

Supplementary materials

Table S1. Sociodemographic data on communication partners

	Foster parent gender	Foster parent age	Foster care type
1.	Female	45–59	Mediated
2.	Female	60–75	Unmediated
3.	Female	45–59	Unmediated
4.	Female	60–75	Unmediated
5.	Male	45–59	Unmediated
6.	Female	45–59	Unmediated
7.	Female	60–75	Unmediated
8.	Female	45–59	Unmediated
9.	Female	60–75	Unmediated

Table S2. Overview of themes and codes with their localisations

Theme	Sub-theme	Codes and localisations in the transcript
Motivation for foster care	Motivation for foster care on the part of foster parents	Desire to have a child (I1/4) Inability to have a child (I1/4, I1/100) Compensation for parental role (I1/47) Children were in a children's home (I6/2) Motivation by grandchild/grandchildren (I2/74, I2/142, I2/147, I4/15, I4/25) Risk of being placed in a children's home (I2/5, I2/8, I2/74, I7/130, I7/163, I8/53) Desire to adopt a child (I7/154)
	Motivation for foster care on the part of children's parents (biological parents)	Daughter's drug addiction (I2/2, I2/16, I2/21, I3/2, I4/3, I4/85, I4/95, I4/181, I4/186, I4/98, I8/3, I8/173, I9/20, I9/27) Sister's drug addiction (I5/4, I5/17, I5/47, I6/2) Daughter's problems (I4/9, I4/119, I4/123, I4/182, I4/183, I7/130, I8/5, I8/15, I8/105, I9/6, I9/244, I9/258) Child neglect (I3/2, I4/6, I4/18) Influence by partner (I7/70, I7/133, I9/20, I9/29) Abandonment by mother (I8/8, I8/9) Aggression and violence (I7/8, I7/11, I7/12, I7/37, I7/133, I8/28) Threats (I7/24, I7/26) Threats to children (I4/88, I4/90, I4/91, I7/11, I8/39) Need for family support (I5/3, I5/6-8, I5/22, I7/16) Mother's ability to care for a child (I7/68, I7/131)
Needs of foster parents	Personal needs	Need to resolve relationship (I8/167) Desire to imprison daughter (I2/69) Need for rest (I2/32, I2/33, I2/121, I2/126, I4/208, I8/165) Need for activation (I2/143) Need for relaxation (I2/180) Need to be oneself (I2/121) Need to go out (I2/121) Need to have a healthy child (I6/10, I8/200) Need to be healthy (I9/122) Time with a friend (I7/88) Child's met needs (I1/52, I1/77)
	Needs associated with foster care	Absence of need for financial assistance (I7/46, I9/58) Need for better cooperation (I4/152) Need for financial assistance (I2/12, I2/13, I2/54, I4/167, I9/7, I9/8, I9/53) Absence of problems (I1/80, I5/39, I5/69, I5/79) Absence of needs (I1/93, I1/97, I4/132, I4/143, I5/45, I6/23, I7/88, I7/108)

