Level 3 Residential Childcare: Unit 17

Understand the Care System and Its Impact on Children and Young People
Introduction

Within this area of your professional development you will gain the knowledge and understanding required to comprehend the care system and its impact on children and young people, exploring how children and young people enter the care system and the possible reasons for this. This includes identifying the frameworks underpinning the care system and how these can facilitate positive outcomes for children and young people.

You will also gain knowledge and understanding of the importance of collaboration in a setting in order to support the wellbeing of children and young people, examining approaches to working and how they are underpinned by legislation, policy and theoretical frameworks. The workings of the care system are explored and its role in the lives of children and young people, ensuring their experience of the care system is a positive one.

You will also cover the importance of planning frameworks for children and young people.

To complete this professional development module, you will be required to meet the learning outcomes detailed below:

Knowledge and understanding:

1. Understand the process by which a child or young person comes into care
2. Understand the entitlements of children and young people in care
3. Understand the context of residential services for children and young people in care
4. Understand the impact of residential childcare services on children and young people
5. Understand how to support a positive experience of care services for children and young people
6. Understand planning frameworks for children and young people in residential childcare
Children and young people are taken into the care of the local authority when they cannot remain at home.

This is either because it is unsafe for them to be there, or because their parents are unable to look after them. Some of the most common reasons for a child or young person being taken into care include abuse, neglect, family breakdown or a parent or child’s illness or disability.

Looked after children may be either ‘accommodated’ by the local authority (at the request of or in the absence of their birth parents) or subject to a Care Order made by the Family Courts. For some children and young people, being taken away from the home where they have been unsafe will be a relief. For others, being separated from their parents and/or siblings will be extremely distressing.

Whatever a child or young person has dealt with beforehand, being taken into care is itself traumatic. Many young people come through the care system and flourish. Many - though by no means all - have loving, dedicated foster carers or residential workers, and encounter social workers who go the extra mile to fight for the opportunities and support that make all the difference to a child in care.

But there is still a long way to go to close the gap in achievement and aspirations between children in care and their peers. The main vision is that children who spend time in care have equal chances to lead a happy and fulfilling life to those who are raised in their birth families.

**Learning Outcome One**

**Understand the process by which a child or young person comes into care**

**Factors in a child's circumstances that can lead to them entering the care system**

These may include abuse; harm; safeguarding issues; the child being at risk. It could be because of family separation, family relocation, unemployment or a severe change to financial circumstances.

Some children and young people are taken into care because of a family death or a severe illness. A parent or guardian may have suffered injury resulting in they themselves requiring long-term care. Some children and young people suffer abandonment and are simply left to fend for themselves without parental guidance. In some cases it can be a court decision, or a care order being issued through the legal justice system. Others may simply have become victims themselves and carried out offending behaviour.

The legal process by which children and young people become ‘looked after’ is a complex process, depending on level of urgency or risk attached to each individual case. It requires identification of placement and in many cases can require a brief or complex Child and Family Assessment. A Child and Family (C&F) Assessment addresses the central and most important aspects of the needs of a child / young person, and the capacity of his or her parents or care givers to respond appropriately to these needs within the wider family and community context. The conclusion of the assessment should provide analysis of the findings leading to a clear understanding of need that will facilitate care planning and inform service provision. C&F Assessments should contain input from other professionals and make use of additional assessment tools such as scales and questionnaires.
In many cases, the courts may require a chronology table, an account of events or dates in order of occurrences that have led to the child being in front of the court. Many children who are in effect wards of the court need to be supported through placement information records, and or review records linked to “Care Plans”. The courts and social Services will require some children and young people to be supported by assessment and progress records. Some children and young people require a “pathway plan”, these are for children aged 16 or 17, who are looked after by children’s services for a period of 13 weeks since the age of 14 and are currently in care. Pathway plans should include:

➢ the nature of and level of contact and personal support to be provided;
➢ the young person’s health needs and how these should be met;
➢ arrangements to support the young person in further education or employment;
➢ arrangements to support the young person in sustaining and developing family relationships;
➢ arrangements to ensure the young person is properly equipped for taking greater responsibility towards their independence;
➢ an assessment of the young person’s financial needs and capacity and any financial assistance provided;
➢ arrangements to ensure the young person is living in suitable accommodation; and
➢ any ‘Staying Put’ arrangements.

Children who are or have been looked after in care may receive what is known as a “Statutory Visit”, this is involves the local authority social worker to visit the child within one week of the start of any placement in a residential setting. In some cases parental consent is required should the placement or social services wish to do something with the child. If there are no parents available, this may require the involvement of a guardian.

The role of key professionals in the care system

Key professional relates to social workers who work with the courts to carry out an assessment of needs, they continue monitoring and review of each individual child. They also undertake the management of transaction between the home environment and the care environment. Of course one of their main roles is accessing resources and funding for each child. They are also in overall charge of safeguarding each child. In addition to these responsibilities.

Other professionals that may be called upon are Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) for representation in court, they also oversee the safeguarding and promote the welfare of children, provision of advice to the family courts CAFCASS provide information, advice and support to children and their families acting in best interests of children and young people. All professional involved must become actively involved in key decision making in liaison with child/young person, overseeing of court orders and contact with parents and guardians as required or allowed.

Why a child or young person may have experienced multiple transitions and traumas before entering residential childcare:

This may be because of safeguarding issues or for the protection of the child. Not all children are deemed safe in the hands of other relatives or family members. They may have suffered traumas with other carers who may not have turned out to be deemed suitable for the child’s emotional and social needs.

