



**ReFaB**

*Research on Foster care in Bulgaria*

*Изследване на приемната грижа  
в България*

# Foster care for children with disabilities in Bulgaria

Report on findings and recommendations from a  
research study on the experiences of foster parents



UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM



This report is based on a research study conducted between 2021-2022 on the experiences of foster parents who have fostered children with disabilities in Bulgaria.<sup>1</sup> The aim of this report is to communicate findings and recommendations from the study in order for them to be used in practice.

The report<sup>2</sup> was created as part of an ESRC-funded Impact Acceleration Account Postdoctoral Innovation Fellowship (Project Number: 1003413) titled, '*ReFaB: Research on Foster Care in Bulgaria*' which focused on communicating and co-producing research outputs based on findings and recommendations made in the original study.

With thanks to Dr Lila Kossyvaki (University of Birmingham), Dr Delia Pop (Tanya's Dream Foundation) and Galina Bisset (Equilibrium Foundation) for reviewing and offering comment on earlier drafts of this report.

Written by:

Sarah Todorov

School of Education,

University of Birmingham, UK

March 2023

---

<sup>1</sup> PhD Thesis: Todorov, S. (2023) '*We had to change ourselves*': An interpretative phenomenological study on the experiences of foster parents of children with disabilities in Bulgaria. Thesis Submitted in January 2023 to The University of Birmingham, UK. To receive the published Thesis, contact [sarah.todorov@outlook.com](mailto:sarah.todorov@outlook.com).

<sup>2</sup> To cite this report: Todorov, S. (2023) *Foster care for children with disabilities in Bulgaria: Report on findings and recommendations from a research study on the experiences of foster parents*. Birmingham: The University of Birmingham, UK.

# Report contents

<b>Report contents.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1. Executive Summary.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2. Research overview.....</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1 Study background and purpose .....	7
2.2 Methodology .....	8
<b>3. Key findings .....</b>	<b>9</b>
3.1 Summary of findings .....	9
3.2 Foster parents' expertise and commitment .....	9
3.2.1 Learning to provide special care .....	9
3.2.2 Recognising what kind of care children need .....	10
3.2.3 Providing children with the care they need in foster care .....	10
3.3 Navigating relationships and services.....	11
3.3.1 Supportive relationships needed by foster parents .....	11
3.3.2 Foster parents' feelings of powerlessness and voicelessness .....	11
3.3.3 Foster parents' perspectives on finance.....	11
3.3.4 Reintegration and biological families .....	12
3.3.5 Foster parents' relationships with social workers .....	12
3.4 The impact of fostering on foster parents.....	12
3.4.1 Life-changing effects of fostering .....	12
3.4.2 Separation from foster children .....	13

3.4.3 Stress vs. benefits of fostering.....	13
<b>4. Recommendations .....</b>	<b>14</b>
4.1 Recommendation 1: Increasing access to foster care for children with disabilities .....	14
4.2 Recommendation 2: Addressing perceptions of foster care .....	14
4.3 Recommendation 3: Development of services for training and support .....	14
<b>5. Conclusions.....</b>	<b>16</b>
5.1 How can more foster parents be encouraged to foster children with disabilities? .....	16
5.2 How can support and training for foster parents be improved?.....	16
5.2.1 Support and training for existing foster parents .....	16
5.2.2 Selecting and training foster parents to care for children with disabilities .....	17
5.3 What are the main areas of need for the development of foster care for children with disabilities in Bulgaria? .....	17
5.4 Relevance to the Bulgarian context .....	18
5.5 Relevance of the research across Eastern Europe .....	18
<b>6. About the ReFaB project and resources .....</b>	<b>20</b>
6.1 About the ReFaB project .....	20
6.2 Outputs from the 'ReFaB' project .....	20
6.3 Beyond the 'ReFaB' project: useful organisations and resources .....	22

# 1. Executive Summary

This report comprises a summary of a research study conducted on the issue of developing foster care for children with disabilities as a form of family-based alternative care in the context of de-institutionalisation of care in Bulgaria. There is limited existing evidence from Bulgaria and the wider geographical region on the practices of foster care for children with disabilities from the perspective of foster parents, whereas there is more evidence on social workers' and medical professionals' perspectives. This was therefore an exploratory research study which used qualitative and interpretative methods to better understand the current practices of foster care for children with disabilities in Bulgaria, from the perspective of foster parents, and to identify directions for future development of foster care as a form of family-based alternative care.

