

## EASTERN COLLABORATIVE CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL NETWORK MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



Welcome to the ECCRN newsletter for April 2026.

This month's read is rich with information.

So, take your time to absorb and enjoy!

**BEFORE  
BEHIND  
BENEATH  
BEYOND**

HHIncare

**Residential Child Care: giving the public  
what it didn't know it wanted**

### **Recognising the reality of the value and contribution of Residential Child Care offers society**

While the public often "wants" visible order, strict discipline, or immediate compliance (often viewed as "good results"), what children in care actually "need" is an environment that prioritises healing. This involves looking beyond surface-level actions to understand the child's complex inner world.

Current behaviour is often the only part visible to the public. It is frequently seen as "bad" or "annoying," but in Residential Child Care, it is viewed as communication. Whilst managing behaviour Residential Child Care is using the communication as a diagnostic tool to understand what the child is struggling to express.

To provide what the public "didn't know it wanted", a truly rehabilitated and emotionally secure young person, practitioners must apply a framework that moves through these distinct lenses:

- **Before:** This acknowledges the trauma, abuse, or neglect a child experienced before entering the home. The public may only see a "troubled" child, but care providers see a history of repeated broken trust in family-based settings that shapes a child's current worldview.
- **Behind:** This looks at the underlying unmet needs or emotions driving a child's actions. While the public might see "defiance," a practitioner sees the fear of survival *behind* the mask. Effective care addresses these root causes.
- **Beyond:** This focuses on the child's future and their untapped potential. It means looking *beyond* their current struggles and providing the unconditional care and boundaries needed for long-term emotional and psychological stability. It is about preparing them for an adulthood where they can thrive, which is the ultimate goal the public "didn't know it wanted".
- **Beneath:** Completes this framework by addressing the internal, often unconscious, landscape of the child. While "Behind" looks at the immediate drivers of an action, "Beneath" focuses on the foundational identity and physiological state of the child, the core-belief of the child, the deeply rooted 'wiring and firing' as a result of past experiences.

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- **The Public's Perspective:** The public often wants a child to "choose" better behaviour or show "willpower." They assume the child has the same emotional regulation tools as a peer who grew up in a stable home.
- **The Caring Reality:** Practitioners look beneath the surface to find a nervous system stuck in a permanent state of "fight, flight, or freeze, " (NCERCC have added more F's - publishing soon - to show and engage with the complexity of multiple, co-occurring and interacting needs). Beneath the behaviour is a child who has felt fundamentally unlovable or unsafe.
- **The Application:** Care that addresses what is "beneath" focuses on co-regulation. Instead of just talking about feelings (top-down), carers use a secure, emotional, close parenting relationship which consciously provides consistent presence through sensory activities at the right intensity and rhythm, to soothe the child's emotional, psychological and social understanding developing first competence then skill.

By addressing what lies beneath, Residential Child Care provides the public with a young person who isn't just "behaving" because they are afraid of consequences, but who is genuinely integrated and regulated from the inside out.

By shifting the focus from "giving what the public wants" (compliance) to "what it didn't know it wanted" (deep, structural healing), Residential Child Care becomes a transformative rather than, merely, a placement service.

See article here: [here](#).

## What do children really think of what we do?

“There are carers, and then there are carers who actually care”; Conceptualizations of care among looked after children and care leavers, social workers and carers - ScienceDirect

(Lots to think about and a very good literature review).



## And right now, finding out from today's children

Westminster inquiry on relationships: the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Care-Experienced Children and Young People has launched a [new inquiry to examine how the care system protects and supports children's relationships](#)

- How does the care system protect and support children's relationships?
- What's the impact of instability on the relationships that matter most to children in care?
- What changes are needed to reduce the instability that children in care face?
- What can be done to strengthen and maintain children's connections to the people and communities that are important to them?

Between March and June, they will hold a series of ten online sessions with care-experienced children and young people. These sessions will explore key themes from the inquiry, as well as the experiences of children and young people with specific backgrounds or characteristics:

All ten sessions will:

- Take place online via Zoom in the evening.
- Focus on people's experiences in care (not leaving care).
- Be open to any care-experienced child or young person, under the age of 27, who has spent time in care in England.

You can get involved in the sessions, which will be attended by Parliamentarians from the APPG. Topics include: Disrupted education, Sibling separation, Moving home and the impact on relationships. See [here](#) for dates.

## Think sisters and brothers

The Government announced it will change the law to protect relationships between children in care and their siblings. 1 in 3 children are separated from their brothers and sisters when they first enter care, often losing contact.

