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Chairs' Welcome

**2 Years before the Mast.....
(or my thoughts as re-tiring
Co-Chair)**

After two years of serving as co-chair of ICHA I thought it appropriate to put a few thoughts down.

The past two years have certainly been the most challenging for the sector as a whole and for each of us striving to survive and develop services at the same time.

Whilst at times I have thought "Oh no – give me a break – not another email about ICHA! I have thoroughly enjoyed my time and been proud to represent the majority of members as being people genuinely committed to providing the highest standard of residential care to all the young people living with us.

In the first year I shared the responsibility with Vivien Snape and Alison Trainor and together we managed to move things on apace.

Alison and I (somewhat reluctantly) picked up the baton again last year and ICHA has managed to continue making huge progress developing its impact nationally. This of course has been done with the ongoing support of other committee members. My thanks to them all. Old stalwarts like Mike Laborde are the backbone of the organisation.

I believe our consistent messages about the long term challenges to all providers in our sector –

independent, 3rd and statutory - caused by short term thinking and inappropriate placing of young people by Authorities is eventually being heard.

It is also heartening to see this message supported by the recent nef report- well worth reading – which we now hope will be looked at seriously by Government.

Alison in particular has done a fantastic job at representing us at many forums, including the National Contract Group, Ofsted and presenting our views on the new Children's Bill. She has been a credit to the organisation and a great support to me. Thanks Al !

I believe the development this year of WICHA and the move towards more regional events will enable more members to attend sessions and benefit from mutual contact and support.

Many more of you are using the revamped Website which Mike has steadfastly developed while ironing out the inevitable hiccups . His dogged determination will ensure a site that is of real value to you as members and which you can use to suit your own needs. Thanks Mike for all the midnight oil you have burnt on this project !

The arrival of Roy as part-time office in October last year and Gail as back up have enabled us to build on the achievements of previous years and raised our profile

considerably. The weekly bulletin is very useful in a busy schedule. Our thanks to them.

But..... we have to move on and make way for others.

Challenges like:

1. Children's Bill and its emphasis on Fostering.
2. Placement Stability.
3. Continued failure of National Contracts.
4. Commissioning not 'joined up'.
5. Oversupply of beds.
6. Annual Uplift (or should that be Downlift !)

..... continue to make life interesting and challenging for members.

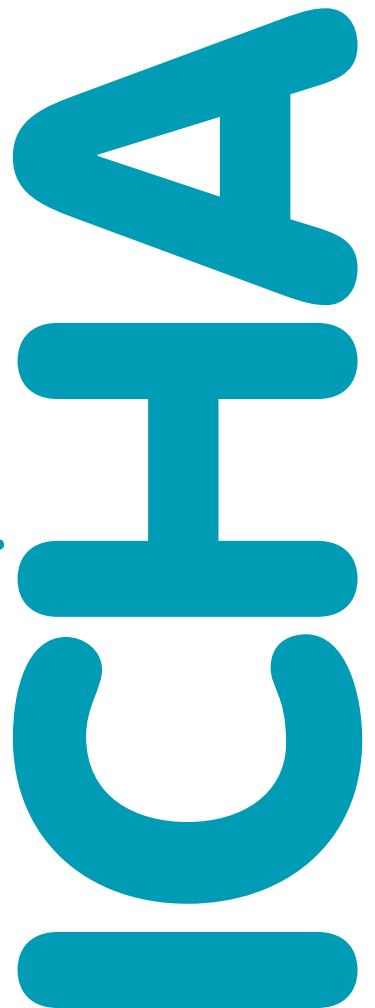
So I now throw the gauntlet down to you.....

The benefit to yourselves may not be immediate, but our joint efforts do make a difference and will help maintain a struggling sector.

ICHA is at its most influential and effective. It will continue to be this if you take an active part. An effective ICHA will, in the long run, be good for your business. An ineffective one will lead to continued pressure on providers and a weakened sector with

1. Less of us in business.
2. Less choice for commissioners.
3. Lower quality provision for young people.

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Diary dates

2008

1st December - WICHA Meeting
1pm – Children in Wales, Cardiff

2009

20th January – ICHA AGM & General Meeting – Bedworth

10th February – Committee Meeting – Thoughts of Others, Birmingham

March – Midlands Regional Meeting – details to be confirmed

April – Southern Regional Meeting – details to be confirmed

May – Northern Regional Meeting – details to be confirmed

9th June – ICHA General Meeting 10am – Bedworth

Autumn 2009 – ICHA Conference – details to be confirmed

Political Report

Our political work has been enhanced by the surprise publication of a groundbreaking report from an unexpected source.

The new economics foundation (nef), an environmental think-tank, recently released a report entitled A False Economy, which “reveals how market approaches in residential care are in effect ‘trading’ the futures of our most vulnerable children, by prioritising short-term cost savings.”

The group’s research “suggests that the Government and some local authorities are claiming to endorse a ‘Child-Centred’ approach while making cuts that betray a lack of understanding of what young people in care really need and value.” Like us, they are worried that “this lack of understanding will inevitably lead to long-term social and economic costs.”

