

## EASTERN COLLABORATIVE CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL NETWORK MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



Welcome to the ECCRN newsletter for March 2026. This month we are covering three important practice topics:

**Outcomes, Peer orientation, Online safety**

Please, absorb and enjoy!

### OUTCOMES

In this forthcoming time, Residential Child Care can expect to be asked to show its outcomes for individual children and as a sector. These categories offer a useful framework for identifying functional outcomes for measurement:

- Safety and risk reduction
- Permanency/stability of living situation
- Behavioural symptom improvement
- Education, employment, and life-skill status
- Supportive and healthy peer relationships
- Involvement with developmentally appropriate community activities

\*Note and how similar these bullet points are to the Bright Spots conclusions below. The above were completed *before* Bright Spots and came from the USA - Bright Spots are UK based.

## Improving outcomes and support for children in care

This **briefing** is what policy makers and parliamentarians will make reference to when making decisions. The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) is a research and knowledge service based in the UK Parliament to develop and publish cutting-edge research, evidence and peer-reviewed briefings based on consultation with experts and stakeholders.

This briefing covers

- Stability, safety, trusted relationships
- Maintaining family relationships
- Improving mental health
- Improving educational engagement and attainment
- Reducing risk of criminal justice involvement
- Keeping children involved and informed

\*It is noteworthy that there is no definition of 'outcome' or the variety of outcome measurement in the evidence finding.

See also: [Mapping the evidence on outcomes of childhood out-of-home care: A scoping review of reviews - PubMed](#)

Here are some resources to assist your thinking, actions, and practice:

- \* [Assessing social and emotional difficulties of children in residential care settings: A systematic review of strengths-based measures](#) – SIRCC Journal
- \* [Voice, data and measuring what matters to children: learning from the Bright Spots Programme](#) - Coram Voice

## Meaningful outcomes

'What's strong', not 'What's wrong' – that's a great place to start.

Are these two good places to start?

What are 'outcomes' and why do they matter? Council for Disabled Children:

[Outcomes explainer- parent carers.pdf](#)

Evidence for strengths and asset-based outcomes – see page 2 and 3:

[strengths-and-asset-based-outcomes-quick-guide.pdf](#)

**See also:**

The wellbeing of children in care and care leavers:

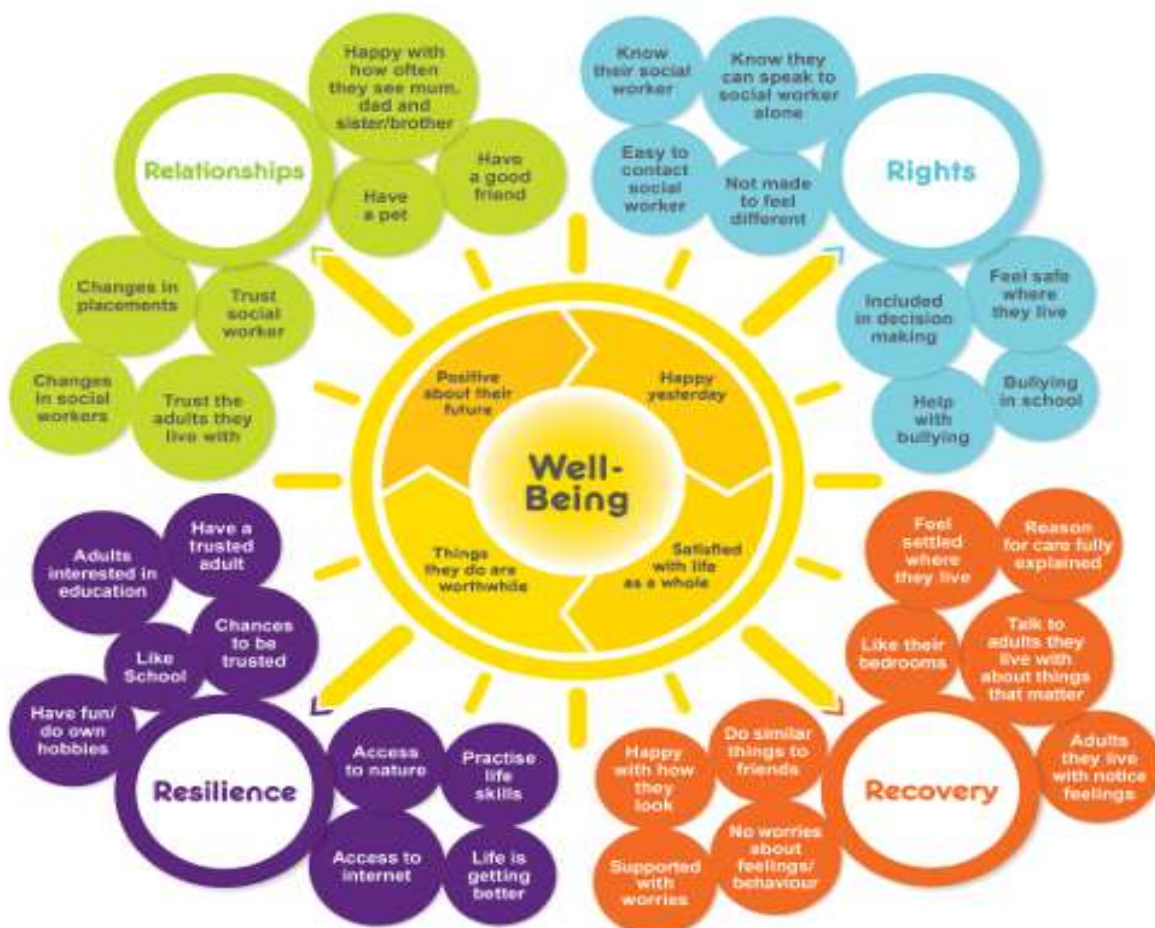
[learning from the bright spots programme sb web.pdf](#)

