



# Transforming Children's Care

GLOBAL COLLABORATIVE PLATFORM

## Spotlight Series on Foster Care Practice: Webinar 4 - On the same team: Parents and Foster Carers working together

18 August 2022



**LOUISE COX**

International Programme Manager  
Martin James Foundation



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Friendly Reminder: Please speak slowly and clearly

**BARBRA ABER**

Regional Family Care Advisor,  
Catholic Relief Services



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**SPOTLIGHT  
SERIES ON  
FOSTER CARE  
PRACTICE**

We will be holding a monthly spotlight webinar that focuses on various aspects of foster care practice

The final webinar of the series will take place on 15 September.



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# AGENDA

Welcome

Presentations

Panel Discussion and Q & A

Upcoming opportunities and closing



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# Speakers

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Lea Wong  
Director of Services and  
Case Management  
Mother's Choice



Kaye Dong  
Foster Family and Marketing  
Committee Member, Mother's  
Choice



Chloe Banks  
Manager, Safe Families and  
Child Protection  
Mother's Choice

A hand with fingers spread, wearing a brown and blue striped sweater cuff, is positioned in the foreground against a blurred background of a cityscape with many buildings.

# Transforming Children's Care

18 August 2022

- Introduction to Mother's Choice and the Hong Kong child care system
- Innovation in Foster Care
- Family Preservation and Strengthening



母親的抉擇  
Mother's Choice



母親的抉擇  
Mother's Choice

**Mother's Choice** is a local Hong Kong charity serving the many children without families and pregnant teenagers.

**Vision:** Every child in a loving family

**Mission:** Joining hands with the community to give hope and change life stories

**Frontline Services:** Teen Crisis Pregnancy, Pregnant Girls Hostel, Child Care Home (0-6), Foster Care (0-18), Early Intervention Services, Comprehensive Sexuality Education, Child Protection, Local and Intercountry Adoption Services, Safe Families, Family Strengthening.

# Overview

Government statistics show there are 3,900 placements for children in the care system, with almost 400 on a waitlist for placement (2021).

