

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.](#)



A time to talk and read about the success of children in care.

*From Steve Jobs (Apple) to Mary Seacole (a nurse) there are record-breaking athletes and award-winning writers, activists, inventors, and leaders who have shaped history. In this [book](#) by Dee Michel and Rosie Canning there's the stories of 30 incredible people who spent some time in care.

*Positive social work/care [stories](#) and how this can affect looked-after children

*The UK's first storybook written by children in care Almost 50 kids wrote short stories for their very own book! ['Superheroes!'](#) features several fictional tales from children in care aged between four and 15 years old

*Poet Lemn Sissay, with the help of London's Foundling Museum, has gathered 59 athletes, artists, CEOs and others who, like him, spent part of their childhoods in care. The result is an inspiring [photograph](#) for young people in care today.



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

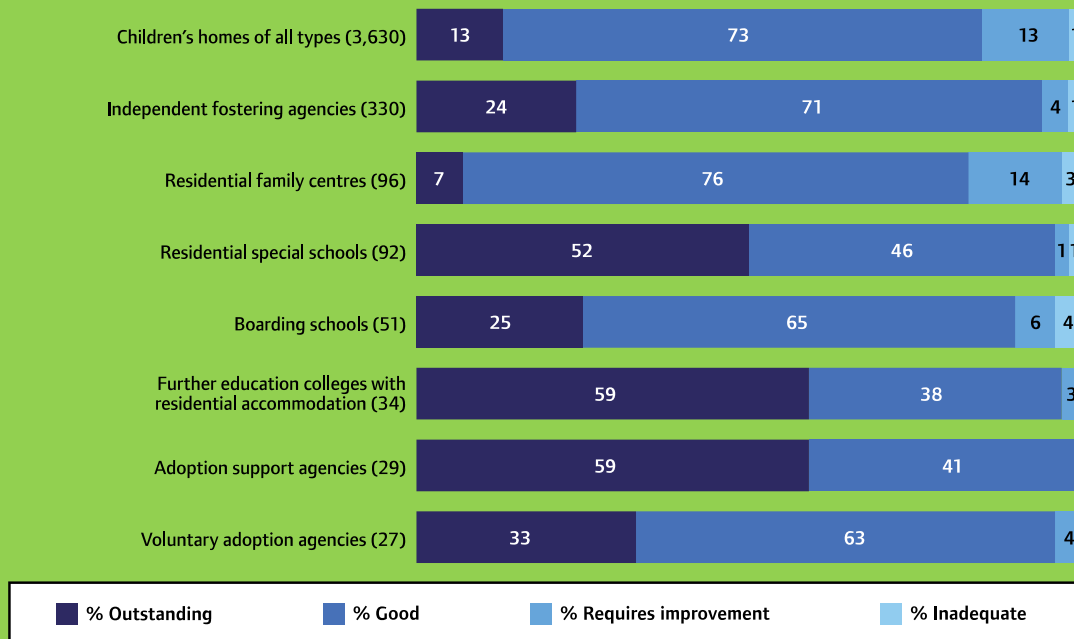
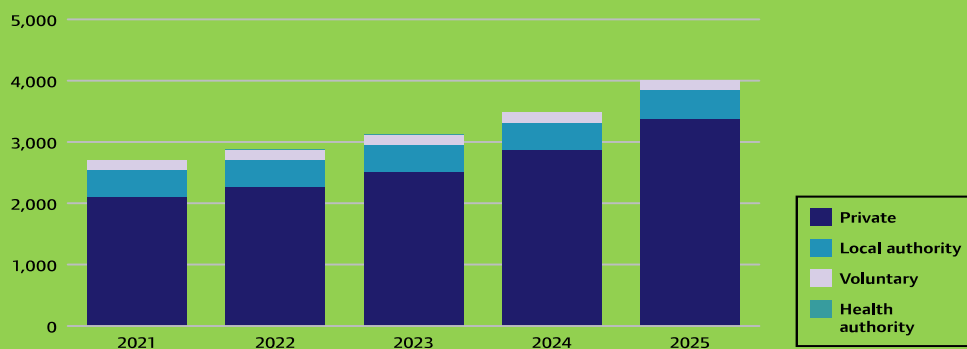


Figure 13: Number of children's homes of all types by sector from 2021 to 2025



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

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

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

See you at the next online ECCRN meeting!

