

# Research Title.

*Breaking Free the Golden Buddha.*

A Phenomenological Exploration of  
the Efficacy of Professional  
Keyworkers in the Lives of Young  
People in Foster Care.

# Content.

- ▶ **The Golden Buddha**
- ▶ **Research Objective/Aims**
- ▶ **Literature Review**
- ▶ **Methodology**
- ▶ **Findings**
- ▶ **Conclusions/Recommendations**

# The Golden Buddha.

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# Research Objectives/Aims

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“What is the efficacy of a professional keyworker for those involved in the foster care system?”

- Exploration of keywork experiences of young people, eighteen year or older, that spent time in foster care
- Identification of the key factors that contribute to positive/negative key-working
- Examination of barriers to key-working experiences
- Exploration and interpretation of the findings through thematic analysis
- Examination as to whether key working benefits young people in the foster care system

# Literature Review.

- ▶ The Care System in Ireland
- ▶ Foster Care
- ▶ Residential Care
- ▶ Professional Keyworkers
- ▶ International Perspectives
- ▶ Averse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
- ▶ Traumatic Impact of Care on Young People
- ▶ Trauma Informed Care
- ▶ Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- ▶ Need for Professionally Trained Keyworkers
- ▶ Requirements

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# Methodology.

- Research Questions and Aims
- Approach, Phenomenological, Qualitative
- Researcher Bias
- Sampling
- Ethical considerations
- Informed Consent
- Semi Structured Interviews
- Data Collection
- Qualitative Data Analysis
- Thematic Analysis

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# Research Participants

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Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Status	Years of Experience relating to the Care system
Holly	52	Female	Social Worker	6
Jean	30	Female	Social Worker	3
Paris	37	Female	Social Worker	5
Kevin	37	Male	Social Worker	7
Mary	64	Female	Foster Carer	25
Ger	56	Male	Foster Carer	17
Jason	65	Male	Foster Carer	15
Andy	60	Male	Foster Carer	16
Monica	19	Female	Young Person	8
Sarah	20	Female	Young Person	4
Han	20	Male	Young Person	12

# Findings.

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<b>Main theme</b>	
<b>Positive Keyworker Experiences</b>	Valuable Service, Positive Relationships
<b>Key Factors</b>	Relationship/Honesty/Trust, Healthy Communication, Comprehensive Prior Information/Identifying Needs, Consistency, Collaborative Reviews
<b>Improvements</b>	Personal Life, Education, Risk Taking Behaviours, Relationships



# Findings.

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<b>Main Theme</b>	
<b>Barriers</b>	Lack of Engagement, Appropriate Start, Resources, Lack of Patience/Personality/Time
<b>Most Effective Time</b>	Circumstances, After School, Weekends
<b>All are Deserving</b>	Unanimous Agreement, Different Perspective, Vulnerability/Trauma Experience, Development/Positive Reinforcement

# Findings.

## Positive Keyworker Experiences.

### Valuable Service

“I thought they do some great work. Some of them left me in awe of the amount of effort they went to for children”

### Positive Relationships

“I had very positive relationships with key workers”

# Findings.

## Key Factors.

### Relationship/Honesty/Trust

“I think what worked well was that I trusted them, so knowing that I could trust them was like a safe space for me to go with them when I wasn't at home or in foster placement”

### Healthy Communication

“We could talk freely with some of the key workers, they would advise us on things and work with the child then to help us all come to a solution”

### Comprehensive Prior Information/Identifying Needs

“I think comprehensive referral forms and information, relevant information. I think discussing cases with key workers prior to meeting”.

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## Key Factors.

### **Comprehensive Information/Identifying Needs**

“A key worker I think should be able to pick up on what they want and help them towards what they need”

### **Consistency**

“being consistently in their life and consistently supportive, really helps”

“A lot of the key workers have a lot of empathy, and they just don't...you know, they don't give up, or they don't give in with the young person”

### **Collaborative Reviews**

“Respect for each other's profession, and how you go about it”

# Findings.

## Improvements.

### Personal Life

“I used to always think, look down on myself, They helped me boost up my confidence. They helped me see that I was, I was a lot more than what I thought I was”

### Education

“When I first got a keyworker, I did not want to finish to school at all. I just wanted to do my Junior Cert and to leave and I ended up completing my Leaving Cert and now I am in college studying social studies”

“One boy in particular who came to us who was 7. He couldn't even spell his own name and he wound up doing his Leaving Cert and went on to do College”

# Findings

## Improvements.

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### Risk-Taking Behaviour

“Yeah. I don’t take risks anymore. Like before I would like when I lived at home I would sneak out at night, and I would come back at all hours, and I would do underage drinking”

### Relationships

“Yes, definitely. I would have found that they seem to make better decisions of who they kind of hang/pal around with and all that, and they are much more open about it, and will talk to you about it, and definitely they do change a good bit - for the better”

# Findings.

## Barriers.

### **Lack of Engagement**

“they could be at crisis during their life, they might not have been at a point emotionally or psychologically that they feel able to engage meaningfully”

### **Appropriate start**

“I do think a lot of it comes down to the matching and the relationship between the key worker and the young person”

# Findings.

## Barriers.

## Resources

“the only complaint that any social worker that I’ve ever come across has about key working, is that there are not enough of them”

## Lack of Patience/Personality/Time

“if you’re not level-headed, or you’re not calm, and you’re really reactive”

“they need to have patience, and not panic, and just take it as it comes because changes happen”



# Findings.

## Most Effective Time.

### Circumstances

“key working agencies in the Mid-West that I had encountered have just been very, very flexible, and have always taken time to work out what works best”

### After School/Afternoon

“after school was probably the best time for me because I was able to like, if I had a bad day, it’s like everything I’d vent out”

### Weekends

“some weekends can be really advantageous”

# Findings.

## All are Deserving.

### Unanimous Agreement

“I would say most definitely”

### Different Perspective

“I think having like looking at it from a different perspective from a Social Worker and a key worker I think having two different people is great”

# Findings.

## All are Deserving.

### Vulnerability/Trauma Experience

“I think the statistics show us year in, year out, that children who have passed through the care system are the most vulnerable children in the country. They are more vulnerable statistically than children under the Child Protection System”

### Development/Positive Reinforcement

“key workers role modelling a way of communicating, you know, the use of language, the use of tone, the use of body language. Taking the time to explore that with young people. I mean, it’s really an undervalued skill”

# Conclusions and Recommendations

- This research finds that efficacy of professional keyworkers in the lives of YP in FC is a positive.
- This study finds several key factors that are present in effective key working.
- This study finds that the YP have improvements relating to their personal lives, education, risk-taking behaviour, and relationships.
- This research finds several barriers to effective key working taking place.
- This study reveals the most effective time, according to the participants, for keywork provision to take place.
- There is unanimous agreement from the participants that all YP in FC are deserving of a key worker.

# Conclusions and Recommendations.

- Educators and service providers
- Training of potential keyworkers. Potential basis for a toolkit
- Research relating to the YP in FC who do not receive a keyworker concerning their experiences and outcomes.
- Proactive approach to YP rather than a Reactive approach.
- Greater allocation of funding and Resources
- Combination of midweek and weekend sessions
- Provision to all YP in FC of a keyworker
- Further research

# Conclusion

Thank you all for listening.