

Evaluation: Siblings Together Buddy Project

February 2015-December 2016



The Buddy Project, run by the charity 'Siblings Together' is an innovative approach to re-unite siblings separated through care. The Rees Centre at the University of Oxford carried out an independent evaluation of the Buddy Project.

Around 13% of children and young people entering care in England, assessed as needing to be placed with siblings, are placed apart from them. Research evidence suggests that sibling groups placed together experience greater stability.

About the Buddy Project

The project recruits and trains volunteers to become Buddies who support and encourage siblings to enjoy activities together on a monthly basis. The project aims to promote fun, develop stronger bonds and strengthen the sibling group. From 2014-16, 23 young people from 7 sibling groups in 6 local authorities, separated from some or all siblings, were involved in 45 meetings, involving 66 different activities, supported by 16 Buddies.

Key Findings

Changes in the well-being of the children and young people involved

- Young people greatly enjoyed the contact with their siblings and wanted more frequent contact and for longer.
- The high quality of the Buddies contributed to their positive experiences.
- Five young people's behaviour significantly improved.
- Most of the young people developed greater confidence.
- Older teenagers discussed futures, relationships, college and housing with siblings and Buddies.

Changes in relationships between siblings and with family

- Relationships between siblings improved significantly.
- Young people demonstrated closer, more affectionate, support to one another and found each other's company to be a source of fun and laughter.
- Siblings supported one another through crises e.g. placement changes, bereavements.
- Siblings developed their sense of identity as part of a family through jointly experienced histories.

Implications for Policy & Practice

- Give siblings, placed separately in care, informal opportunities to meet and participate in activities.
- Provide support for siblings to meet in order to ensure safeguarding but not to impose formal contact.
- Use volunteers who are trained and supported to undertake this role.
- Fund activities and travel to enable them to meet – this is an investment in developing greater placement stability and increasing well-being.

About the Evaluation

- Ran from 2015-16 and involved interviews with 18 young people, 12 Buddies, 15 foster carers (and residential home managers) and 4 social workers.
- Assessed young people's sense of belonging and well-being using items drawn from standardised scales.
- Analysis of 39 diaries completed by the Buddies at 45 monthly meetings of the siblings.

Evaluation Report

The full report is available on our website and can be read and downloaded for free:

[Evaluation of the Siblings Together Buddy Project, Final Report](#) (pdf)

Judy Sebba, The Rees Centre, University of Oxford. March 2017

Researchers: Jo Dixon, Jade Ward, Khatija Hafesji, Judith Clare, Áine Kelly and Vânia S. Pinto

Further Information

Please visit the Research area of our website for work related to siblings in care:

<http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk/research/siblings-in-care/>

Contact

Professor Judy Sebba, University of Oxford: judy.sebba@education.ox.ac.uk

Rees Centre for Research in Fostering and Education

University of Oxford, Department of Education

15 Norham Gardens, Oxford OX2 6PY

Tel: 01865 274050

Email: rees.centre@education.ox.ac.uk

Web: <http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk>

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