They understand the dynamics of the looked after sector arguing that “Behind the dramatic headlines about failing care homes and delinquent young people, good providers of residential care services face being pushed out in the drive to cut costs.”

The report employs a ‘Social Return on Investment’ analysis of the work of the independent Bryn Melyn Care Ltd, and voluntary Shaftsbury Young People.

The nef analysis says that “between £4 and £6.10 worth of additional social value is generated for every additional pound invested in higher-quality residential care.”

Nef further argues that “almost £700 million could be saved over a 20-year period on other social costs by investment in the right kind of residential care - enough to pay for the country’s entire annual care bill for children in care.”

They say that providers of quality care could almost double what they charge each week and it would still represent a positive long-term return in benefits and costs savings by preventing negative knock-on social and economic costs.

They refer to the public spending squeeze which may be worsened by the subsequent credit crunch: “Balancing public spending between more visible, vote-winning public services, such as roads and refuse collection, and residential care are choices that go to the heart of what we value as a society; the efficiency savings targets being imposed on Local Authorities are increasingly forcing them to focus on narrow, short-term financial gains rather than long-term gain. And, the consequences of cost-saving decisions made now, will be borne by vulnerable groups and future generations.”

A False Economy presents a number of recommendations that could provide a new public benefit model for investment in care, one that recognises the outcomes delivered, rather than ‘outputs’ or efficiencies, as the key to improving services.

It rightly says that the sector should involve young people as co-producers rather than mere consumers of public services.

It also says that commissioning of residential care services should be designed to value positive long-term outcomes as opposed to short-term cost savings.

It urges the government to rethink the savings targets imposed on local authorities and establish a system where providers cost their services and local authorities purchase the most suitable services. This approach is used in several European countries, where residential children’s homes are run by the independent sector.

It also asks the government to remove performance indicators that create perverse incentives in decision making that favour bigger, cheaper services and replace them with outcomes measures that recognise the value of specialised providers in delivering essential services – “the current pre-occupation with risk must be re-balanced alongside other considerations so that it no longer crowds-out quality and long-term outcomes.”

The report accords with much of what we have long been saying. We have long argued that residential care is too often considered too late and the report powerfully echoes our view when it says that “The use of residential care as a last resort needs to be reconsidered. Better use of residential care as a positive option can improve outcomes for many young people.

Its author Ellis Lawlor adds that “There are real world benefits of investing in good residential care where this is needed: a safe and secure future for young people, better chances of getting a job and contributing to society. These things don’t show up on the balance sheet today- local authorities currently have no framework for seeing the real costs, or the real benefits. This report shows how to put what matters back at the heart of the way services are commissioned and delivered, and reap the benefits in the long run.”

The full report is at <http://www.neweconomics.org/gen/efficiencydrivetradingchildrensfutures090908.aspx>

The report provides an excellent backdrop for our continuing campaign to alert people to the dangers of multiple placements. Through our parliamentary contacts we uncovered figures showing that in 2007 a child in care had lived in an average of 10 or more different placements in 108 out of 150 council areas.

This is in contrast to the pledge in Every Child Matters that “Stability can make a positive difference to their lives, giving them the opportunity to form strong attachments with carers and friends, maximising their resilience, and improving their chances of achieving positive outcomes”.

Reducing these and thereby increasing the stability of looked after children is a key priority.

Co-Chair Alison Trainor spoke about this with passion at a packed workshop at the recent Community Care conference. She made the point that some had become complacent about multiple placements asking the audience if they had moved more than three times themselves. She added “Zero moves would be good.”

One immediate issue of practice that impacts on ICHA members concerns the needless bureaucracy and exorbitant delays in the issuing of Enhanced CRB Disclosures. We have written to the new minister to tell her that whilst we entirely accept that those in charge of vulnerable children require vetting, it is not in the public interest that child care workers need to obtain separate vetting for every new job.

We said: “If a care worker at organisation A wishes to join organisation B to do the same job and under the same conditions, they have to apply for a new vetting. It’s difficult to avoid the conclusion that this needless bureaucracy only fills the coffers of the company that is responsible for the vetting. Significantly, cheques for the fee are cashed at the beginning which hardly gives the company any great incentive to expedite the vetting.”

We have asked for clarification of the rules and for disclosures to be “ported”. We make the point that such delays add to instability: “Almost one third of care workers leave their jobs each year. Most will have to give one month’s notice. The time taken to secure vetting undermines the smooth working of the jobs market and the stability which all agree is a cornerstone of the best care for looked after children.

We have had a very useful discussion on these issues with Lord Listowel, a crossbencher in the Lords with a deep interest in looked after children policy. We are seeking a meeting with the new minister for looked after children, Baroness (Delyth) Morgan. We will be seeking a meeting with the new economics foundation. We are also hoping to organise regular briefings for parliamentarians on key issues of policy and practice for the looked after children sector and our members.

Gary Kent our political lobbyist – brief profile

Gary Kent has worked in Parliament for two decades and is also active in providing solidarity to Iraqi civil society organisations and seeking to increase integrated education between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland.