In this study, foster parents from one region of Bulgaria were interviewed about their experiences of fostering children with disabilities. During the interviews participants were asked about: 1) how they came to be a foster parent for a disabled child; 2) what their everyday life looked like; 3) what support they have received and what they desire to receive; 4) what challenges they have faced; 5) their interactions with medical services and the education system; and 6) their motivation to continue fostering, or in some cases, why they decided to give up fostering. Data was analysed through a method of analysis known as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and analysed first at individual-case level, and then findings were compared across cases (cross-case analysis).

As a result of the data analysis process, three thematical categories of findings were formed. The first thematical category, 'Expertise and commitment' identified the way foster parents had the shared experience of developing caring expertise through their role, and established a strong sense of commitment to foster children. The second thematical category, 'Navigating relationships and services', drew attention to foster parents' shared experiences relating to navigating the professional relationships involved in being a foster parent and accessing services related to children's care and education. The third thematical category, 'Personal impact', combined foster parents' experiences of a personal impact as a result of being a foster parent in general, and as a result of fostering children with disabilities in particular.

From these findings, three recommendations were made for changes to practices regarding foster care for children with disabilities in Bulgaria. The first recommendation is the need to increase access to foster care for children with disabilities as a matter of urgency, in order to prevent placement in residential care and to provide family-based care alternatives for children already in residential care. The second recommendation relates to changing perspectives and

attitudes towards foster care and foster parents. The third recommendation relates to the development of services for effective support of foster parents.

In light of these findings and recommendations, conclusions are made as to: 1) how more foster parents can be encouraged to foster children with disabilities; 2) how training and support for foster parents should be developed; 3) how foster parents should be selected to foster children with disabilities; and 4) relevance of this research to the wider de-institutionalisation initiatives in Bulgaria and the Eastern European region.

This report concludes with a list of accessible and available resources designed to communicate the messages of this research with a wide audience.

## 2. Research overview

### 2.1 Study background and purpose

Foster care is a form of family-based alternative care which has increased in prevalence in Bulgaria as a result of the policy on the de-institutionalisation of care for children.<sup>3</sup> In order to reduce the number of children in institutional care, foster care was developed through the project 'Accept Me' from 2015-2021.<sup>4</sup> Statistics published by the Agency for Social Assistance (the governmental department which manages foster care in Bulgaria) show that at the end of 2022 there were a total of 1,593 children in foster care in Bulgaria and a total of 1,892 registered foster parents (not all of whom were active).<sup>5</sup>

Children with disabilities are one of the groups of children most vulnerable to separation from parental care and subsequently institutionalisation in Bulgaria.<sup>6</sup> Yet, children with disabilities are frequently seen as being unsuitable for placement in foster care.<sup>7</sup> This study sought to address this issue by contributing to the development of a better understanding of the current practices relating to foster care for children with disabilities in Bulgaria. Through conducting research on the already existing practices of fostering children with disabilities, this study sought to find ways to contribute to the development of foster care and other family-based care practices to promote the placement of children with disabilities in families, not institutions.

