

Supporting Children and Families During Adoption Breakdown



Community Care Live

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All about me....

- Adoptive parent
- Director of Inspired Foundations
- Vice Chair of Barnardos Midlands Adoption Panel
- Member of the Department for Education's 'Expert Advisory Group' on Adoption Support



What do we mean by adoption breakdown?

- No consistent definition of the words ‘breakdown’ or ‘disruption’
- Data for breakdowns that occur pre adoption order is limited
- Beyond the Adoption Order (Selwyn, 2014) identified that between 3% - 9% of adoptions disrupted



Risk factors...

- Multiple placements before adoption
- Age at entry to care
- Length of time from entering care to being adopted
- Age when placed with adopters



A study of Adoption Breakdown

Summary of responses:

- Online survey (77 responses)
- Ten families interviewed
- Age range at placement: birth-11 yrs
- Age range at breakdown: 23 mths-17.8yrs
- 22% pre order / 78% post order
- Breakdowns occurred as recently as 3 months ago and as long as 18 years ago

Terminology...

Pre Adoption Order

Returned to care

Adoption Breakdown

Adoption Disruption

Post Adoption Order

Parenting from a distance

Adoption Breakdown

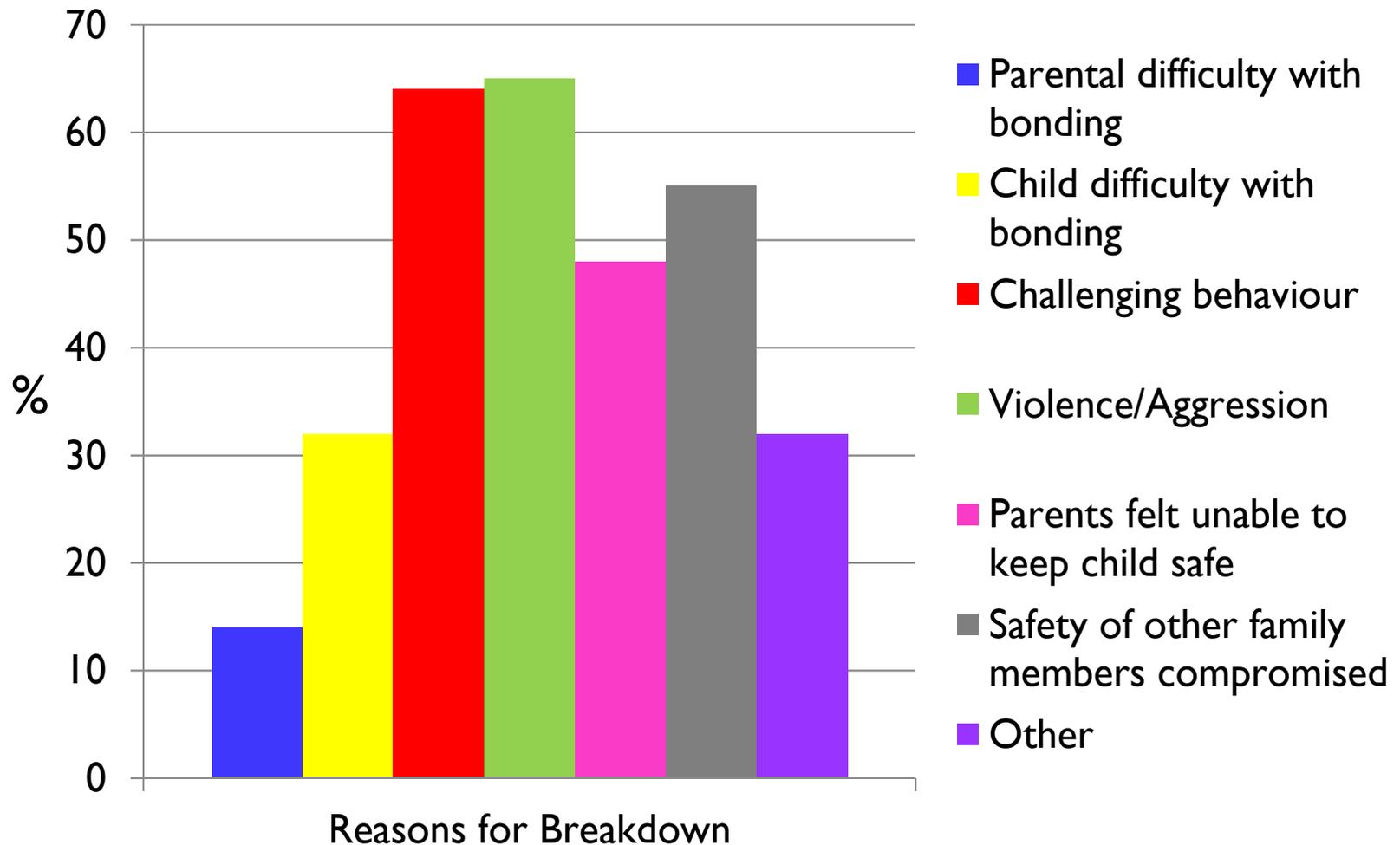
Adoption Disruption

Moved out of home

Returned to care

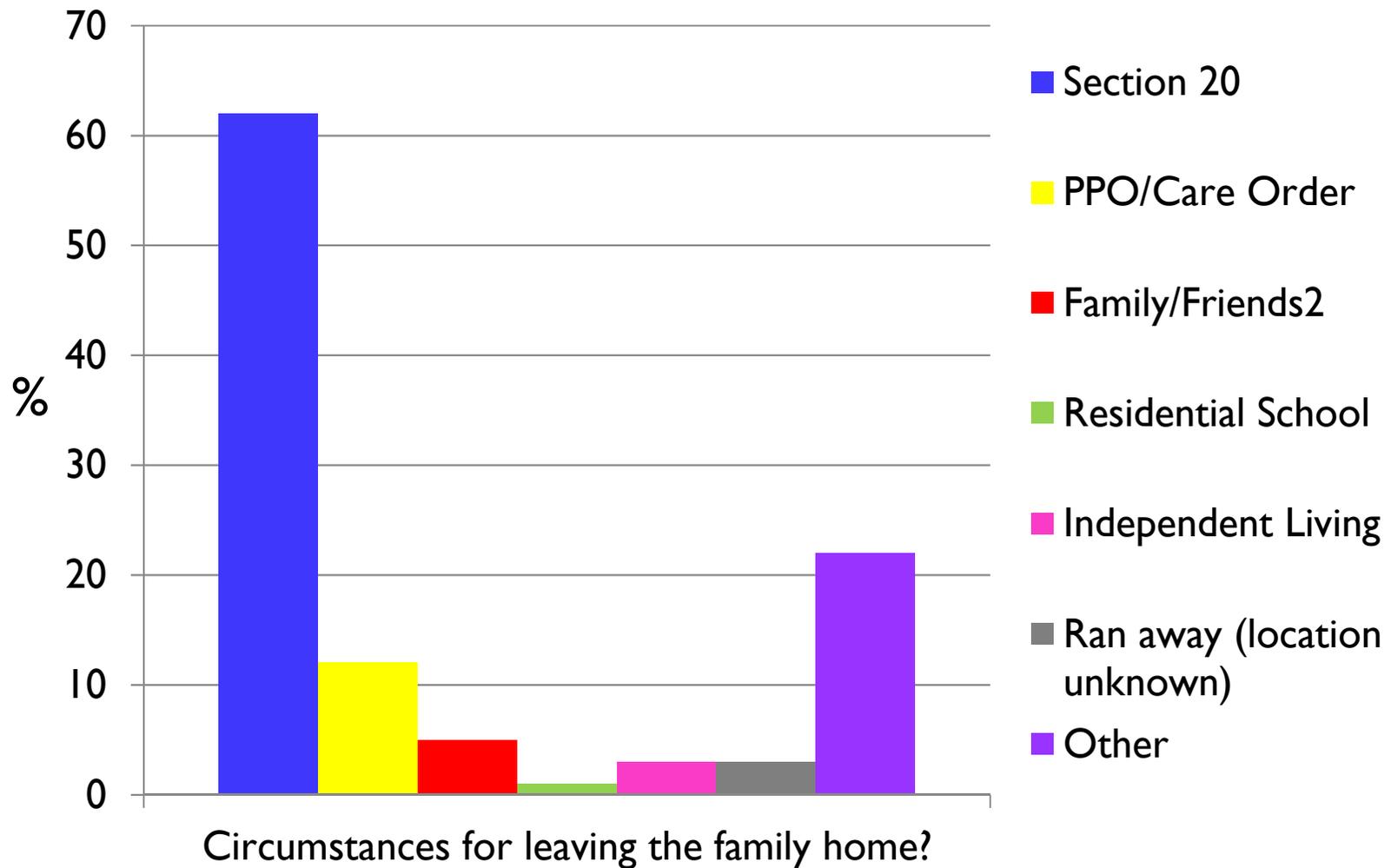
Preferences regarding terminology. A study of Adoption Breakdown (Jones, 2017)

Why do Adoptions break down?



A study of Adoption Breakdown (Jones, 2017)

How do children leave the family home?