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I look forward to being an active part of ICHA in the future.

The professional and personal support I have derived have been invaluable and make it easier to bear when pressed between the needs of the young people, the local authority and the bank!

Good luck to you all in 2009 and thank you for your continued support.

Stay involved!

Danny Curran
Co-Chair

In summary, 2008 has been a busy, productive year for ICHA with a series of achievements throughout the year, including:

- Meetings with Lords (including one with Minister, Andrew Adonis) on Children and Young People’s Bill
- Lobbying on C&YP Bill in relation to RCC
- DCSF representative visits to a range of different sized Children’s homes in North and South to promote RCC
- National ICHA Conference in Regents Park in Feb 2008 with HMCI Christine Gilbert & other speakers
- New look and re-vamp of the website
- NCERCC Board member representation
- Ofsted National Consultative Forum (NCF)

- representative for RCC nationally
- CWDC key contributor (including signing off the RMA standards in April 2008)
- Provider representation in development of CCRA matching engine (database went live August 08)
- Ofsted guest speaker at June General Meeting
- Collaborative work with NCERCC, NCA, Fostering Network – joint workshop at annual NCCTC conference Oct 08
- Attendance & Exhibitor at NCERCC and NCCTC conferences
- Development of regional meetings in South, North and Midlands to reflect local issues & supplement National meetings
- Production and distribution of ICHA Handbook – increasingly used by Commissioners on a national basis
- 4 quarterly newsletters – distributed to governments departments, LA contacts & commissioners, etc
- Weekly bulletins for members highlighting key issues and events within the sector for easy reference for members
- Articles and contributions/quotes in Community Care in relation to Placement Stability, Children’s Bill, NEF report and ICHA in general.
- Building relationships with ministers, MP’s, Lord Listowel, journalists and key people within the sector

We have new members becoming more active and it is good to see Joe Crosbie (Childhood First) taking on an increasing role as the political link as I hand that particular baton on. Also, now that Roy and Gail are fully settled in they have the bulletins, newsletters and handbook well in hand and Roy has also made progress improving our links with the media, with ICHA regularly being quoted in Community Care in particular. Thanks to Roy, Gail and everyone on the committee for their hard work and contributions over the year.

On a more personal note, I would like to thank Danny Curran for his constant support, Gary Kent for his meticulous attention to our work, (highlighting all relevant articles, motions and in particular for connecting us to the right people in parliament and the Lords) and Jonathan Stanley for his wisdom, understanding and guidance.

I look forward to seeing new and existing members in January when we elect the new Chairs and Committee as ICHA presses on into 2009.

Alison Trainor
Co-Chair

CRB disclosures – soft information, hard decisions

There is no provider of residential care that does not complain about the CRB – especially when it comes to delay in obtaining the enhanced disclosure. Maybe proposed changes will speed up a ridiculous set of rules that require an individual to have an enhanced check every time he or she is involved in activities with vulnerable children or adults.

However, what do you do when an enhanced disclosure is returned with no criminal convictions but there is soft information. Does the employer seek guidance from Ofsted, double check with the applicant, speak with the Police? Above all, how long will it take and what is the cost to the employer in terms of maintaining standards and running a business?

The provision of soft information was one of the consequences of the Soham Murders.

Our experience shows that what is disclosed is up to the discretion of the Constabulary concerned. Unravelling the reasons for the disclosure of soft information is much more difficult. Having been involved in negotiation and threatened court action over such disclosure, I know it can take a very

long time to get to the heart of the source of such information and what evidential weight should be placed upon it.

Lawyers love legal argument about the standard and burden of proof. We are all familiar with, “beyond reasonable doubt.” in order to secure a criminal conviction. We all know that in non – criminal cases the standard of proof is on a balance of probabilities. You could quantify that as 51% / 49%.

However, when we move into the field of child protection it seems that we get tangled up. The recent case of Re B in the House of Lords restated the obvious that in care proceedings the only standard of proof was the balance of probabilities. You may know of the case of Re H v R in 1996 when the House of Lords decided that the more serious the allegation the more cogent the evidence has to be before a finding can be made on a balance of probabilities.

But what happens when no court has made a ruling? Most soft information originates from referrals to Local Authorities or Ofsted. Some referrals may be generated by malice, some will be anonymous,

some will be valid. The decision to call a joint police and social services meeting to undertake a S47 Children Act 1989 investigation lies with the Local Authority or Ofsted. My experience tells me that many investigations do not lead to prosecution or the instigation of family or other proceedings. In some cases the alleged perpetrator is neither spoken to nor interviewed by the Police. In those circumstances would you make a referral for inclusion on the POCA List? I suggest not.

On the other hand, if the investigation did lead to court proceedings or the placing of a child on the Child Protection Register, I would expect either such a referral to be made or at least seriously considered.

Whatever you may do in respect of POCA there will remain on Police records, details of the investigation etc. Getting access to this information is tortuous because most, if not all, is likely to be subject to Data Protection considerations.

