

behaviours (Chamberlain & Reid, 1991; Galaway, Nutter & Hudson, 1995; Reddy & Pfeiffer, 1997). In such arrangements, foster carers are usually paid more, given additional support, and are usually allocated only one child. In this form of foster care, carers are, in effect, paid an income, and there is no assumption that service is provided merely through goodwill or altruism. If successful, this form of intervention could serve to alleviate the prevalence of challenging children in the mainstream foster care system, thereby enhancing the appeal of regular care to prospective foster parents. The disadvantage of this scheme is that the Government would have to allocate further funding to foster care, and this might not be possible in many jurisdictions. Nevertheless, in the absence of any analyses that compare the financial benefits of professional foster care with its costs, it remains unclear whether professional care would necessarily prove to be a more expensive option in the medium to longer term. Indeed, it is possible that additional outlays to professional foster carers could be more than matched by

the savings resulting from greater placement stability and increased foster carer retention rates. So far, there has been little, if any, research that has undertaken this comparison.

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