

Too many professionals guilty of applying traditional values to same-sex adoption

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Dr. Kate Wood. Credit: University of Huddersfield

Increasing numbers of gay men and lesbians in Britain are adopting children or becoming foster carers. Latest figures show that there are now more than 20,000 children living in same-sex couple families.

Enabled by legislation passed in 2002, this trend is contributing to the emergence of new conceptions of [family structure](#) and child-raising. But too many professionals involved in the adoption and fostering process are clinging on to traditional ideas of what constitutes a family, claims University of Huddersfield lecturer Dr Kate Wood.

Her research in the subject is leading her to call for a rethinking of family relationships. "They are arguably much more diverse and fluid in today's society," she says.

Dr Wood's latest article is titled 'Families beyond boundaries' - in the journal *Child and Family Social Work* - and is the result of a series of 24 interviews with gay and lesbian adopters and foster carers in England and Wales.

The article includes extracts from many of the interviewees, as participants explain what motivated them to adopt or foster children and describe their attitudes to [family](#) structures.

"Their kinship systems were often diverse and included friends, families of origin and support systems built around fostering or parenting," writes Dr Wood.

Gay and lesbian participants often approached adoption or fostering in unique ways. For example, adopters often stated that this route was their first choice when choosing to expand their families. A number also stated that they felt they were more open to their [children](#) retaining contact with birth parents.

Dr Wood found that while these interviews "sometimes challenged the perceived boundaries of 'traditional' kinship", some practitioners involved in the adoption and fostering process still used conventional "heteronuclear constructions" as a frame of reference.

She writes that her [article](#) aims to make a contribution to a re-examination of "the ways in which practitioners theorise familial relationships and kinship practices within [adoption](#) and fostering".

Dr Wood - who is the course leader for the University of Huddersfield's MSc in Social Work - began to research gay and lesbian adopters and foster carers for her doctoral thesis and she has continued to explore the topic in articles and conference presentations.

More information: Kate Wood, Families beyond boundaries: Conceptualising kinship in gay and lesbian adoption and fostering, *Child & Family Social Work* (2017). [DOI: 10.1111/cfs.12394](https://doi.org/10.1111/cfs.12394)

Provided by University of Huddersfield

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