---

3 Council of Ministers (2010) 'National Strategy "Vision for Deinstitutionalisation of Children in the Republic of Bulgaria"', The Republic of Bulgaria Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. Available at:

<https://www.mlsp.government.bg/eng/deinstitutionalisation-of-child-care> (Accessed: 29th December 2022)

4 National Network for Children (NNC) (2021) 'Bulgarite stavat priemni roditeli samo sreshtu zaplashtane (Bulgarians become foster parents only for a fee)', National Network for Children, 15th February 2021. Available at: [https://nmd.bg/balgarite-stavat-priemni-roditeli-samo-sreshtuzaplashtane/?utm\\_source=newsletter\\_202107bg&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=NewsletterBG](https://nmd.bg/balgarite-stavat-priemni-roditeli-samo-sreshtuzaplashtane/?utm_source=newsletter_202107bg&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=NewsletterBG) (Accessed: 30th December 2022).

5 Agency for Social Assistance (2022) 'Основни направления по закрила на детето - Приемна грижа (Main Areas of Child Protection: Foster Care)'. Available at: <https://asp.government.bg/bg/deynosti/zakrila-na-deteto/osnovni-napravleniya-priemna-grizha/?highlight=%d0%bf%d1%80%d0%b8%d0%b5%d0%bc%d0%bd%d0%b0%20%d0%b3%d1%80%d0%b8%d0%b6%d0%b0>

6 Kriviradeva, B. (2014) 'Development of alternative forms for care and upbringing of children without parents in Republic of Bulgaria', Social Education - The Czech journal for socioeducational theory and research, 2 (1), pp. 100-108.

7 Bilson, A. and Markova, G. (2007) 'But you should see their families: Preventing child abandonment and promoting social inclusion in countries in transition', Social Work and Social Sciences Review, 12 (3), pp. 57-78.

## 2.2 Methodology

This was a qualitative research study which sought to better understand the experiences of individuals with 'lived experience' of fostering children with disabilities in Bulgaria. This research aimed to:

- 1) Find ways to encourage more foster parents to foster children with disabilities.
- 2) Improve support and training for foster parents who care for children with disabilities.
- 3) Identify areas of need for the development of foster care services for children with disabilities in Bulgaria

The study had two main research questions:

1. How do foster parents experience caring for children with disabilities in Bulgaria?
2. How do foster parents' experiences inform suggestions for changes to services and practices in foster care for children with disabilities in Bulgaria?

Between June and December 2021, in-depth semi-structured interviews with six foster parents from one region of Bulgaria (this region is deliberately anonymous to protect participants' identities) were conducted. Participants all had experience of fostering at least one child with disabilities. Participants were asked about: 1) their everyday life as a foster parent for a child with disabilities; 2) support and training they have received; 3) their motivation for fostering children with disabilities; and 4) their experience of services related to the role. The collected data was analysed using the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis approach<sup>8</sup> and resulted in the development of three thematical categories, comprising a total of 11 sub-themes. Ethical approval for this research study was granted by the University of Birmingham Ethics Committee (ERN\_20-0837).

---

<sup>8</sup> Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2022) *Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research*. 2nd edn. SAGE.

## 3. Key findings

### 3.1 Summary of findings

Findings from this study are organised into three main thematic categories which enable a better understanding of the lives and experiences of foster parents who care for children with disabilities.

- The thematic category **'Expertise and commitment'** focuses on the way foster parents have the shared experience of developing caring expertise through their role, and how they develop a strong sense of commitment to foster children.
- The thematic category **'Navigating relationships and services'** draws attention to foster parents' shared experiences relating to navigating the professional relationships involved in being a foster parent and accessing services related to children's care and education.
- Thirdly, the thematic category **'Personal impact'** sheds light on foster parents' experiences of the personal impact which is the result of being a foster parent in general, and as a result of fostering children with disabilities in particular.

### 3.2 Foster parents' expertise and commitment

Findings clarify the valuable role of foster parents in children's upbringing, the special care they provide for children with disabilities and the responsibility this role entails.

#### 3.2.1 Learning to provide special care

- Participants explained **the ways in which they gained the ability to provide a special type of care** for foster children.
- None of the participants had received **formally organised or follow-up training** during their time as foster parents.
- One participant said they had "no memory of anyone teaching us anything."
- **Participants used past experiences to face new challenges** relating to the care of their foster children.

