

## EASTERN COLLABORATIVE CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL NETWORK MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



### Welcome to the ECCRN Christmas Selection Box!

As well as the usual, we've found some Christmassy things to do with children in care. A mixture of things to create entertainment, some to amuse, some to inform. All you have to do is choose and click! Christmas is an important and significant time for us all and a period where we both rest and work our hardest. A well done to everyone working in our services.

Please absorb and enjoy!



### What does Christmas mean to our children?

It's lovely to read from the Director of Social Care for Ofsted of 'building on children's own traditions or creating new ones' and recognising the bittersweet time of year through Christmases past and present. Yvette shares some of the things that have been picked up on inspection. It's not a plan for all and it's not a focus for inspection but this [reflective checklist](#) is a way to make Christmas meaningful in your home(s)

## A poem about Christmas in children's homes



This poem was written when a residential worker heard someone say:

***“Christmas doesn’t happen in care.”***

*Nothing is happening  
 People are eating special snacks  
 People are singing and dancing  
 People are falling out and making up  
 People are opening presents  
 People are sleeping in, some haven’t slept  
 People thank others for getting what they hoped for*

*Nothing happens  
 People sit at a table and eat together  
 People sing together  
 People clear up together  
 People get ready for more food together  
 People feel people are too much together*

*Nothing happened  
 People went out for a walk  
 People went to their rooms  
 People watched TV  
 People borrowed batteries  
 People avoided each other  
 People missed others, couldn’t be together*

*Everything is happening  
 Everything happens  
 Everything happened*



### Choosing the right board game for this Christmas

There's LOTS out there, but which is the best? The one that works for your children! Use [this review](#) to decide what to buy this year. Get the children and grown-ups in your homes involved.



## QUOTES

**A child looks back:** “*Christmas should look like Christmas in any home. Fairy lights, presents, Christmas trees, mince pies, sweets and treats, and advent calendars*”.

**Today:** “*If the children are not comfortable in telling us what they want we simply ask them, so they get what they want, not what we think they want. Christmas is about them; little things are what matter the most*”.

**Young person last Christmas looks forwards:** “*It's just really nice when we all go out together for a nice meal wearing our Christmas outfits and bling, and when we exchange presents! I love the food, decorating the home and the Christmas tree together, and spending time together playing board games! That's everything I could wish for*”

**A time for doing and listening:** “*Swapping stories of our own Christmas experiences using what we know about reflection to really listen, deeply and with care, to the children, that it is more than just a job*”

## T O P   T I P S

**\*Resist the temptation to fill December with lots of doing.** Children who have experienced early-life trauma may need some space during this busy month. The changes in school routine might increase their anxiety levels, as their ability to predict events lessens – or there might be added stress of learning lines for a school play? Or of explaining what Christmas is like living in a children’s home (*answer, no different than living in any home*). Remembering all behaviour is communication helps us stop and think – *Why this? Why now?* And go Before, Beneath, Behind, and Beyond.

**\*A visual timetable – message - the future is predictable and planned**



**\*Presence – warm and firm presence, ‘being there’ with the children.** Some examples of this: Anchoring – not being stressed-out in the kitchen, or madly dashing round the shops, but being present and time-rich, ready to allay any fears about what might be happening over Christmas, to hold and resolve sad memories of previous Christmases, or to take out the life story books and chat through the emotions they’re experiencing.