The dilemma employers face is whether to employ or not. There is the horror for those who are entirely innocent. There are those who fall

into a category where there may be suspicion but an insufficient weight of evidence to lead to further action.

Whatever action the employer takes needs to be measured and considered not just with an eye to the approval of Ofsted but with an eye on the protection of your clients and staff and a third eye upon being seen to be a reasonable and fair prospective employer.

There are no hard and fast rules but I suggest the following precautionary measures:

- Seek a written explanation from the individual concerned
- Make a written note of the decision you make as to whether to employ or not, such note to include your reasons.

If the decision is made to employ, consider notifying Ofsted prior to the employee commencing work.

Raphael Silver
Silver Fitzgerald Solicitors and Advocates, Cambridge.
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Being an ICHA Member: The opportunity to Network

ICHA Northern Regional Meeting September 2008

The first ICHA Northern Regional Meeting was held at Haigh Hall, Wigan on 29th September. The meeting attracted 17 member delegates and 10 non-members.

Danny Curran, ICHA Co-Chair explained that ICHA had decided to embark on a series of Regional Meetings, the first, in London, having been held earlier this year in July.

Acknowledging that Independent Providers are busier than ever with their own businesses, considering the cost-effectiveness of travelling to meetings and taking into account the additional regular information being supplied to members via the ICHA Weekly Bulletin and the ICHA Newsletter, there has been more of a reluctance from members to travel lengthy distances to attend meetings. However, clearly the networking and sharing of information between members is still valued and therefore the creation of Regional Meetings is aimed at filling a gap, enabling members to meet and discuss issues within their own region. Further Regional Meetings in the North, Midlands and Southern Regions have already been pencilled in for 2009.

Attendees were updated on the ongoing work of ICHA in relation to the Children and Young Person's Bill and ICHA's activity in Parliament relating to this, Uplift and the letter that ICHA has sent to the DCSF, the National Contract, CRB and issues of portability and ICHA's engagement with Children's Rights. Paul O'Leary from Cornerstones and ICHA Membership Secretary shared his experiences of being an ICHA member and introduced the round robin session where items discussed included North West Commissioning - how do Providers access contracts in the North West?; and Ofsted - with questions posed relating to Managers, age range of young people and approved methods of restraint. The minutes of the meeting are available in the Members Section of the ICHA Website: www.icha.org.uk

Members and non-members alike were able to share experiences and use the occasion to network with colleagues. ICHA would like to thank attendees for helping to make the meeting a success and look forward to seeing members again at the next Northern Regional Meeting in 2009.

Steering our organisations safely through the current turbulence within Children's Residential Services is increasingly complex and perilous. We can all feel isolated and pulled every which way in pursuit of stability; however there are strategies and ideas which can be shared amongst ICHA members to help lighten the load.

Attending National and Regional ICHA forums can provide opportunities to raise pertinent issues affecting your own organisation and benefit from potential solutions already set in place by colleagues. Complementing such meetings is the ICHA website which can equip you with the latest industry information and also provide a vehicle for membership discussion. If used to their full potential, direct and indirect networking opportunities with fellow ICHA members can be an invaluable source of personal support and information to help your organisation plan, develop and succeed in an increasingly competitive market place.

My own organisation has been able to both improve quality standard ratings and streamline services in recent years with the help and information shared with fellow ICHA members. Often attending meetings can create a 'priority dilemma' which we are all familiar with, however in my experience ICHA can provide a tremendous forum to identify what are and are not effective avenues to commit our time, energies, resources and monies. Examples of cost effective service changes achieved in my organisation as a result of ICHA networking have included;

Utilising the Forum of Private Businesses, 0845 130 1722 (FPB) to provide cost effective advice, information and support in matters of Employment Law and Health & Safety Legislation. Guidance is easy to follow and work place documents/templates are readily available for download. We have always found the service to be focused upon our business needs, highlighting solutions rather than placing obstacles in our way. Additional benefits have also included access to First Rate Legal Services and preferential rates for office supplies, telecom services and utility bills. Services commissioned from the FPB have been most impressive in that they have come at a fraction of the cost of other similar organisations without compromising the quality or integrity of advice and support.

Contracting Human Resource Services to help focus our employee support and accountability within the workplace. This has included streamlining employee contracts, initiating low cost staffing benefits i.e. Health sure / Nursery Vouchers, advanced planning and implementation of employment law and the management of all absence & disciplinary procedures. This support has been liberating for front line managers and cost effective to the organisation. We continue to contract with KEB HR Solutions Ltd (07917 898851) who have developed a clear understanding of our needs as a residential service, however other HR

companies will be operating in your area who will be able to help develop and operate your HR needs whether you are a large organisation or small service provider like us.

Focused our marketing resources in areas we know to be relevant and beneficial to our own settings. Historically as a growing business we fell prey to advertisers playing on our vulnerability, naivety and desperation. In reality 95% of 'fantastic' opportunities to take up advertising space in a whole range of journals across the country proved ineffective. Such opportunities are often futile, particularly in light of current commissioning strategies. Networking with other ICHA members has provided us with a better understanding of where to target our marketing resources and how not to fall prey to opportunistic and manipulative sales teams.