### [Exploring separated children and caring relationships | Research in Practice](#)

This podcast looks at research that explores what 'care' looks like for unaccompanied children seeking asylum. Senior Research and Development Officer Georgina Chetwynd meets with Professor Sarah Crafter and Kirstie Baughan to hear how learning from the 'Children Caring on the Move' study and other research can help social care practitioners critically reflect on their role in caring relationships with separated children.

This podcast looks at:

- The emotional impact on practitioners of being in a 'caring' role for young people – particularly value conflicts in work and the importance of reflexive practice
- The importance of building trust for young people in relationships with professionals and how professionals can embed this in their work
- The importance of peer relationships for separated children and incorporating thinking about peer relationships in social care decision-making.

**Keeping brothers and sisters connected in care (England): [right to maintain contact with siblings to be strengthened via amendment to Children's Wellbeing and Schools](#)**

## Continuing our support for thinking around race and care

How does Ethnicity Affect Children's Pathways Through Social Care?

[IPC report Mar26](#)

Race, ethnicity and culture:

[learning from case reviews for improved practice NSPCC Apr26](#)

### The things we don't want to think about but need to...

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-to-examine-deaths-of-vulnerable-care-leavers>

Data published in May 2025 showed 91 notifications of care leaver deaths in 2024–25, with the majority aged between 16 and 21.

The review will focus on young people's experiences, who and what mattered to them, and identify what more could have been done to support them.

## Ofsted SCCIF updated

Ofsted has released the **2026 update to the Social Care Common Inspection Framework (SCCIF)** for Children's Homes, along with refreshed inspection documents in **Annex A**. The main change this year is a strengthened section on **how inspectors assess children's experiences and progress**. The updated framework places a clearer focus on:

- What daily life feels like for children living in the home
- how well staff understand each child, their needs, identity, communication, and what helps them feel safe
- the quality of relationships and the overall feel of the home
- how children's progress is recognised and supported over time
- how well the home promotes stability and prevents unnecessary moves

How we understand this in practice, this update reinforces the heart of good residential care:

- **It's about the child's lived experience**, not the list of things we offer.
- **It's about really knowing the child**, how they communicate ( ALL methods of communication), what matters to them, and what helps them settle.
- **It's about relationships**, warmth, boundaries that feel safe, and adults who show up with consistency and care.
- **It's about noticing the small steps** and understanding the story behind them.
- **It's about stability**, thoughtful leadership that protects children from disruption.

In short, this shifts the focus of inspection from describing activity to demonstrating **what has genuinely changed and mattered for the child**.

Full Documents [SCCIF: Children's Homes](#) & [Annex A: Children's Homes Inspection Documents](#)

### We're a therapeutic home...

Here's a very good article by an experienced therapeutic child care practitioner, leader, and developer that will to enable your reflection: [what a therapeutic model is and why it is important to have one - patrick tomlinson \(2019, revised 2025\)](#)

## Ofsted research - Education matters

Are you and the schools you work with doing [this](#)?

### Safeguarding

The updated [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026](#) guidance is now live, bringing clearer national expectations, stronger multi-agency standards, and a sharper focus on prevention and whole-family working.

It reflects the direction already seen across the Care Review and SEND reforms and aligns with what many homes have been working towards.

What matters for children's homes and supported accommodation:

- Clearer multiagency roles, information sharing and escalation
- Greater consistency across local areas
- Stronger emphasis on relational, whole family practice
- Residential settings recognised as active partners in early help
- Updated statutory duties for providers

### Contextual safeguarding - What Practitioners Need to Know

NSPCC Learning has released a new podcast with Professor Carlene Firmin exploring how harm happens beyond the home — in peer groups, schools, neighbourhoods and online spaces. It breaks down what contextual safeguarding is, how to build partnerships that respond to risks in those wider environments, and how to monitor outcomes. Why it matters for our sector: Residential teams are increasingly expected to understand and respond to risks that sit outside the home. This episode offers practical insight into strengthening whole system safeguarding around children. Listen to the podcast: introduction to contextual safeguarding [here](#).

The episode covers:

- what contextual safeguarding is
- how different contexts affect children's risk of abuse
- how you can build partnerships that facilitate a contextual response
- how you can monitor outcomes of contextual safeguarding response
- examples of contextual safeguarding in practice.



## Have you heard of PACE?

**P.A.C.E** is an Attachment Focused Treatment for Childhood Trauma & Abuse. Many settings use PACE - **Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy**. Read more about it from the Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy Network: [What is meant by PACE? - DDP Network.](#)

See also: [The Ultimate Guide to Using Dan Hughes' PACE with Children](#)

PACE is a therapeutic approach developed by Clinical Psychologist Dan Hughes, which outlines four key principles for adults to use when supporting children and young people who have experienced trauma. PACE focuses on the whole child rather than just their behaviour.