- Development of specialist skills in caring for children with disabilities was achieved through **informal interactions with and observation** of specialists.

### 3.2.2 Recognising what kind of care children need

- Participants recognised that **children with disabilities need a special type of care**, but also that this care can be provided in a foster family.
- Participants **changed their point of view** on what they perceived as ‘normal’ and learnt to accept children’s differences.
- One participant described how *“every child grows differently, takes things differently, sees things...”* and expressed their opinion that it is not necessary to make all children meet developmental milestone criteria, but to allow them to **progress in their own time**.
- Participants recognised the **need of all children to have a consistent parental figure**.
- Care in **residential care centres was seen as unsatisfactory and inadequate** for children with disabilities. Care in a foster family was seen as **more suitable and satisfactory for meeting children’s needs**.

### 3.2.3 Providing children with the care they need in foster care

- Providing special care involved **consulting with specialists** and developing routines and regimens to support children.
- Some participants explained that it was **not always easy to get the support needed** from specialists for their foster child. One participant described advocating for the child’s needs as having to **“fight windmills”**.
- Participants felt that decisions made about children were not always in the child’s best interests and therefore they felt that **part of their role was to advocate for the child’s best interests** to be met.
- Participants felt **highly responsible for the medical needs of children** and **wanted more training** on how to care for children with specific conditions.

### 3.3 Navigating relationships and services

Findings highlighted foster parents' experiences of the important relationships and key services involved in fostering children with disabilities.

#### 3.3.1 Supportive relationships needed by foster parents

- Findings show that foster parents rely on **practical and emotional support** from family, friends, colleagues and charities/NGOs. These personal support networks are important for foster parents to continue caring and **prevent burnout**.
- Participants were **disappointed by the support professionals gave them**, and sometimes had to ask unqualified individuals for advice.
- Participants highlighted the need for provision **of formal support services to help them to continue fostering**.

#### 3.3.2 Foster parents' feelings of powerlessness and voicelessness

- Findings show that foster parents feel powerless **regarding their job security, employment rights and transitions**.
- Foster parents often **feel unheard**, despite knowing foster children intimately and having suggestions to make about children's care and future.

#### 3.3.3 Foster parents' perspectives on finance

- Participants were **aware of others' negative perceptions** about foster parents being financially-motivated ('money grabbers') and actively resisted this.
- Some participants admitted that they **fostered primarily as a form of employment**, explaining that everyone has to work.
- Across all participants, **altruistic motivation** was prevalent.

### 3.3.4 Reintegration and biological families

- **Not all participants were clear about their role in the reintegration** of children with biological parents and some had experienced distressing situations during this process.
- There was a **general preference for adoption** for children with disabilities instead of reintegration.

### 3.3.5 Foster parents' relationships with social workers

- Participants reported **relationship fragmentation** with social workers, and a sense of social workers being invested less in relationships and more in administrative tasks.

## 3.4 The impact of fostering on foster parents

Findings show that the personal impact on foster parents is not only confined to negative experiences, but foster parents also experienced positive effects on their personal life as a result of fostering children with disabilities.

### 3.4.1 Life-changing effects of fostering

- Fostering brought an **unexpected richness** to foster parents' lives and participants felt that children brought a sense of joy back to the home.
- Participants were able to **re-purpose and enhance parenting skills** developed when learning to care for their biological children, which brought a sense of fulfilment and usefulness to their lives.
- Fostering children with disabilities was considered by some to be a **privilege and was an opportunity** to contribute to the lives of children who really needed their care, making them feel useful again.
- Fostering caused foster parents to change their **mindsets on disability** and caused them to discover new interests and occupations. Some experienced **spiritual and mental** growth through fostering.