Finally like many other providers we historically found ourselves requiring significant overdrafts each April with the arrival of each new financial period. This resulted from the delay in agreeing new uplifts which we had included in our projected invoices. This created an unwelcome delay which potentially disrupted the payroll and incurred significant bank charges. Dialogue with ICHA colleagues resulted in a change to our invoicing policy which has proved more effective. We now send our general invoices without associated uplifts and forward uplifts as a separate entity. In our experience this has not prejudiced the value of our uplifts but has resolved the issue of cash flow at the beginning of each financial year.

These strategies may be operated by other providers with differing levels of effect and may not be relevant to all settings; however they are examples from my own organisation of positive changes which have directly resulted from networking with our fellow ICHA members. There are many more examples from across our diverse sector of others benefiting from networking opportunities and I would hope that if you are able to attend National and Regional ICHA forums or contribute to Website discussions then you will find your Membership to be an invaluable support in the ongoing development of your Residential Service.

Paul O'Leary
Director, Cornerstones and
ICHA Membership Secretary



ICHA Members Meadows Care at work at the Commissioning Conference in Swanwick.

Alison Trainor, ICHA Co-Chair, presented to the Community Care Live Event in London on 29th October

Here is a summary of Alison's presentation.

A key area of the Children and Young People's Bill which has passed through various stages of parliament and is now on its way for Royal Assent, is ensuring stability and continuity for children in care. Over the past year, a key theme on which ICHA has lobbied is that of stability and we have emphasised our case time and time again for Residential Child Care to be seen as a "first choice" option for the outcomes it can achieve in the right circumstance for Children and Young People with a range of complex needs.

ICHA's conference in February focussed on "Investing in Children - the Intelligent Use of Residential Child Care"; a subject which has now received some research-based support in the form of an independently produced New Economics Foundation (nef) report published in September. This challenges some of the myths about economic efficiency and highlights short-termism and how this may lead to a false economy; whereas there is real value in higher quality therapeutic residential child care in terms of added social value over the lifetime of the child in to adulthood (eg the value in ending up in a solid job, becoming a responsible tax-paying citizen rather than ending up in the prison system, sustaining safe and stable relationships and not perpetuating the cycle of care, etc).

Deloitte research commissioned by the DCSF (published October 2007) included a diagram of a "ladder of care", highlighting the historical propensity to start low and "step up" one level at a time as placements failed (see www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/DCSF-RW023.pdf) and proposing a modified diagram where effective assessment in the initial stage resulted in "jumping" to the right level of care to meet needs with the possibility of "stepping down" to a less intensive setting when sufficient progress has been made.

There is some evidence to indicate that social workers and commissioning managers are working together effectively to match needs to placements and there is clear indication of improved stability. However, there are still some children and young people being denied the right level of support, intervention and treatment because of cost.

The Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) indicator A1 which relates to how many children have 3 or more placements within 12 months (usually calculated from 1st April - 31st March, annually) has been under scrutiny as we discover that 1100 children and young people had 5-9 moves in 2007 and a further 190 had ten or more placement moves!

To get this in perspective, let's reflect on our own experiences:

Firstly, as an adult, how many times have you moved home, job or both in the past 12 months? Once? Twice? Three times? How did each move feel and how much control did you have over your destiny?

For me, my maximum number of moves in any 12 month period was 3. It was exceptional and very stressful and I felt quite lonely for some of it and the rest of the time I had to act like a chameleon, adjusting to whatever environment I had landed in. My friends and family were massively supportive and I was able to continue working, un-interrupted, throughout it all. A big change after 9 years in one place.

Secondly, have you ever returned home and your partner/mother/father/flatmate ever said "pack your bags, you/we're leaving in 7 days"?

Not something we want to think about - it takes a long time to gather up your things and they make a pitiful sight when you have your whole life in boxes in front of you. Then there's always something you forgot - or lost, which suddenly becomes so much more important than you ever remembered before...

Finally, as a child, how many times did you move home, school or both during the ages of 11 & 18?

I moved once during this period - when I was 14 and just before I started my "o" levels (yes, old speak for GCSE's, and no - I did not go to school with my pet Pterodactyl - not quite that old!) and that meant a new area of the country, new school, new syllabus, new teachers and having to make new friends and leave old friends behind. I remember every aspect of that change and even though I was well prepared, had visited, said goodbye/kept in touch and had the summer holiday to settle in, it was hard (not least because teenagers have feelings of their own and are often stubborn). And that was with preparation, consultation and support.

So, the 1100 who moved between 5 & 9 times in 2007; I hope you are somewhere settled now where you can put down roots and attend a good school and catch up on what you missed during your packing and unpacking.

Those 190 children and young people who kept on moving more than 10 times in one year - I simply cannot grasp the concept, let alone imagine how that feels. How do you cope?

And for those responsible for this small but significant number of "overlooked-after children" - how do you sleep?

