

# RESIDENTIAL FORUM

A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE - REGISTERED IN ENGLAND - REGISTRATION NO. 4802524  
CHARITY REGISTRATION NUMBER - 11060304

## Residential Care of Children

## **RESIDENTIAL FORUM SEMINAR**

### **MODERNISING RESIDENTIAL CARE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

**PAISLEY 20-21 JUNE 2005**

#### **1 - THE QUESTIONS**

What is the vision for children's residential care in the United Kingdom in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

What are the key elements of a framework to embody and deliver the vision?

What sort of action plan will promote implementation of the vision and framework at national and local levels?

#### **WHAT WE KNOW**

About 9000 looked after children are in residential placements on any one day.

60% of the placements are in the private sector, voluntary sector provision is next in size and the local authority sector is the smallest.

Up to 40% of young people positively choose residential care in preference to other forms of placement.

25% of children and young people in residential care are placed outside the boundaries of their home authority.

The proportions of looked after children in residential care vary in the different countries – 1 in 6 in Scotland, 1 in 8 in England, 1 in 14 in Wales.

Taking children in all 19 types of residential setting, the numbers are very much larger – 145,000, of whom 75,000 are in boarding schools. The next largest groups are in Further Education establishments and special schools.

## **THE VISION**

The service should be child-centred, geared to putting children's interests first *and helping them to overcome the difficulties that led to their placement.*

Residential child care should promote and extend children's human and civil rights, *and help them grow, develop and realise their potential*

Children should be enabled and encouraged to participate in the range of decisions affecting them, including the way their unit is run and priorities for the use of resources. Residential care should be a service children and young people receive as a positive choice, *providing a valued, stable, nurturing and therapeutic form of care*

Instead of concentrating solely on the position of looked after children, the focus should be on the policy and practice implications of the scale and diversity of the whole residential sector

Residential care should be seen as an integral part of a whole spectrum of services for children and families, *offering specialised and expert provision, and closely linked*

to fostering, adoption, family support and services for children in need and children at risk.

Best practice should seek to ensure that abuse of all kinds is prevented.

High quality staff are enabled to develop skills and promote innovation.

## **HOW TO MODERNISE CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL SERVICES**

Quality residential care needs to be adequately resourced, both financially, in terms of staffing levels, and in provision of expert support *from* other services particularly child and adult mental health services

Regulation of residential care and its workforce should be rigorous but flexible, to encourage innovation and creativity, and to enable the service to be wrapped around the child, not making the child's needs subordinate to the service.

Investment should be made in research and development programmes to build the knowledge base for good practice in residential child care.

Investment is required in the development of a skilled, knowledgeable, sensitive and creative workforce able to express and encourage high aspirations for all children in terms of their potential.

There is a pressing need to develop a cadre of leaders in residential child care, able to communicate the vision to

their staff, young people, councillors and trustees, and the public.

## **WE CAN MODERNISE THROUGH:**

- taking steps to improve the image and standing of children's residential care, to remove the stigma attaching to the children and young people living there, and improve the ability to recruit and retain able staff
- reviewing the rewards structure in the sector and the terms and conditions of the workforce to ensure they are fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and adequately reflect levels of responsibility and skills required for this work
- involving children and young people appropriately in all decisions affecting them, both individually and collectively
- investing in leadership, management and staff development programmes to develop a new outward-looking culture of positive achievement in residential child care.
- ensuring residential services are fully integrated and valued in the spectrum of services for children, young people and families  
requiring all authorities to make provision for the residential care needs of their children and young people within the authority's area *or* close to it, working in partnership with private and voluntary sector providers

Established in 1994, the Residential Forum seeks to promote high standards in residential care and to contribute to improving the quality of services and practice. The Forum encompasses all parts of the residential sector - statutory, voluntary, not for profit and private.

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