

## EASTERN COLLABORATIVE CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL NETWORK MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



Welcome to September's ECCRN newsletter.

This month we are focusing on Sense of Self and Residential Child Care.

Please, absorb and enjoy!

### For anyone working or caring for young people:

**Positive Environments for Children: A Sector Imperative:** In Ofsted's latest blog, Restraint and restrictive practices: positive environments for children, Yvette Stanley calls on providers to reflect deeply on how restraint is used and, more importantly, how it can be avoided through nurturing, relational care.

**Online safety:** NSPCC Learning has published a series of expert insight videos on online safety. The films aim to help those working and volunteering with children to explore what online safety means, recognise the risks children face, and understand how to support children's safety online.

### Residential Child Care and Identity: A Systematic Review

"...we need to reflect more profoundly on how we comprehend identity within the residential childcare milieu. Not only is it the environment in which many vulnerable children grow up, it is also the place in which their evolving sense of self is shaped and formed by the culture of care that surrounds them. Anglin (2002) reflects that a living environment in a children's home is crafted within and through the inter-relationship between young people and staff. This therefore has deep implications for how we support the construction of positive identity in this setting".

### Understanding the identities of young people in care - Nuffield Foundation

A new model – *identities in-flux* – to inform both theoretical understanding and practical interventions for children in care. This framework urges the adoption of best practices when implementing support plans for young people and children.

Within this model, we consider the nuanced interplay of changing socio-ethnic-religious factors rooted in a child's biological heritage, their care journey and their own sense of agency in shaping how they want to be seen.

### **Open Access Resources**

1. This is an [animation](#) that we produced in collaboration with Beluga Animations. In 5 minutes it aims to represent the complexities of children's identities and ramifications for Social work practice.
2. [Research Report](#)
3. Animation produced by young people. Watch [here](#).
4. Frontline [briefing](#) produced in collaboration with ResearchinPractice
5. [Podcast](#) produced in collaboration with ResearchinPractice

### "It was a thing about belonging and identity. I just felt, this is who I am": residential care experienced children and young people actively (re)creating identity, family and community

Identity formation is one of the primary psychological tasks of adolescence. Having a positive sense of self is closely related to feelings of belonging, a sense of agency and self-esteem. But the physiological, cognitive and social changes that occur during this period can make self and identity development particularly challenging... Young people, through being cared for, became carers to others. This has implications for how RCC experienced children and young people are perceived and the opportunities for re-signification that might be provided for them. Reflecting care ethics perspectives, participants were as much carers as they were cared for and claimed this identity, often proudly, in young adulthood.

### Faces, spaces, places... why we must cultivate belonging | BASW

Based on her own experience of being in care, Dr Lisa Cherry stresses the human need to feel 'part of something' and she shares her thoughts on 'Unbelonging'.

Unbelonging denotes a sense of displacement, a feeling of being on the outside, a search for a home that cannot be assuaged. The work of cultivating belonging, of developing relationships that make a difference and have longevity, is often not the priority.

## Social care practitioners play an important role in supporting children and young people to develop a positive sense of self...

<https://www.researchinpractice.org.uk/children/news-views/2025/august/promoting-a-positive-sense-of-self-with-children-and-young-people>

Our identities begin to form in early childhood and continue to develop and change throughout our lives. They are shaped by a number of internal and external factors, including culture, social interactions, and life experiences.

Research has found that supporting children and young people's identities can enhance their sense of wellbeing and confidence. It is then important that social care professionals and carers possess a good understanding of the identities of the children they care for, as well as the most appropriate ways to support them.

### What do we mean by 'identity'?

A person's sense of self is formed by their experiences, values, characteristics and social roles. It informs answers to questions such as:

**\*Who am I? \*What is important to me? \*What is my place in the world?**

An assessment of this can be found here. Identity develops and evolves in relation to children's developmental ages and experiences. Adolescence is a particularly crucial time for many aspects of developing self and identity. Young people may begin to question and re-examine who they are and who they want to be, beyond their place in their family or carer environment.