## Why do children live in care?

18% Abuse or Suspected Abuse

82% Temporary lack of appropriate care

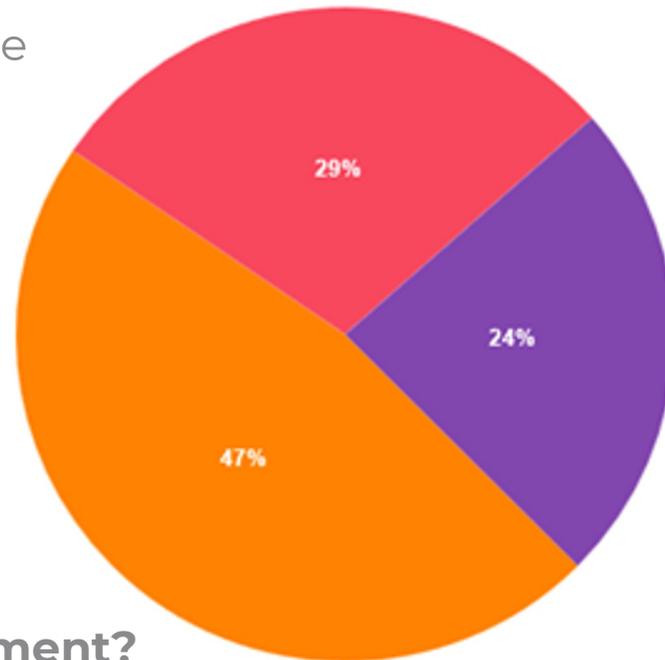
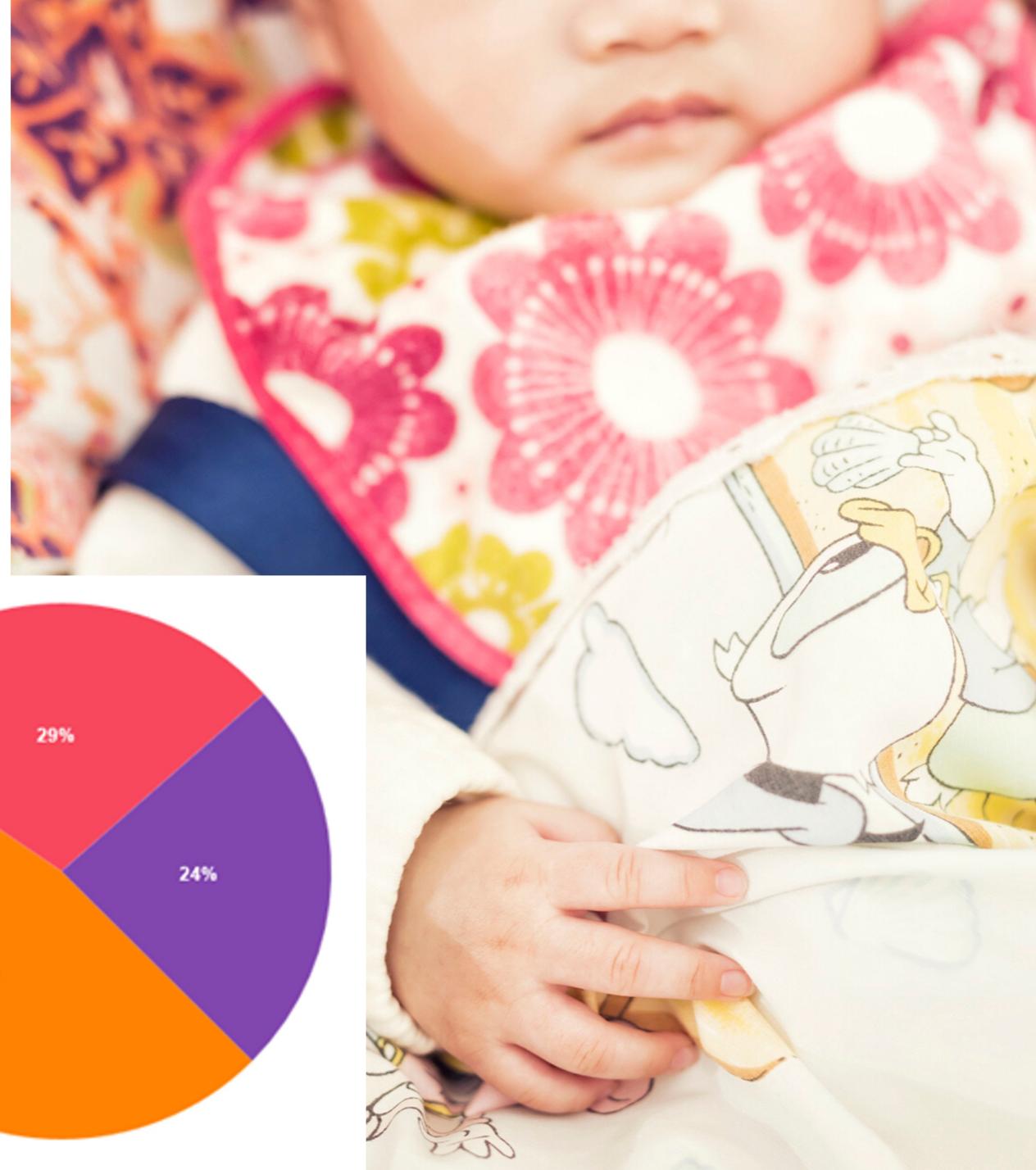
## Where do children live in care?

**47% Residential Homes**

**24% Small Group Homes**

**29% Foster Care**

## How do we grow the foster care segment?



# Permanency

Where do children leave care to?