A study of Adoption Breakdown (Jones, 2017)



Preventing adoption breakdown

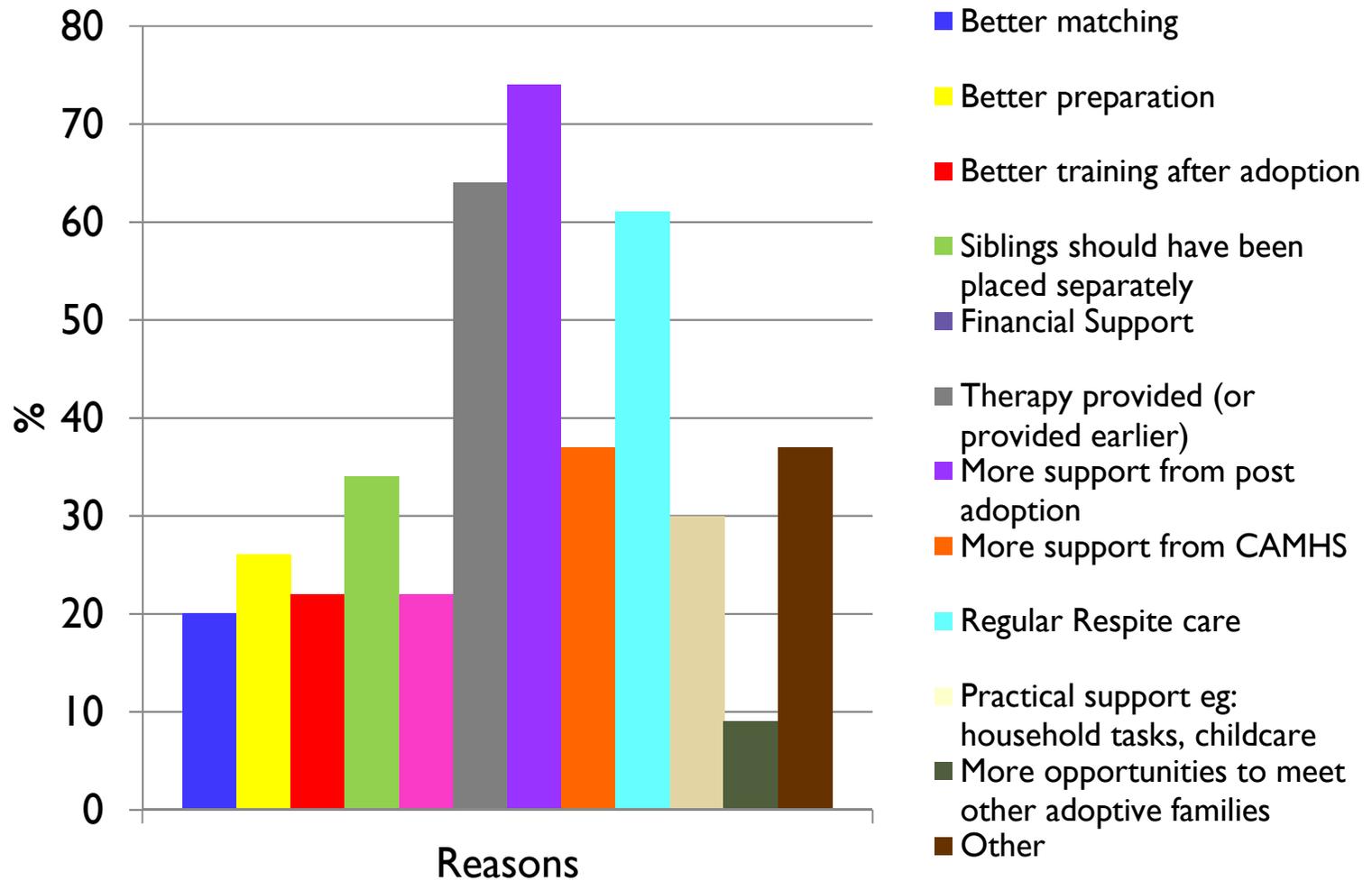
- Reduce the risks identified in BTAO
- Develop a culture of ‘adoption support’ right from the start
- Access to early training in addition to standard preparation courses
- Careful matching
- Share all the information available
- Individually planned introductions
- Prepare the child – don’t gloss over the hurt or losses



Preventing adoption breakdown

- Early support - not blame
- Listen, acknowledge, support
- Ongoing training (eg: NVR)
- Consider all options (eg: respite)
- Use the Adoption Support Fund
- Encourage networking with other adopters
- Encourage parents to contact support organisations (eg: Adoption UK, POTATO)

What may have helped prevent the adoption from breaking down?