(ICHA will continue to campaign for improved placements and stability into 2009. We believe that Children and Young People with "high end" complex needs keep slipping through the gaps in the system and we need purchasers and providers to work together openly, honestly and with a shared sense of commitment to ensuring they all get the right placements and their deserved and intended outcomes)



Bollington Group

For the last two years Bollington Group, the UK's leading children's home insurance broker, has run a care leavers scheme to help people leaving the care system, into work and hopefully start a career in insurance.

Of the original care leavers on the scheme, one very quickly decided that insurance wasn't for him and left. The other three stayed until recently and received the grounding and support necessary to find their feet in the working world. Each of the care leavers has now moved on elsewhere and we are particularly pleased that one of them has decided to make a career in insurance and taken advantage of an opportunity for advancement that arose elsewhere.

Bollington is delighted that its care leavers are now integrated into the working community and remains committed to helping leavers. It has been approached by The Prince's Trust and is now in discussion about a mentoring scheme for leavers which the Trust is considering introducing. Bollington sees the role of employers as being an important part of this.

Paul Moors, Chairman of Bollington, commented: "Each of the care leavers who came to us has now left with our blessing and best wishes for the future. They will hopefully now go on to have successful careers. We are pleased to have played our part in setting them on their way and are now looking to see what further help we can provide in this vital area."

Doing The Right Thing

Tough financial conditions brings increasing pressure for economies, whether it is cutting capital budgets for play, keeping salary increases down or stopping activities that are discretionary. Finance managers will insist that reserves are kept up to meet the fast approaching rainy days. Belt tightening becomes the organisational and individual order of the day. The gloomy state of the financial markets is fast making the transition to the real economy, including bit by bit services for children and young people.

Prudence may well be necessary but her appeal can mean that it is also all too easy to lose sight of longer term objectives for responsive children's services. We know that smaller efficiency

savings may well be secured through selective reductions. Staff members leave or retire and are not replaced. However, the very scale of reductions in a lengthy recession may well require some different thinking, as much about effectiveness of the current and future organisation as its economy or efficiency. At its heart is a different approach to the organisation's people in seeking value for money.

The search for this effectiveness prompts five key questions:

- Have we got the right funded balance of services to meet needs, current, emerging and future?
- How fit for longer term purpose is our organisational structure?

Can it stand much flexing in size as the economic conditions get worse and then eventually better but inevitably different?

- Do the definition of job roles owe more to yesterday's needs than engaging the increasingly better trained workforce of the future? Have we developed the new roles we will need?
- Does the way we do things (our organisational culture) really favour much greater joint working across occupational boundaries and creating "super teams" or are we stuck with silo working?

Have we got effective ways to plan for and sustain change and communicate what is needed to staff?

Hilary Barnard is a strategy and change consultant, specialising in supporting children and young people's services. He can be contacted at hilarybarnard@aol.com



2020 Children's Workforce Strategy: Update

"Leadership and Management in Care Services"

Awarding bodies have now developed the level 4 NVQ in Leadership and Management in Care Services (replacing the Registered Managers in Child Care Award). This is offered by the following Awarding Bodies:

- Edexcel
- EDIP
- City and Guilds (C&G)
- OCR
- OPUAB
- Chartered Management Institute (CMI)

The NVQ is accredited until December 2010.

Health and Social Care (H&SC) and Children's Care, Learning and

Development (CCLD) National Occupational Standards (NOS)

CWDC, as members of Skills for Care and Development, have recently completed the incremental reviews of the NOS for Health and Social Care (H&SC) and Children's Care, Learning and Development (CCLD). The remit of the review was 'light touch'. This included:

- Addressing 'banked' errors, received since their accreditation in 2005.
- To address any omissions, identified since 2005.
- Duplications in terms of repeated knowledge requirements or competences, identified since 2005.
- Updating of significant gaps due

to changes in policy since 2005.

- Update of imports from other Sector Skills Councils

CWDC Officers undertook 12 participation activities (with over 100 children) to support the incremental review of the H&SC and CCLD NOS. All activities were based on these key themes to ensure that the children and young people were feeding into areas that would/could be developed, changed or enhanced, as part of the incremental review.

Currently each partner within Skills for Care and Development are submitting the reviewed standards to their boards for sign off. Dependant on all partner sign

off, the following timeline will be adopted:

All partners to submit the final standards to their internal "sign off" processes and feed back approved/not approved position by 31 October 2008. Submission to the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) for formal approval November 2008. Dependent upon approval from UKCES, UK launch January 2009. Any questions should be submitted to:

abby.beattie@cwdcouncil.org.uk

Village Link

Thoughts of Others Ltd. from its inception has always planned to support a project in another continent. Our opportunity to fulfil this vision arose when two teachers from Kenya joined our staff team and two years later Stanley, the humanities teacher, suggested that we meet an African teacher he knew from his previous teaching. Susan had come to England to try to obtain funding to support a village and school project she had started in Kenya, near to Nairobi.

We met Susan and listened to her outline of the plans to help the village that lay outside the regular lines of aid. We committed to helping fund food for the school and helping the most vulnerable adults in that community with food and medical supplements each Wednesday.

