

ICHA Media Release

Children's homes providers propose protected title to verify data used in reports

Children's homes providers are proposing an easily achieved change that will create accurate data, which will allow a better understanding of the issues and provide a secure basis for policy and practice.

They propose a new definition of children's home be only for registered and regulated children's homes.

Children's homes providers are concerned that a portrayal of regulated children's homes is being established in reports by organisations and commentaries in the media that does not relate to their current reality.

They are concerned that policy actions might be determined on these reports.

On this basis of the new definition, the authors of any report or story can be requested to verify that their data conforms to the new definition, and make their data open for scrutiny. Children's homes providers see that this is the only way that politicians and the public can be assured that they are receiving an accurate portrayal of life in children's homes. Importantly, the focus will shift to those settings that need attention and action.

Children's homes providers are concerned that as the current definition of 'children's home' includes other settings, semi-independent, supported accommodation, hostels and residential special schools registered as children's homes.

Regulated children's homes providers are concerned that that the data or experience in recent reports and stories in the media, which have raised concerns regarding young people going missing from care, criminalisation, police call-outs are being generated by settings that are not regulated children's homes.

The data being collected by government, local government and agencies uses the current 'children's homes' definition. This is resulting in an undifferentiated dataset that cannot be distinguished to identify those issues relating to the unrelated different settings. This is leading to a situation where reports and stories raise matters relating to 'children's homes' but, in fact, are not.

Attention is being incorrectly focussed. There is a focus on children's homes that evidentially do not merit it. Over 97% of Ofsted inspection outcomes show regulated children's homes are meeting the required Quality Standards, over 80% are Good or Outstanding. Children's homes are robustly regulated, with most inspected twice a year.

Attention is not being sufficiently focussed onto settings that may be creating the issues that are of concern. Additionally, these unregulated settings are invisible, as they are not regulated or inspected. Children's homes providers see there is a strong case to be made for the regulation of all settings providing social care for young people.

By distinguishing regulated children's homes, a focus can be given to those settings needing attention and action.

A new DfE definition of children's home is needed.

The current definition includes settings that are not children's homes.

Reports and stories include data from settings that do not conform to the requirements under regulations and as such, cannot be children's homes. By continuing to use a single term, children's homes, politicians and the public may not distinguish the difference in the quality of care.

Accommodation that is not registered as a children's home with Ofsted needs, by law, to be prevented from using the title.

The use of the term 'children's home' needs to be a protected title, only for regulated children's homes.

Semi-independent or supported accommodation or hostels or other provision need to stop being called a children's home.

The need for this distinguishing is 'urgent'.

Going forwards, the ICHA will be requesting the authors of any report of story verify that their data conforms to the new definition.

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