Foster parent role and personal approach to fostering	Foster parent role	Parental role (I1/47, I1/49, I1/89, I5/12, I5/14, I5/45, I5/52, I6/40, I8/243, I8/244, I9/18) Foster parent's pension (I2/33, I4/55, I9/138) Care while having a job (I4/91, I4/173) Fostering as a source of income, work (I1/125, I4/172) Religious family (I1/53, I1/69, I1/105, I2/134, I2/135, I2/138) Predominance of kinship foster parents (I1/27) Motivation to have another child (I7/172) Part of the family (I1/29, I1/90, I1/108, I1/126, I3/33, I4/25, I4/42, I5/11, I5/14, I5/19, I5/29, I5/52, I5/80, I6/42, I7/154, I8/165) Appropriate decision-making (I8/298) Personal regimen (I7/88)
	Expectations from foster care	Positive approach (I1/32, I4/177) Expectations met (I1/55) Absence of expectations (I7/45) Evaluation of institutional care (I7/169) Assumption of grandparental care (I4/110, I4/161) Motivation by grandchildren/grandchildren (I2/74)
Social work	Cooperation with child protection services agency	On-site investigation by child protection services agency (I1/84, I1/86, I4/22, I4/31, I5/35, I5/65, I6/21, I7/110, 9/110) Dissatisfaction (I4/114, I4/125) Contacting child protection services agency (I7/9, I7/18, I8/52) Child protection services agency intervention (I7/10, I7/18) Child protection services agency inaction (I4/19, I4/22, I4/31, I4/34, I4/88, I4/103, I4/67, I4/93, I4/103, I8/217) Dissatisfaction with child protection services agency (I4/29, I4/32, I4/74, I4/60, I4/63, I4/67, I4/74, I4/83) Changing of social workers (I4/77, I8/56, I8/57, I9/114) Child protection services agency assistance (I8/54)
	Cooperation with accompanying organisation	On-site investigation by accompanying organisation (I1/85, I1/86, I2/90, I3/16, I5/65, I8/61) Good relationship with social worker (I2/89, I2/91, I4/138, I4/130, I4/138) Support from accompanying organisation (I2/93) Assisted contact (I4/134, I4/200) Assistance from accompanying organisation (I5/38, I5/67-69, I6/18)
	Assistance and support	Satisfaction (I5/32, I7/105, I7/112, I9/105, 9/110) Self-sufficiency (I2/170, I4/80, I4/152) Offer of help (I3/16, I3/17, I8/74) Use of help (I7/105, I7/109) Offer of advice and counselling (I6/18) No need for support (I1/85, I3/16, I7/108, I8/72)
Obligations of foster parents	Foster parent training	Preparation for education (I1/33, I1/34, I1/71) Training contribution (I1/67, I1/68, I1/70, I1/78, I1/92, I3/19, I1/78, I1/91, I2/180, I5/32, I5/45, I5/75) Participation in training (I8/78, 9/178) Inspiration from others (I1/78, I5/32, I5/45, I5/76)
	Administration	Obligation to inform the child of his/her biological origin (I1/35, I1/37-39) Obligation to inform parents (I2/24) Parental consent (I5/60) Administration (I5/53)
Risks and difficulties	Risks and difficulties associated with foster care	Risk of loss of confidence (I1/39) Intra-uterine development (I1/61) Uncertainty about the future (I1/102, I1/115, I2/37, I2/78, I2/172, I4/145, I5/48, I6/31, I7/166) Adverse genetic predisposition (I2/17, I2/76, I2/79, I2/110, I6/31, I7/122, I8/222) Apathy (I8/208) Impact of drug addiction on a child (I6/12, I6/33, I8/145, I8/207, I8/222, I9/22) Threat of child's placement in an educational counselling centre (I2/47) Difficult care (I3/9) Difficult cooperation with school (I8/254, I8/263) Behavioural problems (I2/42, I5/42, I7/56, I7/59, I7/121, I8/63, I8/80, I8/125, I8/154, I8/238, I8/302) Problems at school (I6/14, 9/181, 9/191) Educational counsellor (I8/246)
	Health and psychological problems	Psychological help to a child (I2/10, I6/11, I6/18, 9/181) Psychiatric help to a child (I2/20, I6/11) Health problems of a foster mother (I2/123, I7/140, I7/175, 9/75, 9/253, 9/295, 9/297) Health problems of a child (I5/28, I6/11, I8/6, I8/275)

Table S3. Recommendations to increase interest in foster and substitute family care

Foster parent support and training: The provision of professional support and training for foster parents by qualified trainers is essential to improve their preparation and ability to provide quality care. In addition, we propose the training of selected experienced foster parents to involve them in preparatory courses for new foster parents. We recommend that training sessions include topics related to trauma management and the impact on children, children's developmental needs, effective communication with children of different age groups and role-play communication, stress management and burnout prevention, conflict resolution and crisis intervention, including hands-on practice of de-escalation techniques. Regular training sessions should also be supplemented by workshops on various topics, e.g., "Creating a child's life story".
Involving foster parents in peer-to-peer support and community engagement: We recommend developing a programme in which experienced foster parents (mentors) are paired with new or less experienced foster parents (mentees) to provide a structured one-on-one support relationship outside of formal management to enable the sharing of experience, advice, and emotional support between foster parents. Community networking can also support foster parents in their strength and commitment to caring for their children through peer-to-peer support and through the sharing of similar life experiences, or it can serve as a platform for the exchange of practical advice and information.
Information and awareness-raising campaigns: It is important to inform the public about the challenges of closing children's homes for children up to 3 and the benefits of foster care. Awareness campaigns can emphasise the benefits of family care for very young children, promote strategies for reunification with the biological family, and help to raise the reputation of foster parents in society, for example by involving popular figures as ambassadors. In addition, we recommend supporting these campaigns with talks at schools, video clips, photo exhibitions, and public events to promote substitute family care, e.g., foster care days in individual regions. Campaigns can also be differentiated according to the groups of potential foster parents (singles, gay couples, etc.).
Establishment of a helpline: We recommend establishing a specialised telephone line to help foster parents navigate the foster care system in the Czech Republic and solve related practical problems. Trained, experienced foster parents could also be engaged in this activity.
Joint group activities for foster and biological families: We recommend organising leisure-time and cultural events for foster and biological families to further support relationship building and the sharing of experiences in an informal environment.