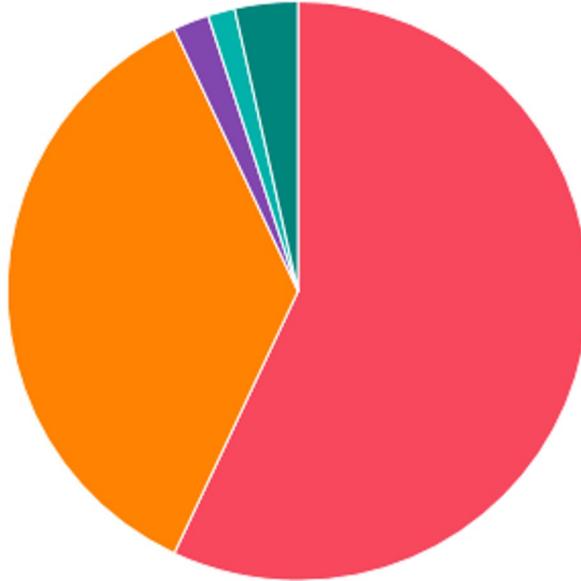
**57% Family Reunion**

**36% Placement Change**

**2% Adoption**

**1.5% Independent Living**

**3.5% Unknown**



## Challenges

- Court oversight in permanency planning
- Few permanency options
- Missing data, re-entering care numbers

## Opportunities

- How can we model and innovate in placement quality and permanency planning?



A photograph of a woman and a young girl. The woman is in the foreground, smiling, with her hands gently holding the girl's hands. The girl is in the background, looking towards the camera. The woman is wearing a blue patterned top, and the girl is wearing a pink top with a green collar and a floral pattern. The background is blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting.

# Challenges and Innovation in Foster Care

## Challenges

- Bias against parents
- Fragmented system that is difficult to navigate
- Frequent changes of social worker and changes in assessment

## Innovation

- Expanding Family-Based care placement capacity to support Family Reunion
- A common language in placement and Permanency Planning
- Expanding Family-Based Care
- Parents and Foster Carers working together





母親的抉擇  
Mother's Choice

**Partnering  
together and  
learning from one  
another**

**Interview with a Foster  
Carer & Social Worker**

# Learnings from Foster Care

## the Gap in our Services



### CRISIS & SEEKING HELP

Many families are leaving our Services without the extended family or community support needed to raise a child. If they are alone and face another crisis, they may be forced to separate from their child, placing them into the care system.



### THRIVING IN PARENTING

# Safe Families Circle of Support

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“ With Safe Families, we empower a mom to be a mom, to keep her and her child together and not see more children in the system. It is a great way to love a mom and child and encourage them in their little family unit.  
Claire, Safe Families Volunteer ”

Trained community volunteers surround the family in a “Circle of Support”, building relationship and providing a social safety net for an isolated family.



# Learnings and Encouragement

- How can you innovate and think creatively outside of the box?
- Does every child have a concrete and achievable permanency plan, how can you ensure this?
- Expanding the pool of eligible foster families – who is a “hidden resource” in your community?
- What encouragement, upskilling, and support do your foster families need?
- How we encourage the whole team to take Child Protection as their own responsibility?
- How can we communicate for the best interests of the child with all decision-makers?



# On the Same Team: Parents and Foster Carers Working Together

- Regular visitation, parenting training (changing, feeding, modeling singing, playing, cuddling).
- Provide transportation costs to reduce barriers to visitation.
- Parenting training & courses on topics including child care, baby development.
- Set up video calls during Covid restrictions
- Incentives for visitation – family photo shoot, home leave.
- Identify other family members as sources of support.  
Welcome mother & father/ grandparents/ aunt together.



# Permanency Planning

- How can we plan for permanency without court oversight or concrete timelines?