**P** **LAYFULNESS**  
**'I can enjoy'**  
Being playful creates a fun, positive and calm atmosphere when communicating with a child.

**A** **CCEPTANCE**  
**'I can open'**  
Accepting a child as a person without judgement, shows a child you can see beyond their behaviour.

**C** **URIOSITY**  
**'I can make links'**  
Being open to discovering why a child is behaving the way they are, will help with developing a better understanding.

**E** **MPATHY**  
**'My feelings are valid'**  
Put yourself in a child's situation and try to show them that their experiences are important to you.

Our training at bMindful is designed to support key adults' communications and interactions with children which offers them a sense of safety and security. To find out more information on how you can apply the principles of PACE to your practice get in contact with our team at bMindful.



## Attachment theory in practice: What it is, what it isn't and why it still matters

Research in Practice free webinar 2<sup>nd</sup> June and 2<sup>nd</sup> July 9.30 – 3.30

[Attachment theory in practice | Research in Practice](#)

A facilitator-led interactive workshop that will provide practitioners with current evidence on attachment theory in social care practice. It will explore the attachment theory and its principles for practice, supporting practical application and considerations.

The workshop will utilise and build on Research in Practice resources on using [attachment theory in children's social care](#),

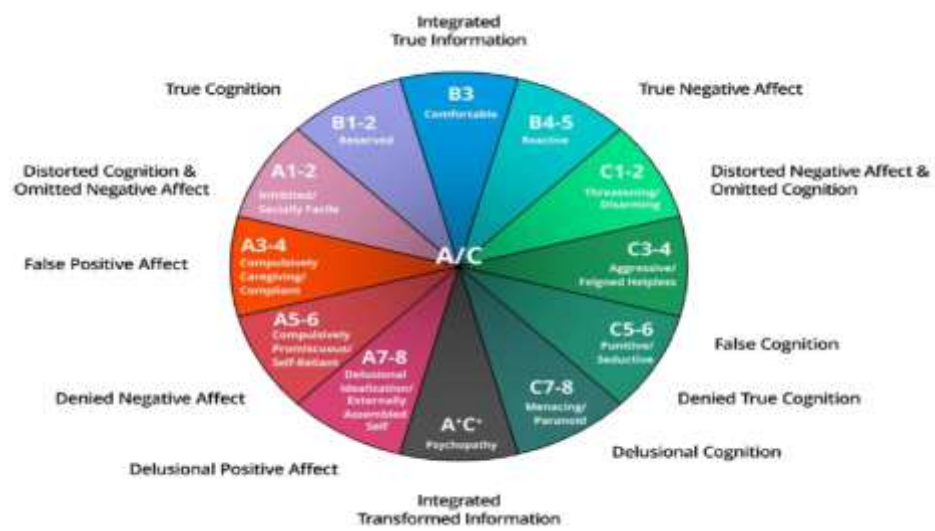
- Participants will explore: The key concepts of attachment theory.
- The ABC+D and Dynamic Maturational Model (DMM) models and use.
- Considerations for its use in professional contexts.
- The practical application of attachment theory for practitioners.
- Using a mentalising approach.
- Using the family network to support relationships

**A further description:**

[DMM Model - Family Relations Institute](#)

**And a comparison:**

[Attachment pattern comparison: DMM and ABC+D \(Berkeley\) - Conflict Science Institute](#)



## Relevant Reads & Listens

### research in practice

#### DOLS:

Read a review of legal frameworks around [the deprivation of liberty of children and young people](#).

#### UASC:

A podcast looks at care for [unaccompanied children seeking](#)

#### RECORDING MATTERS: [Better Records Together](#)

The ICO's launched a campaign to help care-experienced people access care records, including guidance, research and tools. To learn more, visit the [hub](#) or get in touch with the team working on this project: [BetterRecordsTogether@ico.org.uk](mailto:BetterRecordsTogether@ico.org.uk)



#### WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT THE SECTOR

Recently Jane Garvey and Fi Glover at Times Radio interviewed Clare Bracey, Become's Director of Policy, Campaigns and Communications about profiteering in children's residential homes and the impact it's having on children in care being moved far away from the people and places that matter. Listen to the segment on the 18 March [podcast](#) from 38.13 and Clare's interview from 45.23.

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:

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See you at the next ECCRN meeting!



Partnering for Practice