For young people, being supported by professionals who recognise their unique and evolving identities is important. A Research in Practice **Practice Tool** considers how practitioners can explore and write about identity with children and young people. It introduces useful concepts about identity and provides practical tips and tools to use in direct work.

## Identity & Intersectionality

Young people in care have said that they want their social workers to have a better understanding of different aspects of identity. This includes an awareness of gender and sexual identities, beliefs and religion. Additionally, the Care Leavers' Charter emphasises the need to respect and honour a young person's unique identity.

Using an intersectional approach can help us to better understand how different aspects of our identities interplay. This framework considers how different parts of a person's identity – for example, race, gender, sexuality – can lead to experiences of inequality, disadvantage or privilege.

It's important that practitioners are able to advocate for young people and challenge discrimination when it is encountered. A suite of our open access resources aim to support professionals who work with minoritised children and young people in care. They offer practical guidance to help think about and explore identity with young people.

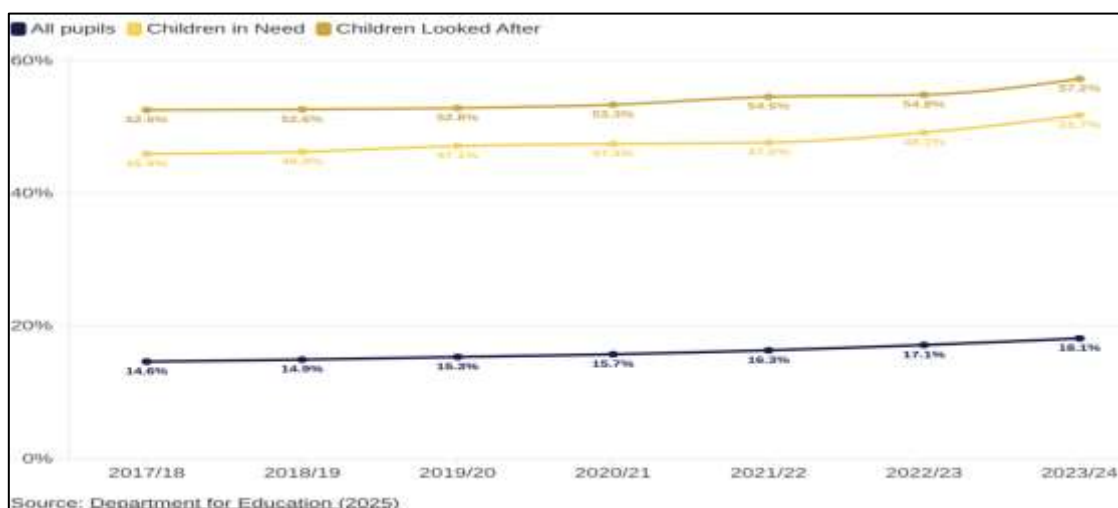
## Puberty & Learning Disabilities



### An aspect of care not much thought or spoken about – but necessary we do...

NSPCC Learning has updated its resources on **Navigating puberty** for children and young people who have learning disabilities. There is an updated guide with advice and practical tips exploring what puberty is and how to support children through the physical and emotional challenges that puberty brings. There is also a new series of 14 symbolised books on topics such as periods and body hair. The resources are designed to be shared with parents and carers of children and young people who have learning disabilities.

### Did you know? Over half of school-aged children in care have special educational needs



**Percentage of pupils with special educational needs in England, 2017/18 - 2023/2**

Special educational needs (SEN)s encompass a range of needs and disabilities including neurodivergence (such as ADHD and Autism), cognitive, socio-emotional and mental health difficulties, physical disabilities and sensory difficulties.

Since 2017/18, the number of children with special educational needs has steadily increased, with a sharper rise among looked after children (4.7%) compared to all pupils (3.5%).

Over half (57%) of children in care have special educational needs, compared to 18% of all children. This suggests that approximately 3% of all children with special educational needs are in care, around four times higher than the percentage of children in care in the general population (less than 1%).

**Let's Play!** The Cards You're Dealt is a card game that allows people to see through the eyes of children in care. A useful tool for staff meetings and team days.