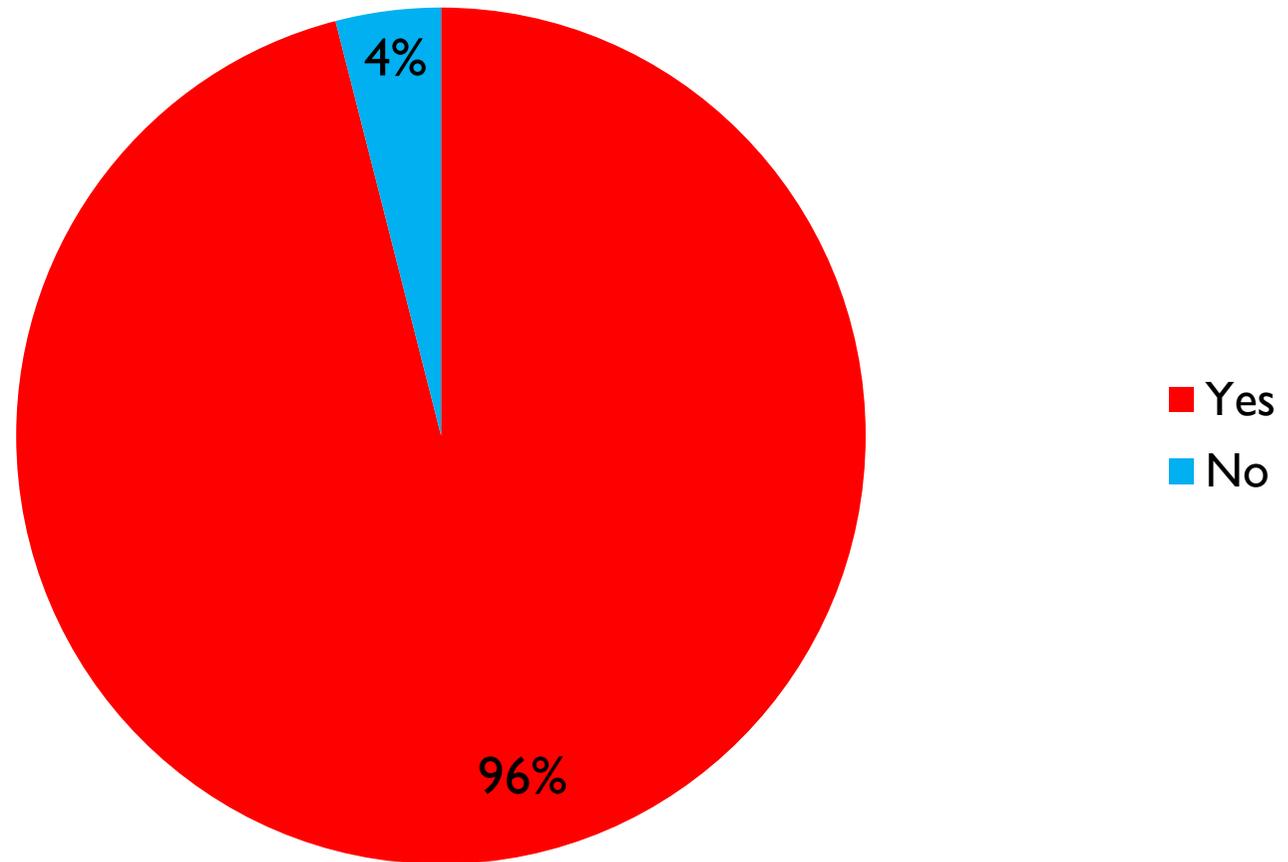


A study of Adoption Breakdown (Jones, 2017)