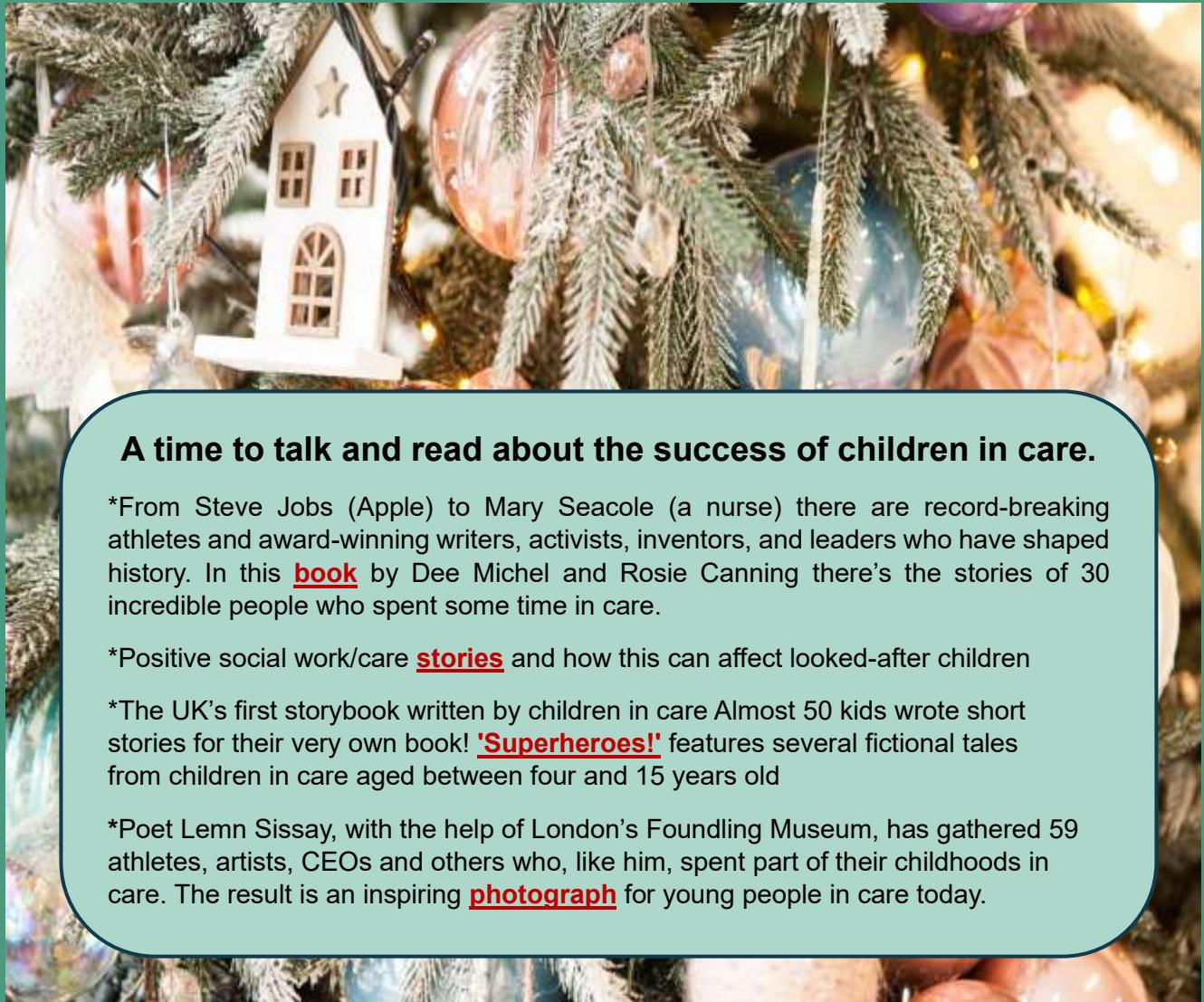
**\*Look after yourself, have some ‘me-time’!**



### QUIZMAS!

Creating questions is hard work so [here](#) are loads of different ones to choose from.

And something a little different from the NCERCC – they have found the answers – it's up to you to write the questions. [Children in care films and books quiz.](#)



# The Nothing To Do With Xmas Information Section

## Lessons from Wicked for safeguarding children

<https://learn.childhood.org.au/defying-organisational-safeguarding>

There's much we can learn from the story of Elphaba (the "Wicked Witch") and Glinda. Their relational dynamic offers lessons on leadership, collaboration, and empowering the most vulnerable.

So, how can *Wicked* guide us in organisations for safeguarding children and young people?

## Information you need to know

### Decriminalisation of children in care

(we're discussing this at ECCRN in 2026)

**\*A reminder to think about what we write for the child who will read it later in life -**

Information Commissioner calls for organisations to create better records together | ICO -

This real-life experience has changed many homes and workers ways they write about children –

An Open Letter to the Social Worker Who Wrote My Case Files | BASW

**\*Doing something for the decriminalisation of children in care:**

The introduction - The criminalisation of children in care | Children's Commissioner for England

The report: The criminalisation of children in care

**\*The national protocol:**

The national protocol on reducing unnecessary criminalisation of looked-after children and care leavers