## Tools for Permanency Planning

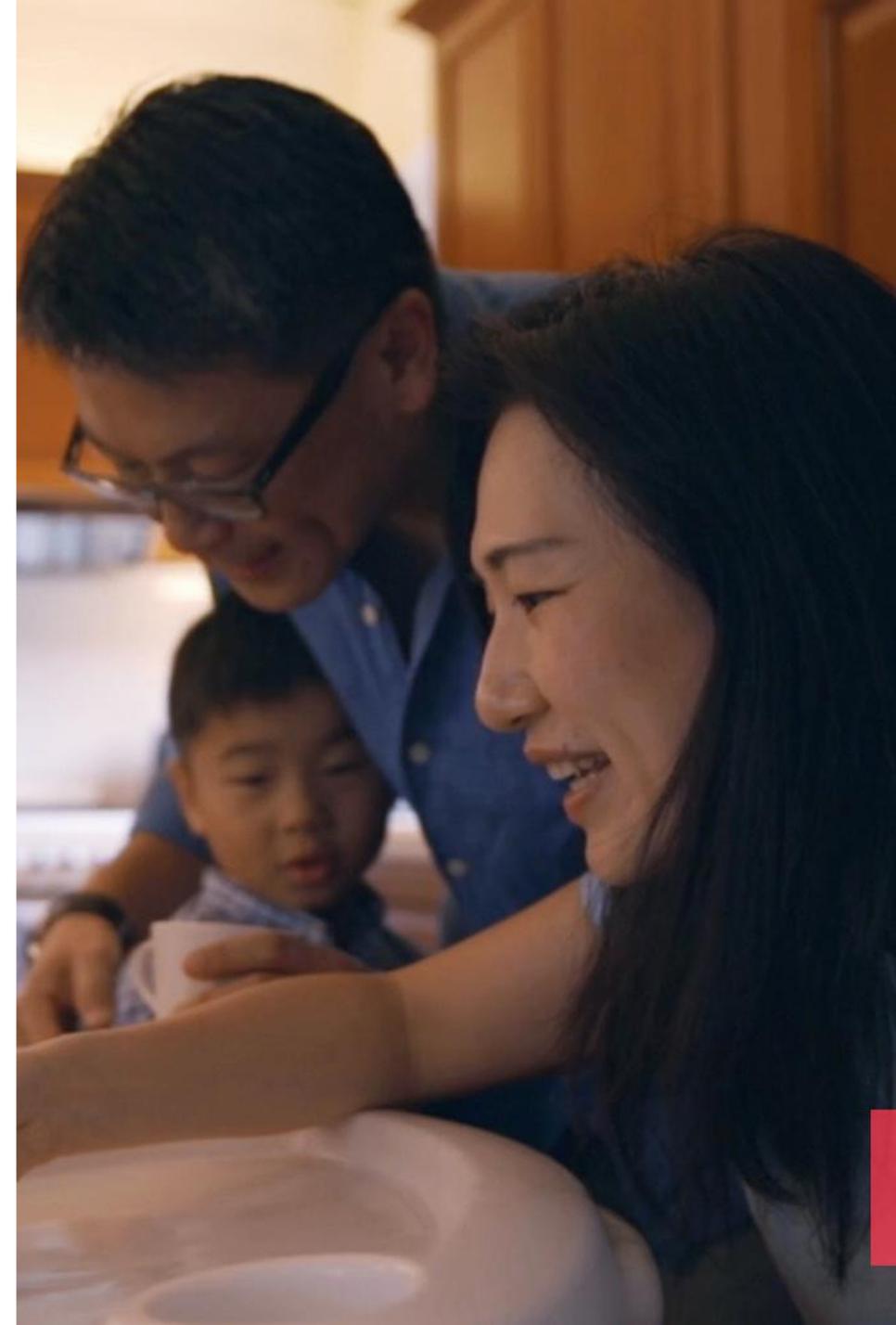
- Social Worker advocacy, understanding law and policy, asking for concrete timelines, and escalating when the case is stuck to determine barriers to permanency.
- CANS (Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths) is a communications tool to build a common language to make decisions, individualized service planning, goal setting, tracking progress, and facilitating permanency planning.
- Combined CANS ratings allow us to assign a level of complexity and urgency for each case.

\*CANS was developed by Dr John Lyons and is supported by the Praed foundation.