People who are sick in the community are also helped with medical bills, as access to medical help is not free and hospitals are far away from the village. At first the money we provided helped to pay off debts for food, renting the school building and other subsistence costs. Then we received news that the money had purchased sewing machines for adults in the village to join a tailoring course set up for them, with a view to them contribution to the village economy.

In February 2005, we were joined as partners in this funding by Holbrook House, who are ICHA members based in London. Unfortunately the expansion plans for the project have had to be curtailed due to the International 'Credit Crunch' and the effect on the cost of food and

other basics. We are still actively looking for individuals and organisations who would like to support the development of this project.

'Village Link' is becoming part of our curriculum within the citizenship course. We are in the process of completing the first edit of a video taken of the project last summer, when Stanley went to visit the village on his visit home to Kenya. We are hoping to use this as a focus for fundraising for our special project.

Our target, before Christmas 2008 is to raise £1,000 to fund the building of a communal well for the villagers as an extra to the existing support. Then, in 2009, we will be moving towards more curriculum links based around the school.

The Welsh Assembly: Residential Care as a placement of choice

The Welsh Assembly Government views children's residential care as a placement of choice, recognising that this type of placement will best meet the assessed needs of some children and young people.

The policy agenda for vulnerable children and young people in Wales is increasingly diverging to reflect Welsh circumstances and priorities. This was evidenced last year in 'Towards a Stable Life and a Brighter Future', regulations and guidance that come into force on 1 July 2007 to strengthen arrangements for the placement of looked after children.

Towards a Stable Life introduced a number of changes for children's homes in Wales, designed to raise the quality of the children's residential care workforce and to best meet the needs of children placed in these settings.

Early in the new-year the Welsh Assembly Government will consult on a strategy for vulnerable children (including looked after children and care leavers). The strategy will build on our policy in Towards a Stable Life and a Brighter Future. The key vehicles for taking the strategy forward are a Legislative Competence Order on Vulnerable Children and clauses within the Children and Young Persons Bill, both of which are expected to receive Royal Assent later this year.

The Legislative Competence Order (LCO) will provide the Welsh Assembly Government with wider

powers to legislate for vulnerable children to meet Welsh priorities and timescales. It has been drafted widely to include young people up to the age of 25 and to incorporate support to vulnerable families.

The Children and Young Persons Bill includes around 40 clauses, the majority of which extend to Wales. It aims to reform the statutory framework around the care system to enable children and young people to receive high quality care and support and drive improvements in the delivery of services focused on the needs of the child.

Key areas in the Bill include improvements in placement stability, educational experience and attainment of the child and quality of care planning to ensure the voice of the child is heard in all decisions that affect them and ensuring that children are not forced out of care before they are ready.

The Welsh Assembly Government is keen to ensure cross-sector involvement in the new policy agenda to promote improvement in service delivery and ensure a thriving sector fit to meet the new challenges.

With this in mind we have held initial meetings with key stakeholders including the Social Care Association, Care Forum Wales and the Independent Children's Homes Association to encourage the development of a Forum for Children's Residential Care in Wales. The intention is that

the Forum will be run and owned by the sector and will provide a vehicle for the dissemination of good practice and a sounding board for the Welsh Assembly's policies.

This is an exciting time for children's policy in Wales. We look forward to working with our partners including those in the children's residential care sector to improve outcomes for looked after children in Wales.

Footnote: Towards a Stable Life can be accessed on:

new.wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/publications/guidance/1549304?lang=en

The Children and Young Persons Bill can be accessed on:

services.parliament.uk/bills/2007-08/childrenandyoungpersonshl.html

Donna Davies

Cyfarwyddiaeth Iechyd Plant a Gwasanaeth Cymdeithasol Directorate for Children's Health and Social Services Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru - Welsh Assembly Government



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru Welsh Assembly Government

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Diversity Champion ICHA representative on CWDC

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WICHA Chair

Pauline Webster

Support on the Political Work, including DCSF contact ICHA representative on CWDC

New Members

Welcome to new ICHA Members - Roc Northwest Ltd; Horizon (North West) Care Ltd; Turnaround, Derbyshire. New members from January will appear in the next edition

NCERCC View

The title of this year's NCERCC conference was deliberately chosen – Leadership, Management and Outcomes. The sector will need to be fully engaged in all three over this next year. The aim for this conference was for it to act as a reference point for developments in all 3 areas. The RCC specific perspective is crucial for success.

The NICE/SCIE research will be developing guidance on improving the physical and emotional health and well-being outcomes for looked after children and young people. www.nice.org.uk/guidance/index.jsp?action=byID&o=11879

There will be recommendations for good practice, based on the best available evidence of effectiveness, including cost effectiveness, and ineffectiveness. NCERCC has ensured there is a RCC presence in the working group. It is only on the basis of good evidence that good decisions can be made. The researchers will need to have experienced residential practitioners to assist them in the working group and in consultations if they are to adequately answer some of their questions regarding how to identify and monitor health, emotional and social outcomes.