## Education

A new important report concerning all children: The home learning environment and attainment.

The media and the Secretary of State have framed the reception of this report into attendance, behaviour and parenting. This is a report identifying that the main factors shaping educational inequalities are socioeconomic background, behavioural factors and the home learning environment.

There is more to be done than behaviour hubs.

Residential Child Care settings have knowledge and experience over decades of working with children whose needs have been structurally created with resultant co-occurring vulnerabilities. Poverty and deprivation matter and bring implications for social and inner psychological and emotional worlds.

The Quality Standards demand of us that we provide an environment conducive for education and learning.

We do so, knowing emotional security precedes educational engagement, advancement, achievement and attainment. The emotional secure base is all important for our children to do well with their learning.

## Parliament

### Children's Well Being Bill

The House of Lords are being diligent in completing their scrutiny.

### **Public Accounts Committee**

Inquiry: Financial sustainability of children's care homes

Calling for evidence on the financial sustainability of children's care homes.

### **Education Select Committee**

Published their report of their Inquiry into Children's Social Care

Children's social care - Committees - UK Parliament

### Parliamentary inquiry: Human rights of children in care

Inquiry into how well the rights of children in or supported by the care system are upheld in law, policy and practice.

IROs' duty to protect children's human rights (High Court judgment)

## National Audit Office

Study: Monitoring and managing the children's homes market

This study will examine whether DfE: understands the challenges within the market: is taking sufficient action to address the value for money challenges faced across the market: is ensuring that children's homes and supported accommodation are financially sustainable, cost-effective, and delivering positive **outcomes**

You ask us...We respond...

What to do when a child doesn't want to see a parent?

<https://www.communitycare.co.uk/2025/08/22/family-court-advisers-given-guidance-on-children-not-wanting-to-see-a-parent>

## Developments in theory

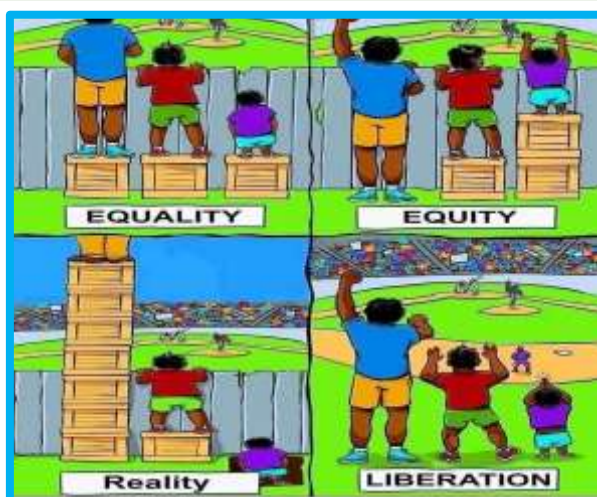
**Attachment theory in social work: Why a new approach is necessary.** This article by Dr Robbie Duschinsky draws attention to what the theory can tell us about children's needs and important caregiver behaviour. It presents contemporary understandings of the value of attachment networks and the synergies that can be found in considering caregiving in conjunction with the broader social and economic context for families.

Our aim is that their article will support practitioners to 'see the value of attachment theory for their practice and use the theory in helpful and appropriate ways. We must also highlight how much misinformation on attachment theory is in circulation. So be aware!

Worth a read: **Cornerstones of Attachment Research** and **Developments in Attachment Research** both by Dr Robbie Duschinsky.

Research in Practice has also published a suite of **resources** to support the use of attachment theory in children's social care.

Let's finish on...A thought-provoking picture



\*Image from [here](#).



Thank you for reading our newsletter, your feedback would be very welcome. If you wish to be removed from the distribution or wish to add a colleague, please email us:

SLI Programme mailbox: [EasternRegionCIB@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:EasternRegionCIB@norfolk.gov.uk)

SLI website: [Commission East – Improvement East](#)

Linked In: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/improvement-east/>

The next ECCRN meeting is being held on Teams on:  
Thursday, 2nd October – 10.30 – 12.30