# Expanding Family-based Care

- Mother's Choice piloted private foster care (endorsed by Social Welfare Department) to expand and improve short-term placement capacity by innovating in areas that are barriers to care and permanency.
- Enhanced home assessment guidelines and recruited foster families from different demographics – approving highly motivated volunteer families, with a built in Buddy system to prevent burnout.
- Community outreach attracted potential foster parents who had never considered foster care before.
- Since 2014, **we recruited, trained, and approved 90 families, who have cared for 133 children with a 90% placement stability rate.**



# Increased Awareness and Training for Foster Carers to work with Parents

- Understanding the child, having compassion and empathy and acknowledging their trauma.
- Pre-service and ongoing training topics include:
  - **Child Development** (Baby's First 100 Days)
  - In-utero substance exposure
  - Trauma, grief and loss
  - Case management, law and policy (for foster care social workers)
- Embedded **Child Protection** policies and training into every aspect of our work, including foster parent training to identify, respond to, and report child abuse.
- Led to increased awareness of foster parents to identify concerns and they bring knowledge into their own communities.

**Child abuse includes all forms of ill treatment that result in actual or potential harm to a child's health, development, or dignity.**







# Appendix

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母親的抉擇  
Mother's Choice

# Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS)

- CANS is a communications tool, used across Mother's Choice services and contextualised to a Hong Kong context (ages 0-6 and 7-25).
- Ratings are completed by social workers with input from those in the child's life across a consistent set of items "strengths" and "needs"
- Builds a common language to make decisions, individualised service planning, track progress, and facilitate permanency planning.
- Combined ratings allow us to assign a level of complexity and urgency for each case.
- CANS was developed by Dr John Lyons and is supported by the Praed foundation.



# Child Protection Policy and Training

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## PREVENT

child abuse through minimising risk to children in policy, procedures, and training.



## RESPOND

to risks of abuse and respond to child protection concerns in a skilled, prompt, and sensitive way.



## REPORT

and escalate child protection concerns to trained individuals and record and review incidents.

# Child Protection

- In 2016 Mother's Choice Board approved resources to launch & embed child protection policies and training for management, staff, volunteers, and foster families.
- Code of Conduct signing sets clear expectations of behaviour around children.
- **Hong Kong Polytechnic School of Nursing** conducted a secondary analysis of administrative data comparing pre and post implementation.
- Found it is effective in improving knowledge (+13.3%) and attitude (+18.9%), Training allows for improvement of knowledge and attitudes even when there is organizational commitment
- Trained persons bring knowledge back to their communities.
- Working On: Confidence in identifying and responding.



# Foster Care & Family Reunion Challenges

- Baby Alex was placed with the Lee Foster Family as her mother, Ting had a history of drug use. Her social workers are not optimistic that she will reunite with Alex. Many requirements are placed on Ting, including scheduled and random drug testing and psychiatric appointments, and to attend visitations and baby medical appointments.
- The Lee Foster Family saw strengths in Ting's ability to be a parent and they encouraged her to visit their home to spend time with Alex. They thanked her for bringing diapers and formula and new clothes for Alex, and guided her to be the primary caregiver when she was around, feeding, changing, and playing with Alex. They took photos of the two of them together and sent them to Ting.
- When Ting missed a random drug test as it clashed with a job interview, her drug rehab social worker scolded her for not taking responsibility and did not approve her to move towards unsupervised visits with Alex. Ting also found it hard to arrange appointments with her changing social workers.
- The foster family had built a trusted relationship with Ting, and Ting shared her worries about the assessment of her ability to achieve family reunion. The foster family committed to be flexible when she needed to adjust visitation times to make a required appointment. At each Case Meeting, Ting expressed her determination to care for Alex and the foster parents continue to attest to her commitment to care for Alex.
- 2 years later, after communicating with a total of 6 social workers, drug rehab workers and a psychiatrist, Ting finally received an updated confirmation that she is mentally fit for childcare, as well as drug free. The foster family's support played a great role in facilitating family reunion as they witness Ting's commitment to Alex.