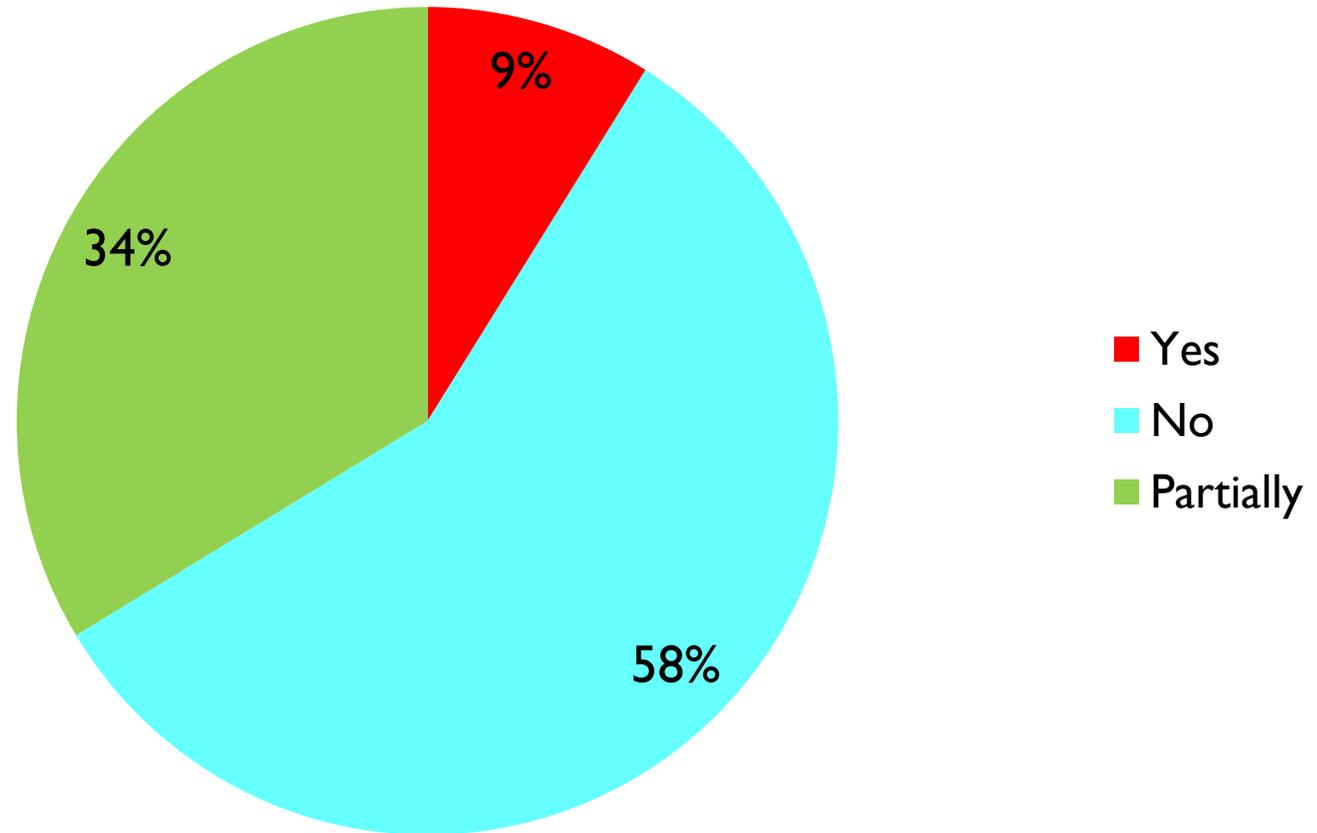
“I truly believe if they had listened and understood that we would not have had an adoption breakdown.”

Did you ask for help before the Adoption broke down?



A study of Adoption Breakdown (Jones, 2017)

Did you receive the help that you asked for?



A study of Adoption Breakdown (Jones, 2017)



“The Social Worker said if we wanted our son to go then she would remove the other two children as well. They had all been with us for 8 years at this point!”



Immediate support in crisis

- Have all alternatives to breakdown been considered (eg: respite)?
- Listen to all views (eg: timing of removal)
- No blame
- Accurate note taking
- Consider terminology
- Recognise the depth of hurt for all those involved



Supporting to maintain relationships

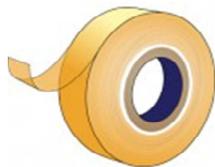
- 73% of survey respondents still have some level of contact with their child
- Recognise adoptive parents as parents
- Recognise the impact of the child's trauma on their decision making
- Encourage parents/child to 'bridge the gap' in contact (eg: letters, texts, phone call)
- Think Life Story!
- Recognise the depth of hurt for all those involved



“We were treated as if we were the abusers. The reality was that we had been trying to repair the damage caused from the abuse before they came to us”

Planning for a long term solution

- No 'one size fits all'
- Look at all placement options for a best fit
- Assess what level of contact everyone feels comfortable with
- Consider the context in which decisions are being made – can these decisions be revisited?
- Be the sellotape, not the scissors





Further reading / support

- Adoption UK www.adoptionuk.org
- POTATO www.thepotatogroup.org.uk
- The Open Nest www.theopennest.co.uk
- Adoption Disruption UK www.adoptiondisruptionuk.com
- CoramBaaf www.corambaaf.org.uk
- PAC-UK www.pac-uk.org
- Beyond the Adoption Order: Challenges, Interventions & Adoption Disruptions (Julie Selwyn, 2014)
- Dealing with Disruption in Fostering and Adoption (Hedi Argent, 2012)



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