\*Government announces review to strengthen 'National Protocol' guidelines to stop the criminalisation of children in care and care leavers:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/children-in-care-protected-from-falling-into-justice-system>

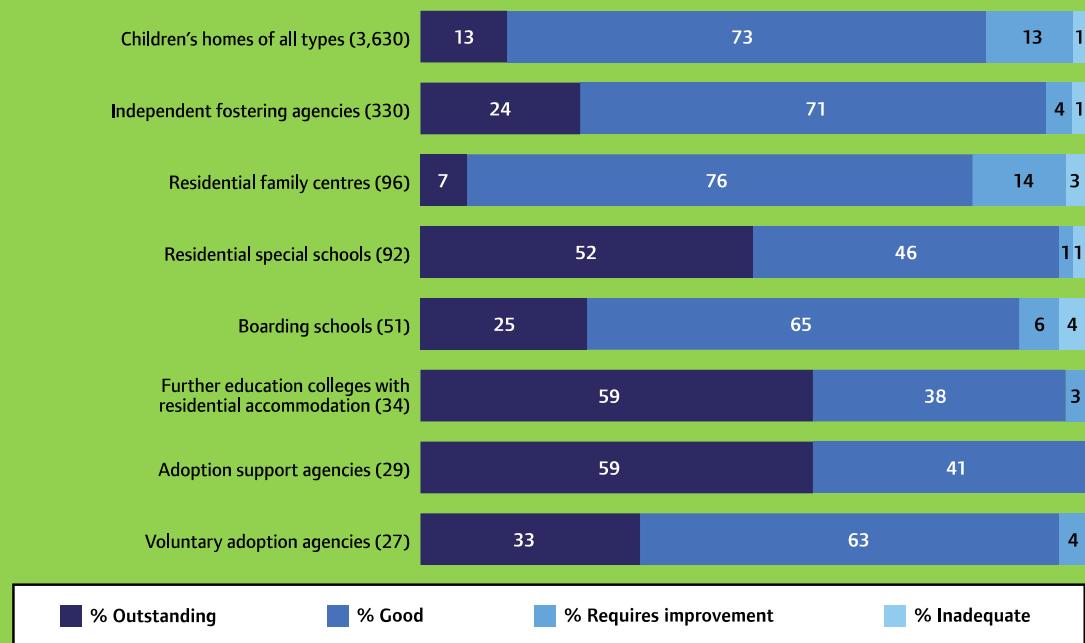


## Ofsted annual report

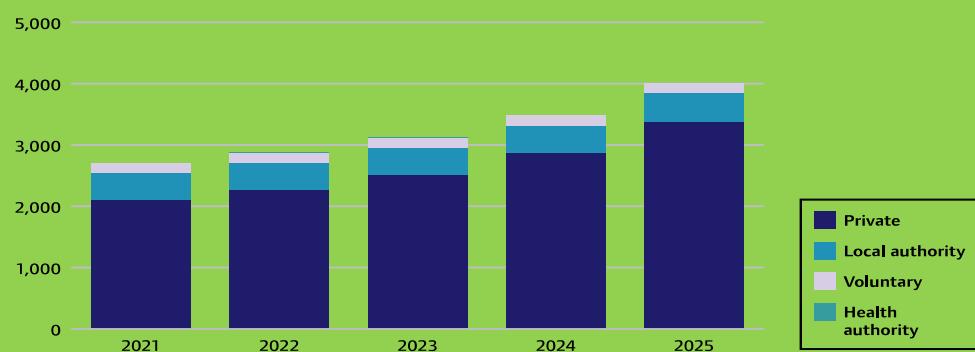
### The annual report of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2024/25 - GOV.UK

**Figure 12: Overall experiences and progress of children and young people judgements at social care provider full inspections by provider type, as at 31 March 2025**

Number of providers with inspection judgement in brackets



**Figure 13: Number of children's homes of all types by sector from 2021 to 2025**



### A THOUGHT TO FINISH

People often use negative words to describe winter; 'bleak', 'dark', 'barren', 'cold', 'miserable', 'depressing'. We can reframe our language to appreciate the joys of winter using 'yutori', a Japanese word that means room to breathe, a sense of space, taking a moment to pause.



*“Happy Christmas to  
everyone, everywhere,  
looking after  
each other.”*

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](http://Commission East – Improvement East)

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

See you at the next online ECCRN meeting!

