

If you fall, I fall with you

Preventing the criminalisation of looked
after children in Residential Care

Core Principles

Children in our homes have suffered a form of trauma

All our practices start with understanding these traumas, where we develop care which is founded on the principles of “**in their best interests**”

This principle underpins all our residential and joint working care practices

Together Childrens Residential and the Child & Youth Justice Service is committed to seeing children as Children which experiences and not the behaviours which may be present at any one time.

Knowing our Children



Behaviours

Emotions

Feelings

Experiences

To know our children
they must trust us to
help us understand
everything we can't see

Listening to our Children

- Behaviour is a type of communication that lets us know something isn't wrong.
- We listen to this communication and we respond with an approach that is “in their best interests”
- We know each child will have had experiences that cause feelings and emotions, which is behind every behaviour.
- We ensure we provide opportunities for every child to speak and be heard

Principles in Practice – Extracts from reflective conversations with child and staff during debriefs.

Child

“I thought he was calling me a liar”. So I hit him, “I got so angry”, “I lost it”. “I hit him hard”, “I think I bust his lip”.

Manager

“She hit me hard, I was talking to her about another child and a recent conflict they’d been in and before I knew it, she’d punched me, I was stunned and a bit shaken with a bleeding lip. I just didn’t understand it. It came from nowhere.

Child

After I hit the home manager I thought that's it. I’m going to get moved, I’ve hit the manager and now he is going to kick me out. He’s going to ring the police and I’m going to get moved. I’ve ruined everything.

Manager

I thought should I phone the police, I can’t believe she’s punched me and a solid punch at that.

Child

When the manager came back over to speak to me I thought that's it, he's going to move me, so I told him first "I want to leave", I demanded to "speak to my social worker so I could tell her to get me out of here".

Manager

I knew something wasn't right here and I was missing a big piece of the picture, I went over to talk to her but before I could say anything she was demanding to move. This came as a shock as I thought she liked living here. We certainly like her living here she has become a member of our bizarre residential family. I told her this and that we love having her living here.

Before I said another word she wrapped her arms around me and began to cry, she was sobbing heavily. I just sat with her

Child

I told the manager how sorry I was I didn't want to hurt him. I was so sorry and I really do like living here. When he said I wasn't going anywhere I gave him the biggest hug but as he is a bit fat I could get my arms round him.

Manager

We talked for about an hour, my child explained that when I was talking to her about the other child she had an incident with she thought I was taking sides. She explained to me that her mum always took sides with her sister and she was always blamed. She thought I was doing the same thing. This caused feelings to resurface. I know she suffered trauma whilst living with her mum and I will never fully know what she went through. I do know that I'm pleased I didn't call the police. It would not have been in her best interests. Our relationship is so much better after this. I think she is starting to trust me more. I will use this trust to help her manage her impulses and I will show a better way. My job is to help her understand lashing out isn't right but she will never know this until someone shows her the right way.

Experience – Emotion – Feeling – Behaviour

It was not in the child's best interests to involve the police or seek criminal charges. By showing compassion and not responding to the behaviour but understanding and seeking the cause of the feelings that drive behaviour, the child has a better chance of understanding and changing her responses to those feelings.

It's time to judge the winner of our Halloween cake decorating competition finalists