Outcome-based accountability (OBA) is a method being strongly promoted by IdEA, it uses three common sense performance measures: How much did we do? How well did we do it? and, Is anyone better off? It takes the view that current measures are too often about process and delivery targets, rather than results. www.idea.gov.uk/idk/search/system-search.do?k=OBA&x=19&y=6

Central to OBA is the idea of 'Turning the Curve', by effective

and timely action to achieve better outcomes, service planners can expect to achieve results that move away from the projected baseline, thereby "turning the curve". Its focus includes:

- 'what works' suggested by rigorous research and shared knowledge concerning 'best' and 'promising' practice
- 'No-cost' or 'low-cost' ideas that may not be accredited by research but have the potential to be effective based on experience and knowledge.
- Innovative approaches that can stimulate creative thinking, even if the actual ideas seem 'off the wall'.

In these and other opportunities it is crucial that the sector communicates clearly the RCC task. NCERCC takes the view that there is no one thing called RCC, only RCC's - Plural. A sector seeking to match needs and placements ensuring in the words of the Children and Young Persons' Bill 'a diversity and sufficiency of supply,' is required to have creativity as a key component in its practice. The complexity of the sector and subtlety of the task has to be appreciated in order to suitably understand and encapsulate this in a method of evaluation.

NCERCC fields many enquiries concerning outcomes. We already have some practice materials on our rapidly expanding website. The sharpest enquiries come from commissioners. Our view is that RCC wide outcomes will be the result of dialogue and development and that we are not yet at the stage where we should proscribe what will emerge, certainly outcomes must not be reduced to the OfSTED inspection framework. Appropriate outcome indicators fit for a RCC

purpose and matching the RCC task are necessary.

NCERCC invites participation in its RCC Commissioning Community of Practice. Already on this page on our website you will see the first document 'Commissioning is a Parenting and Child Care activity'. NCERCC seeks to initiate discussion and development of a theory and practice of commissioning that balances administration and finance with parenting and child care objectives. There is some practical optimism that this is achievable with the regional data matching engines comprehensive listing of needs and provision types.

In the next few months we look forwards to the guidance relating to the Children and Young People Act and to a revision of the National Minimum Standards. Both are centrally concerned with outcomes. The measured outcomes must focus on meeting a child's needs, assessing need in relation to positive child development and evaluate the effect a placement is having on a child. The experience of intense disadvantage is rare often leaving the understanding even of professionals too limited and especially excluding an understanding of what is necessary to care appropriately for these young people. Knowledge and experience of RCC, its task and purpose has to be conveyed to politicians and civil servants.

A review of the NMS will take place soon, The current NMS were written building on previous legislation and regulations. Since then we have new foundations to build upon too that comprehensively capture RCC life.

- A National contract with a considered RCC focussed service requirements.
- A National Occupation Standard for managers in which in England there is a mandatory Group Living module that reflects the complexity and subtlety of RCC.
- Professional Standards for RCCW's – CWDC consultations start next month. The invitation from CWDC was sent via the CRN today.

On all 3 NCERCC has been contributing to ensure RCC life is understood and included. A conscious part of NCERCC work is the understanding of the need to remember, reclaim, renew; looking forwards to a Renaissance of RCC thinking and practice made relevant for these times.

Sector specific knowledge is important to avoid unintended consequences where developments in one area affect another. For example NCERCC has been in contact with OfSTED and the DCFS proposing solutions to potential difficulties arising from the introduction of the new OfSTED safeguarding Benchmarking at a time when the Children and Young Persons Bill introduces a halt on admissions for failing settings.

Effective management for RCC needs a strategy that explains what is going on so that everyone can understand. That is what is needed – a practical explanation of the RCC sector so the work it is actually undertaking when meeting needs of young people can be evaluated.

We look forwards to continuing to explain alongside you all in the joint project of leadership, management towards child-centred outcomes.

Jonathan Stanley

Setting up the new ICHA website

The new ICHA website has been live for a few weeks now and users have been busy visiting and interacting with the site. Box Interactive Ltd were commissioned to develop the new website and member's area to enable ICHA to easily communicate a whole range of information. The website has a full content managed system allowing ICHA key staff to keep information up-to-date quickly and easily in-house and provides them with full control over the content and images displayed. The website has been developed to enable future expansion as needs arise.

Box worked closely with ICHA in creating the website, firstly creating detailed specification from the brief supplied and a number of meetings. On agreement of the specification, a look and feel for the site was created. Once the look was agreed, Box began the build of the site and after a series of iterations to fine tune the information delivered, the site was put live and all members provided with a login.

Box Interactive specialises in the design and build of websites, online systems, graphic design for print, multi-media, video and DVD



production, animation and game design, and PR and marketing. The company has over a decade of experience in delivering online and offline marketing solutions. They specialise in combining a range of skill sets to produce creative and bespoke solutions to help clients meet their marketing needs.

If you are looking for a solution to your online or offline marketing needs, you may wish to consider contacting Box Interactive, by calling Angela Carson on 07931 373560, email: sales@boxinteractive.co.uk or visit the website at www.boxinteractive.co.uk.