

# CLAHRC BITE

CLAHRC CP BITE 2  
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A bite-sized summary of CLAHRC CP research: helping foster carers to identify early signs of emotional problems in young people



**Young people in care are at increased risk of emotional and behaviour disorders, yet such needs often remain unaddressed.**



## What?

CLAHRC CP researchers in collaboration with Cambridgeshire County Council and foster carers, are devising and piloting a new mental health training course to help foster carers identify signs of emotional distress in young people entering care.

## Why?

This pilot study came about as a result of our initial research which focused on two groups of potentially vulnerable 16 & 17 year olds facing major changes in their care arrangements.

## What did we find?

We found that the transitions in care arrangements faced by young people may be compromised by poor mental health, particularly for young people in care. This is often accompanied by poor engagement with services or being unemployed. This combination is likely to render these youngsters vulnerable as they negotiate the challenges of independent living.

## Background

Some young people are vulnerable to mental health problems which have a serious impact on quality of life and the ability to achieve and function in society. The initial research project by CLAHRC CP focused on two groups of potentially vulnerable 16 & 17 year olds:

- young people in local authority care facing the move to independent living
- young people using NHS Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services facing either discharge or transfer to an adult service.

In both of these groups, the findings suggested that transitions may be compromised by poor mental health, particularly in young people in care. Recent surveys have also shown that foster carers would like more training, improved support, and improved access to psychological services for the young people in their care.

Researchers are now devising and piloting a training course to help foster carers identify, monitor and record core symptoms of emotional distress in young people entering foster care for the first time.

The hypothesis of this study is that early identification of mental health problems will lead to timely and appropriate interventions. Should the study findings be positive, and if the study also finds that training foster carers is cost-effective, we will be recommending the adoption of mandatory emotional wellbeing training for all foster carers.

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## Background research

Dunn, V et al (2011) Transfer of Care at 17 (TC-17) - pilot phase: An investigation of factors which influence two groups of young people facing transitional care at 17.

## Further reading

Harter, A; Oakley, M (2012) Fostering Aspirations: Reforming the foster care system in England and Wales. Policy Exchange.

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## An explanation of CLAHRC CP and its role

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Collaboration for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care (CLAHRC CP) is a partnership between the University of Cambridge, NHS organisations in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, and Cambridgeshire County Council.

Funded by the National Institute for Health Research, our mission is to undertake high quality applied research to improve health and social care across the East of England.

CLAHRC partners for this research project were Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust, Cambridgeshire County Council Children's Services, Peterborough City Council Children's Services, NHS Cambridgeshire and NHS Peterborough.

This CLAHRC CP research into mental health training for foster carers is now part of the Enduring Disability and Disadvantage research theme of the CLAHRC East of England.

<http://www.clahrc-eeo.nihr.ac.uk/2014/03/mental-health-training-for-foster-carers/>

CLAHRC CP Research Associate, Valerie Dunn, is responsible for the foster carer training project. She is also coordinator for the ROOTS Project, a large community study tracking 14-year olds through adolescence to examine risk factors for common emotional and behavioural problems.

Valerie is contactable on email: [vjd20@cam.ac.uk](mailto:vjd20@cam.ac.uk) if you would like further information on these projects.