An important inclusion:

[How does Ethnicity Affect Children’s Pathways Through Social Care? - IPC Brookes](#)

**Graphic of the Month:** [The wellbeing of children in care and care leavers- learning from the Bright Spots Programme](#) see figure 1 page 8

Figure 1 Your Life, Your Care Wellbeing indicators (children in care)



# PEER ORIENTATION

## Children looking to peers rather than parenting figures = peer orientation

Many providers report receiving such referrals. Here's an insight into what may be going on.

Peer orientation, a concept from Dr. Gabor Maté and Dr. Gordon Neufeld describes the detrimental, modern trend of children looking to peers rather than parents for guidance, values, and identity. This shift weakens essential parent-child bonds, causing immaturity, bullying, and reduced school performance.

### Key Aspects of Peer Orientation (Gabor Maté):

- Definition: Children substitute parents/mentors with peers as their primary attachment figures.
- Causes: Increased, premature, and constant interaction with other children, often encouraged by school, social media, and diminished adult presence.

### Consequences:

- Immaturity: Children model themselves after other, equally immature peers.
- Behavioural Issues: Increased aggression, bullying, and a "sexualized" youth culture.
- Disempowered Parenting: Parents lose their influence, leading to more difficult parenting and sometimes harsh, reactive discipline.
- Mental Health: Contributes to stress, anxiety, and, in severe cases, is a strong predictor of adolescent substance use.

### Solutions (How to Reclaim the Role):

- Re-establish Attachment: Focus on building a strong, loving bond (emotional and physical closeness) with children so they want to follow your lead.
- Prioritize Family: Limit age-segregated activities and prioritize family, routines, and meals.
- Be the "North Pole": Provide security, unconditional acceptance, and firm, consistent guidance.
- Create an "Attachment Village": Surround children with other trusted, mature adults, not just peers.

### **A short review by one of our readers of Peer Orientation by Maté and Neufeld**

Written in 2004, Peer Orientation by Gabor Maté does well to seemingly predict the current crisis we're facing with young people. Our Western society's norm of two parent, or even single parent households may have increased independence, but at what cost?

bell hooks talks about these independent homes being so devoid of support that there is no opportunity for love. Love instead replaced with stress and chaos, because raising children was never supposed to be an isolated job, famously requiring a village.

Unsurprisingly, it's challenging for healthy attachments to be created and maintained in exhausted and isolated spaces, particularly when children are spending substantially less time with their caregivers.

The result is that their attachment and secure base become their peers, thereby becoming peer-oriented. For the peer-oriented child, their values, social norms, moral compass, priorities, and sense of safety all rest in the hands of their peers.

The rise of violent crime, harmful sexual behaviour, connection with dangerous individuals, and many other such behaviours increasing, is perhaps not surprising when many children are effectively raising each other. An unconscious rejection of society, a society they never got the chance to know, to reject.

If we don't want our children to be peer orientated, we need to find a way to safely re-attach remembering **it is parents who make attachment and children who take the attachment.**

### **Reflection**

Is this so new? It seems very similar to **Romeo and Juliet** and **West Side Story**. See also Redl and Wineman **Controls from Within**, and **A view from the Boys** by Howard Parker. They seem similar, don't they?? Has this always been with us?

**See also:** [Understanding youth violence | Research in Practice](#)

**And:** [Trauma-informed care: Understanding the use of trauma-informed approaches within children's social care](#)

### **Good resources regarding Attachment**

[Attachment-informed practice with looked after children and young people](#) by Judy Furnivall

[A Practical Guide to Donald Winnicott's Attachment Theories for Counsellors](#)

## Safeguarding - Online safety

### Safeguarding Insight: Harmful Online Content (NSPCC Learning)

NSPCC Learning has released a new briefing on how harmful online content is affecting children and young people. Drawing on Childline and NSPCC Helpline data, it highlights the impact of online bullying, hate content, violent imagery, pornography, misinformation and addictive platform features. The findings show clear gaps in protection ahead of the Online Safety Act's child safety duties. Read the briefing: [The impact of harmful online content on children](#)

Is your child influenced by toxic content? New government campaign supports parents to talk about harmful online content [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/>

See you at the next ECCRN meeting!



Partnering for Practice