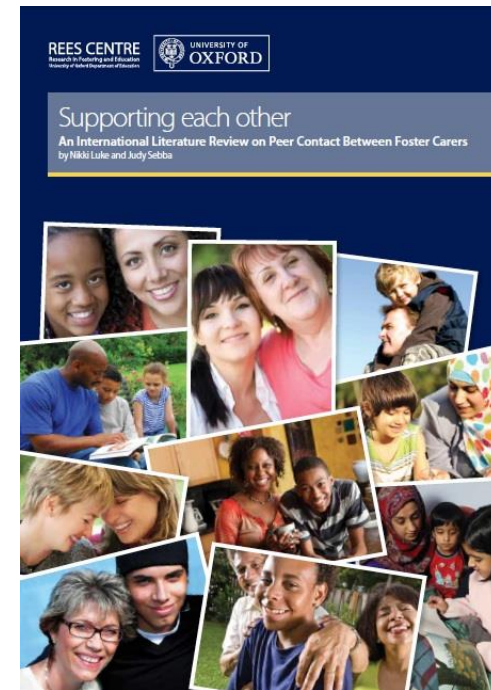


# Top tips when engaging with stakeholders

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**Director, The Rees Centre**  
**Department of Education**  
**University of Oxford**



# What is the problem?: The lack of evidence-informed policy and practice

- Policy makers rank academic research well below special advisers (media background), experts and think tanks as sources of evidence (Campbell et al 2007; Rich 2004; Rigby 2005);
- Policy makers often regard research findings as impenetrable, ambiguous, conflicting, insignificant, untimely or only partially relevant. In turn, they display confusion about what constitutes evidence and its role (Brown, 2012; Rickinson, Sebba & Edwards 2011).
- Confusion about evidence is rife amongst politicians, civil servants & the public: *The honourable member for Braintree cited evidence from the Sun, so I want to refer to a recent edition of the British Medical Journal* (ex LibDem MP Evan Harris in the parliamentary debate on cancer)

# Rees Centre for Research in Fostering and Education

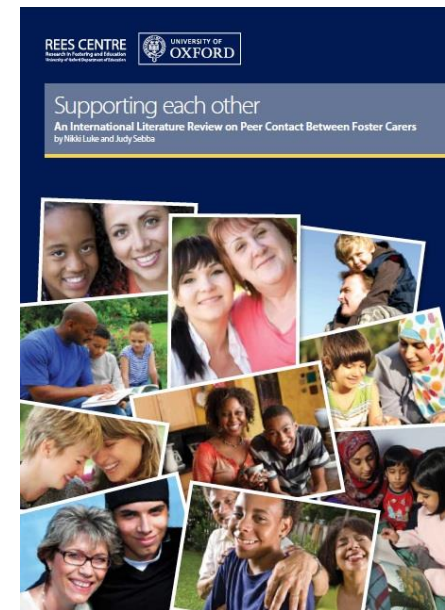
The Rees Centre aims to:

- identify what works to improve the outcomes and life chances of children and young people in foster care

We are doing this by:

- reviewing existing research in order to make better use of current evidence
- conducting new research to address gaps
- working with service users to identify research priorities and translate research messages into practice
- employing foster carers and care experienced young people as co-researchers.

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## Increasing quality and impact through user engagement (Rickinson, Sebba & Edwards, 2011)

<b>Users</b>	<b>Resources they offer to research</b>	<b>Why and when</b>
<b>Policy Official/Analyst</b>	Funding, access to data/sites, networks, policy context	Identify policy needs for evidence; Refine research question; Assist access to sites & data; Respond to validity & relevance of findings, interpretations; Draw out policy implications; Broker use of research in policy.
<b>Practitioner/service user</b>	Research sites, networks, insights based on current experience	Identify practice needs for evidence; Refine research question; Keep researchers grounded - & inform of changes in context; Assist access to sites & data; Respond to validity & relevance of findings, interpretations; Draw out practice implications.

# How do we engage users?

- Through consultation groups, in-care council, regular briefings in government
- As members of the research teams
- To provide feedback on draft reviews
- As co-presenters at conferences
- As co-presenters and participants in webinars, blogs and tweets
- Through visiting placements into the Centre
- Our 'researcher-in-residence' model

# Challenging practice – Knowledge Claims

1. The quality of 'ordinary care' influences the outcomes of mental health interventions – what are we doing to improve 'ordinary care' before requesting specialist services?
2. Moving schools in Years 10-11 has a major affect on worsening outcomes – what are you doing to prevent this?
3. Preparing and supporting carers' own children for fostering reduces placement disruptions – how is this done in your service?
4. Better support for foster carers who experience an allegation would increase retention – what do you do to provide this?
5. Do your Supervisory Social Workers challenge foster carers as well as supporting them?
6. Do your assessments of potential LGBT foster carers include questions that would not be asked of other potential carers?

# How do we know if it helps?

- We don't!
- Feedback from users or others
- Our research quoted in policy documents
- Observation of practice that reflects our findings
- Invitations to work with users in bring about change

Challenge is to find ways of evaluating it