### 3.4.2 Separation from foster children

- The **greatest challenge** for foster parents **was separating** from children at the end of the foster placement.
- **Receiving new children can feel overwhelming** especially for children with complex needs. Guidance and support from professionals alleviates the feeling of being overwhelmed.
- Not knowing how children are or hearing from them was a **source of stress** for participants, not only for the individual foster parent but for their wider family who had been involved in caring for the child.

### 3.4.3 Stress vs. benefits of fostering

- Findings show that participants are **aware of the stress** that fostering can bring to a person's life.
- Despite knowing this, participants felt **the benefits of caring for children who were in need of family care outweighed** the implications on their own lives.

## 4. Recommendations

The experiences of foster parents who took part in this study informed the following suggestions for changes to services and practices in foster care for children with disabilities in Bulgaria. Based on the above results the following recommendations can be made.

### 4.1 Recommendation 1: Increasing access to foster care for children with disabilities

**Access to foster care for children with disabilities is increased**, beginning with developing **professional understanding of the importance** of family-based care for all children, including children with disabilities.

### 4.2 Recommendation 2: Addressing perceptions of foster care

In order to expand and develop foster care, **recognition of the important and often sacrificial work of foster parents** is needed in both public and professional spheres. By shifting the narrative on foster care and foster parent motivation, **more foster parents will be attracted to fostering** children with disabilities and current foster parents will feel more comfortable to continue their role.

### 4.3 Recommendation 3: Development of services for training and support

From the perspective of foster parents in this study, **the strength of support they receive directly impacts the care they are able to give**. In order for foster parents to feel prepared to take on children with disabilities, they need **specialised, ongoing training to better equip them to meet children's medical and therapeutic needs**. Foster parents should be **up-skilled** as part of their role. This will mean that more foster parents are available and prepared to take on children with a range of needs.

In addition to this, foster parents need **positive, co-operative relationships with social workers and other professionals**. By improving relationships between those involved in foster care

provision, the quality of foster care will be improved in Bulgaria. Part of improving the relationships between these parties **involves creating meaningful opportunities for foster parents' voices to be heard**. These opportunities should not be tokenistic, but forums for **appropriate contributions** which utilise the everyday expertise, experience and intimate knowledge foster parents have about their foster children should be developed.

## 5. Conclusions

Conclusions from this research are made about 1) ways to encourage more foster parents to foster children with disabilities; 2) the support and training foster parents need; 3) the main areas for the development of foster care for children with disabilities in Bulgaria; and 4) the relevance of this research in and beyond Bulgaria.

### 5.1 How can more foster parents be encouraged to foster children with disabilities?

- The **positive side of fostering** should be more widely understood across Bulgaria.
- Fostering can be positively life-changing: it gives individuals the opportunity to make **valuable contributions to children's lives** and help those in greatest need.
- By accepting children with disabilities, individuals' perspectives on disability are changed. Long-term, this will have a **positive impact on reducing the persistent stigma of disability** in Bulgaria.

### 5.2 How can support and training for foster parents be improved?

This study identified what support and training is needed for existing foster parents who already have experience of fostering children with disabilities, and makes recommendations for the selection, training and support of potential foster parents for children with disabilities.

#### 5.2.1 Support and training for existing foster parents

- Gaps in support include **guidance when making medical decisions** and **help with travel and logistics** regarding children's operations and appointments.
- Foster parents call for opportunities for **flexible respite care** to allow them to complete day-to-day activities when caring for children with disabilities.

- Participants demonstrated a need for **psychological support** from someone other than their social worker.
- Foster parents need training on how to **communicate** with and **facilitate relationships** with children's **biological parents**.

### 5.2.2 Selecting and training foster parents to care for children with disabilities

- In order to care for children with disabilities, foster parents need to be **prepared to learn from specialists** and **adjust their approach** to parenting based on professional advice.
- Foster parents need **specialist and ongoing training** on understanding **childhood trauma** and should be provided with practical guidance on caring for children who have experienced trauma.
- Foster parents should consider children's **previous upbringing and their need for life-experiences**. Disability should not be seen as a limiting factor to broadening children's experiences, but foster parents should consider ways they can **overcome difficulties** to give children **positive, full childhoods**.
- An understanding of the need for **individualised, holistic care** is needed and willingness to develop individual approaches to caring for children with disabilities.
- Emphasis should be put on **effective communication** between foster parents and social workers.
- Foster parents should be **open** to receiving **continuous training** throughout their period of fostering in order to be up-skilled.

