Tackling Recruitment on a National Scale

Robert Tapsfield, the Fostering Network

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The Fostering Network

- 33,700 fostering households
- Over 58,000 members
- 205 local authorities and health authorities
- 174 independent fostering providers
- 87 local foster care associations

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Children Looked After	31.03.01	31.03.05	31.03.09	31.03.10	31.03.11
All Children	58,900	61,000	60,900	64,400	65,500
Foster Placements	38,400	41,300	43,900	46,800	48,500
Relatives or friends within LA	5,100	5,600	4,900	5,300	5,400
Other foster carer Provided by LA, within LA	23,500	20,300	20,000	20,500	21,400
Through IFA within LA	670	2,000	3,300	4,000	4,500
With relative or friend outside LA	1,400	2,000	1,900	2,100	2,100
Other foster carer outside LA provided by council	4,600	5,200	5,900	6,000	6,100
Through IFA outside LA	3,000	6,500	7,900	8,900	9,200
Children's Homes		7,000	6,100	6,200	5,900

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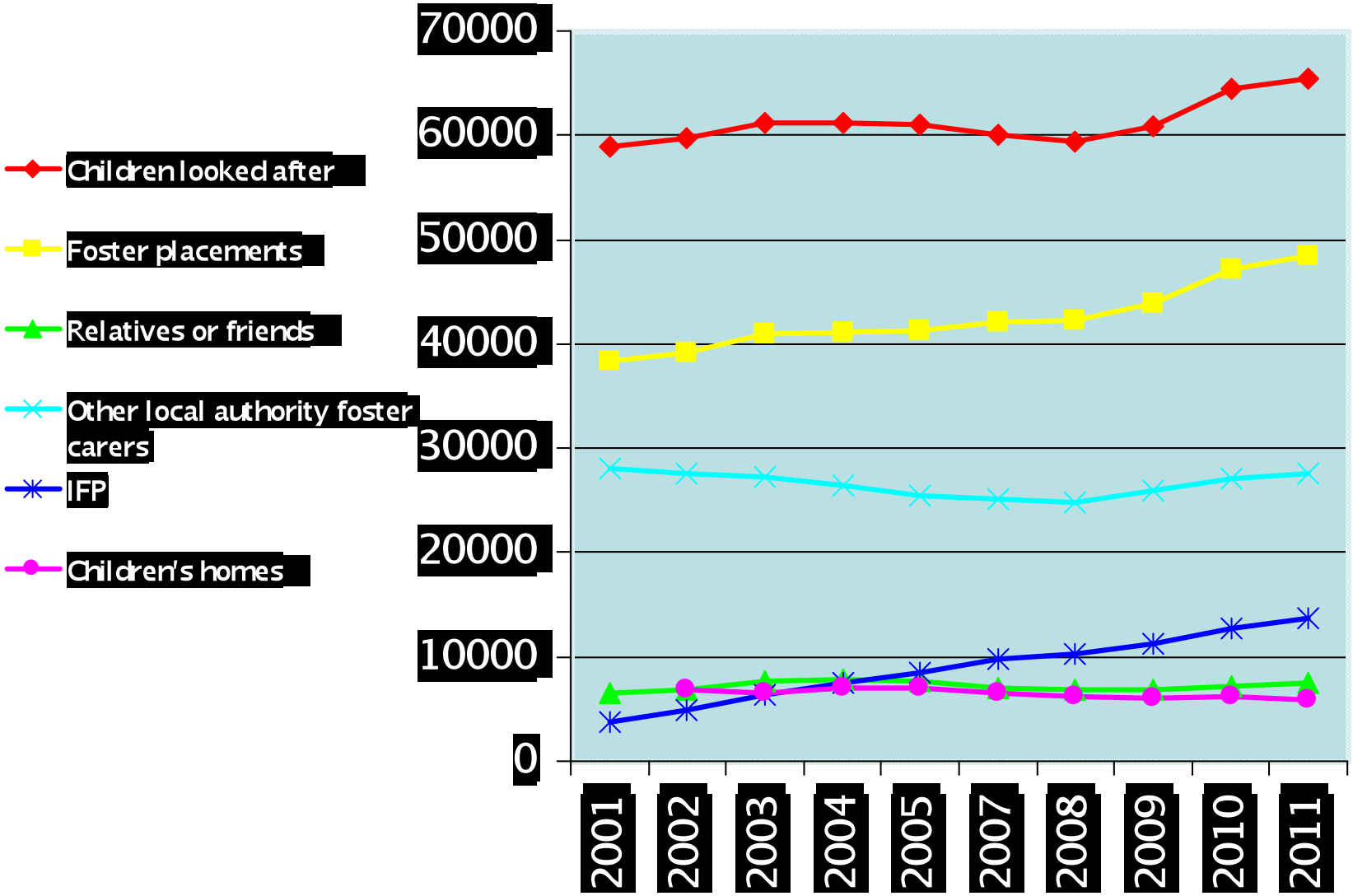

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Key facts

- Numbers of children in foster care are rising overall but significant local and regional variations
- Going down in inner and outer London, Gloucestershire, Somerset, Solihul
- IFP placements up overall but down in East Midlands and outer London
- Excluding family and friends placements, one third of placements with IFPs
- Large variations 0% to 70% - 7% to 51% in West Midlands, 7% - 41% in South West, about 50% in London
- About 180 independent providers but relatively small number of large or medium providers
- Overwhelming majority of placements spot purchased

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Ofsted data set 2010/11

- 6,470 new fostering households, 3,915 LA & 2,555 IFP
- 1,592 of new fostering households are family and friends 25%
- LAS 24,971 fostering households 32,719 children in placement (1.3 children per household)
- IFPs 10,984 fostering households, 12,961 children in placement (1.2 children per household)
- 14% of fostering households ceased fostering during the year
- Slightly higher turnover for LAs

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Quality of Fostering Provision

Ofsted inspection of fostering services

	Local authority fostering services	Independent fostering services
Outstanding	18.8%	27.7%
Good	60.4%	49.2%
Satisfactory	20.1%	21.5%
Inadequate	0.7%	1.6%

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The quality of the product

- Status and authority
- Support
- Learning and development
- Pay

- The quality of the relationship between the fostering service and their foster carers

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The incidence of allegations

- 14 local authorities and England and three independent fostering services. Incidence of allegation 2009/10
- 4.3% of foster families had an allegation which led to a strategy meeting
- 1.4% of foster families (33% of allegations) had a section 47 investigation
- 2 % (47 % of allegations) had a standards of care investigation
- 19 % of allegations led to NFA following strategy meeting

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The incidence of allegations

- Discussions with 21 fostering services regarding payment to foster carers who are effectively suspended
- 16 had some arrangements for paying something
- Arrangements ranged from one service paying fee and a proportion of allowance until resolved
- To discretionary payments for discretionary timescales

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Managing allegations

- Nina Biehal, Elizabeth Parry – 2010
- Incidence, 3.5 – 4% for annual incidence of allegations and less than 1% for substantiated allegations
- The impact on foster carers, their families and children in foster care is devastating
- Lack of due process and timescales a real problem
- Some fostering services have worked with their foster carers to solve this and vastly improve the management of allegations

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The future for foster care

Despite the difficult economic outlook there are real opportunities to improve foster care and do much better for children living with foster carers.

Government policy announcements will hopefully be helpful.

This will require foster carers, local authorities and the independent sector to come together, make the same asks and work together to implement change.

Where we can do this, I believe we can improve the life chances of children in care.

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Thank you

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