# Opportunities

Mother's Choice role in modeling quality placement services and permanency planning

Care that is/has:

- Child Centered
- Builds Attachment with Caregivers
- Comprehensive Training for Staff and Volunteers, Foster Families
- Focus On Permanency Planning



**TALIAH  
DRAYAK**

Director, International  
Parent Advocacy Network  
(IPAN)



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# International Parent Advocacy Network

**Stronger Together - Working  
with birth parents**

Presentation by  
Taliah Drayak



Changing  
the way  
we see  
each  
other

## “NOBODY WANTS TO WORK ANY MORE!”

*A brief history of capitalists complaining that nobody wants to work for starvation wages*

2022

According to a new survey released by TinyPulse, 1 in 5 executive leaders agree with this statement: “No one wants to work”. These same leaders cite a “lack of response to job

2014

What has happened to the work ethic in America? Nobody wants to work anymore. It has not always been that way. When I first started to work as a teenager, I saw people work hard.

2006

like nobody wants to work anymore and when they do

1999

“Nobody wants to work anymore,” Cecil said. “They all want to work in front of a computer and make lots of

1981

off this land last week. But they just fooled around. They didn’t want to work. Nobody wants to work anymore.

1979

“Nobody wants to work anymore.”

— disgusted businessman

1969

called “Nobody Wants to Work Anymore.” Talking about un-

1952

everybody was getting too darned lazy and nobody wants to work anymore. That’s the truth if I ever heard it.

1940

trouble is everybody is on relief or a pension — nobody wants to work anymore.”

1937

ams counties are complaining that “Nobody wants to work anymore.” There is work, it is reported, for 15

1922

it is because nobody wants to work any more unless they can

1916

he answered, “the reason for food scarcity is that nobody wants to work as hard as they used to. I asked a

1905

unreliable. None want to work for wages.

1894

next winter? It is becoming apparent that nobody wants to work these hard times.

# Shared Goals

- ▶ We must start by recognizing that we all want the same thing. For our children to be safe, loved and achieving. But we may feel differently about how best to achieve this.
- ▶ As well as shared goals, we have many shared challenges and we need to support each other to overcome these challenges and avoid conflict.
- ▶ Systems are imperfect, so it is our duty as people to do our best to care for one another.



Working  
together can  
be hard



A 3D illustration of a landscape with floating blocks of earth, rocks, and water. The scene is set against a light blue sky and a dark grey ground. In the foreground, there are several floating blocks of earth and rock. One block has a large, clear blue cube of water on top. Another block has a small wind turbine on top. A large, green tree is on a block in the background. The overall scene suggests a fragmented or unstable environment. The text "Resources are a necessity" is overlaid in the center in a bright green, sans-serif font.

Resources are  
a necessity

# Opportunity to Join the Task Force on Foster Care

The **Task Force on Foster Care** has been established to provide a platform for sharing and learning on foster care practice experiences from different contexts across the globe.

The group will meet on the Tuesday following each webinar. Learnings from this platform will inform the development of a Thematic Brief on Foster Care.

We encourage and welcome people with lived experience of foster care, foster carers, practitioners, Government actors, and those interested in sharing their experience of the implementation of foster care services to join the Task Force.

If you are interested in joining the Task Force, please sign up to the Transforming Children's Care Global Collaborative Platform and request to join the 'Foster Care Group'.

<https://www.transformcare4children.org/user/register>



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**THANK  
YOU FOR  
JOINING!**

Please see the chat box for a link to learn more about the [Transforming Children's Care Global Collaborative Platform](#) and find out how to join.

We will be sending you a link to the webinar recording and slides in a follow-up email shortly. If you have questions, comments or recommendations for future webinar topics, please send them to:

[contact@transformcare4children.org](mailto:contact@transformcare4children.org)

En el chat encontrará un enlace para obtener más información sobre la [Plataforma Global de Colaboración para la Transformación del Cuidado de la Niñez y Adolescencia](#) y saber cómo unirse a ella.

En breve le enviaremos un enlace a la grabación del seminario web y a las diapositivas en un correo electrónico de seguimiento. Si tiene preguntas, comentarios o recomendaciones para los temas de futuros seminarios web, envíelos a:

[contact@transformcare4children.org](mailto:contact@transformcare4children.org)



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