### 5.3 What are the main areas of need for the development of foster care for children with disabilities in Bulgaria?

- Foster placements in **rural areas** can be **successful** for children with disabilities but foster parents expressed a need for **help with transportation** when living outside of the city.
- **Clearer definition of the role** and responsibilities of both **foster parents and social workers** in the provision of foster care as a service should be communicated and expectations should be clarified.

## 5.4 Relevance to the Bulgarian context

This research focused on foster care in Bulgaria, and offers an in-depth insight into the experiences of a small group of foster parents from one region of the country. The fact that not all foster parents' experiences are shared is not ignored here, but instead this research provides **a springboard for further important work on theorising and developing knowledge on foster care in Bulgaria**. For example, further study is needed on **the context-specific needs** of foster parents of children with specific disabilities and on the **educational experiences** of children in foster care.

At the same time, the findings from this research are not only confined to developing a better understanding of ways to develop foster care. The findings are also relevant to the support needs of **biological parents of children with disabilities**. Findings from this study can be used in order to **prevent separation** of children from their biological families through better understanding 1) **how to support** biological parents; 2) **how parents develop skills and expertise**, and **what guidance they need** and 3) **types of services** biological parents need in their long-term caring role, such as respite care.

## 5.5 Relevance of the research across Eastern Europe

While this study was primarily focused on the issue of foster care for children with disabilities in Bulgaria, the findings of the study are not confined to the Bulgarian context. The relevance of developing foster care services in other countries in the same geographical region are prevalent. Important takeaways from the research that are relevant to other contexts include:

- 1) The **importance of supportive relationships** for foster parents in order to facilitate high-quality foster care.
- 2) The **influence of public perceptions** of foster care in how foster parents feel about their role.
- 3) The **need for ongoing training** in order to up-skill foster parents and make more foster care placements available for children with disabilities, as and when these placements are needed.
- 4) The **valuable contributions** foster parents make to **de-institutionalisation**.
- 5) The way foster parents can be seen to have **skills, expertise and intimate knowledge** about foster children. They are 'experts in everyday life' whose work **crosses the continuum of care and work**. This can mean that the quality of foster parents' work is not always well recognised.

- 6) Foster parents are well-placed to **offer insight into the best next care** for children they have previously fostered due to the intimate knowledge they have.

These areas are important considerations for countries to make when working to de-institutionalise care and develop alternative family-based care models such as foster care.

## 6. About the ReFaB project and resources

### 6.1 About the ReFaB project

The ReFaB (Research on Foster care in Bulgaria) project is a research impact project funded by an ESRC Impact Acceleration Account Postdoctoral Innovation Fellowship. The ReFaB project aims to provide evidence-based (developed through rigorous academic research) resources for experts, policy-makers, social workers and foster parents to contribute to the development of foster care for children with disabilities. Outputs from this project in addition to this report include: 1) easy-to-read infographics; 2) an accessible findings video; 3) a podcast episode on the topic of care for children with disabilities in Bulgaria; 4) a recorded webinar; and 5) an animation about the role of foster families in caring for children separated from parental care.

These resources have been co-created with a range of specialists involved with foster care at research, practice and policy-level. A list of links of organisations and outputs is included below.

### 6.2 Outputs from the 'ReFaB' project

- **University of Birmingham Project Webpage:** Further information about the researcher and research is available via the University of Birmingham's website: <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/education/departments/disability-inclusion-special-needs/resources/bulgarian-foster-carers-of-children-with-disabilities.aspx>
- **Animation:** 'The family puzzle'. This short video was inspired by this research and in particular, aimed to contribute to the actualisation of Recommendation 2, outlined in this report in section 4.2. The video is a professionally-created animation which aims to communicate the purpose and aims of foster care, and the important role of foster parents in Bulgaria. Watch the video here: <https://youtu.be/jmiryfoXNT0>
- **Findings video:** This video contains a summary of the findings and recommendations of this research. This video aims to be an accessible and easy-to-watch introduction to the study and is available in Bulgarian and English. Watch the video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=szG3dHNFicA>

- **Research blog:** As part of the ReFaB project, a research blog was created which contains a variety of resources related to the research. Read the blog here:

<https://medium.com/@todorovsarah>

- **Infographics:** These visual depictions of the research were created to be a quick-look at the findings and recommendations of the research. These infographics are easily shareable and available in Bulgarian and English.

View infographics in English here: <https://medium.com/@todorovsarah/refab-project-infographics-english-c2329445c025>

View infographics in Bulgarian here: <https://medium.com/@todorovsarah/refab-project-инфографики-български-език-f3f4361c42>

- **Webinar recording:** A webinar hosted by the Know-How Center on the 16<sup>th</sup> February 2023 focused on the topic of foster care for children with disabilities. The webinar was recorded and may be re-watched here via YouTube.

Watch in English: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VmuHlapgyRg>

Watch in Bulgarian: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=18ZxPHIBl4I&t=2073s>

- **'ReFaB Conversations' Podcast:** The ReFaB Conversations podcast focuses on current issues on the topic of foster care in Bulgaria, including foster care for children with disabilities. This podcast aims to communicate important issues regarding the development of foster care in Bulgaria to a wide audience. Guests include: Galina Bisset (The Equilibrium Foundation Bulgaria), Bisser Spirov (LUMOS Foundation Bulgaria) and Evgeniya Toneva (The Know-How Center).

The podcast was recorded in English and may be watched here

[https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLhraSQn47hJiYlYE81IS\\_4J\\_NZdMtiK-](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLhraSQn47hJiYlYE81IS_4J_NZdMtiK-) with Bulgarian subtitles.

The podcast can be listened to here (English only): <https://soundcloud.com/sarah-todorov/sets/refab-conversations-podcast>

### 6.3 Beyond the 'ReFaB' project: useful organisations and resources

- The **Know-How Center for Alternative Care for Children**, a research centre based at the New Bulgarian University, has a website and regular bulletin which includes information about webinars and events, research reports, opportunities for participation in their projects and news items relating to the alternative care of children in Bulgaria. Visit their website and sign up for their bulletin here: <https://knowhowcentre.nbu.bg/>
- The **National Network for Children** is an alliance of organisations working to promote, protect and observe the rights of children in Bulgaria. They regularly report useful information on the topics of children and childhood in Bulgaria and communicate important events and information for those involved in this sphere. Visit their website: <https://nmd.bg/>
- The **National Foster Care Association of Bulgaria** is an association of foster parents in Bulgaria. For more information about their work, visit: [www.napg.eu](http://www.napg.eu)
- **Hope and Homes for Children** is an organisation working to stop the institutionalisation of children. They regularly publish reports, blogs and statistics about the state of alternative care in a number of European countries. Hope and Homes has a local team focused on Bulgarian specifically. More information about Hope and Homes for Children in Bulgaria can be found here: <https://hopeandhomesbg.com/>
- **The Equilibrium Foundation** is a Bulgarian non-profit organisation which works actively in the field of alternative care in Bulgaria and in particular focuses on the promotion of family-based care for children with disabilities. Learn more on their website: <https://eq-bg.org/en/>

This report is property of the University of Birmingham. For reproduction of parts of this report you will need to use the following citation:

Todorov, S. (2023) *Foster care for children with disabilities in Bulgaria: Report on findings and recommendations from a research study on the experiences of foster parents*. Birmingham: The University of Birmingham, UK.