Some children and young people may have fallen victim to funding issues and may have been shipped from pillar to post just to ensure a roof over their heads every night. It may be
that due to the type of court order placed upon them, they themselves may be of harm to others within a residential childcare setting. They may carry out offending behaviour towards staff and other residents in the home. In other instances, it may be because of the breakdown of a last placement, the child or young person requiring a change of needs, that the placement cannot address these changing needs. In some cases, it is simply a case of the chosen location not being suitable to the child, young person or their parents and or guardians.

**Understanding the entitlements of children and young people in care**

The legal and statutory entitlements of children and young people in care:

These will include those relating to visits-risk assessed on an individual basis. Each child’s entitlement must be consistent with their welfare and well-being.

Some young people in care may have been awarded allowances, these are support and benefits payments to help with costs. Each child and young person is entitled to contact with family members, this is encouraged, but is dependent on individual circumstances. They are entitled to “advocacy” - in all its forms seeks to “ensure that people, particularly those who are most vulnerable in society, are able to: Have their voice heard on issues that are important to them. Defend and safeguard their rights. Have their views and wishes genuinely considered when decisions are being made about their lives”.

Children and young people in care are entitled to seek out the advice and guidance of an “Independent Reviewing Officer” who will ill work with them and provide support with care planning, preparation for reviews and access to resources. For many children placed into care for the first time, it is a bewildering experience, and many do not understand their personal entitlements or are not supported to access them, this can result in their individual needs not being met.

Many children fall foul of an overburdened care system and receive inadequate assessment, poor on-going reviews which can lead them to experience a placement breakdown, they experience unmet duty of care from the setting all of which have a severe impact on their development.

Remember: - Children have a voice and children have entitlements
**Understand the context of residential services for children and young people in care**

In order to be in a position to understand the context of residential services, you will need to study and develop new skills around theoretical approaches relating to residential childcare services. It is vitally important that you have a clear understanding of “Social Pedagogy” – an approach to caring for children and young people which combines education and care, shared responsibility of parents/carers and society in general.

When looking deeply into the overall context of residential childcare, it is essential that all the adopted systems and procedures provide a consistent approach with built in flexibility for change and adaptation. All system and procedures adopted by your setting must be geared around and provide an outcome based focus. Concentrating on what has can be achieved rather what has not been achieved. As a residential Childcare practitioner, you should know and understand “Life-space”, the promotion of individual growth and development within the context of daily activities and events. Within the context of residential childcare, there exists a “Solution Focused” approach to care, this is built around the identification of goals with a focus on resources available to support this.

Look back at what we have already covered. Remember the legislative and policy frameworks underpinning care for ‘looked after’ children and young people:

- Children Act 1989
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- Children Act 2004
- Children and Young Person Act 2008
- Equality Act 2010
- Children and Families Act 2014
- The Care Act 2014

We must also consider the types of care arrangements for ‘looked after’ children and young people, including:

- staying with parents (compulsory supervision)
- kinship care
- foster care
- children’s homes
- residential schools

It is important to understand the characteristics of therapeutic services that distinguish these from other residential childcare services. Consider the development and use of models/approaches utilised across this complex area of care, these must each be tailored to the needs/prefereces/abilities of the child/young person. Each must carefully focus on specific aspects of health and/or wellbeing.

Study and reflect upon the aims and objectives of a residential childcare service: look carefully at your own workplace. Look into an analyse the characteristics of provision that reflect good practice, how do these relate to current theories, your settings policies and procedures.
How do these link into current regulations and legislation?
Does your setting include child centred provision?
Do you understand and advocate children’s rights?
Do you adequately promote equality and inclusion?
Do you promote and advocate cultural sensitivity (includes avoiding stereotypes and respecting cultural practices and beliefs, including those relating to disability, while remaining alert to risks and discriminatory practices)?

One other area of support available to residential childcare settings comes through networking with other agencies to build a team around a child. This can be a very complex. Finally, when looking at support and complexities of this, each child is entitled to advocacy, the support of the Law of the land.

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**Learning Outcome Four**

*Understand the impact of residential childcare services on children and young people*

Within your on-going professional development, it is of great importance that you are able to understand, how being in care presents additional challenges for children and young people. Not all children and young people placed into care have an easy time, many are subjected to repeated and sudden enforced transitions.

Many simply cannot bear the fact of living away from the family, sometimes in strange and threatening environments. They cannot understand or comprehend the need to engage with a range of professionals and discuss their lives openly.

Compare the life chances and outcomes of children and young people in residential childcare with:

- children and young people in other types of care. Look at all the similarities and differences. Consider the levels of risk identified. What are the opportunities available that can impact on a child’s development. What is the availability of these within different care settings and do the children and young people have access to preferences/choices and do they experience increased levels of support.

- children and young people outside the care system. Consider the home environment, the role of the parental/carer and the levels of support provided to them. What are the resources they have access to, and how do they benefit from peer influence?

Finally look at how these children are viewed by the community and society in general.
Understand how to support a positive experience of care services for children and young people

As a developing professional in a position of utmost responsibility, it falls to you and your colleagues to understand the impact on practice of recognising that all children and young people in care are vulnerable.

Each child becomes dependent upon you and your team to ensure that all the statutory safeguarding issues surrounding them are catered for in an effective and caring manner. Each child or young person relies on you for protection, the expect high quality duty of care from you and the team. As a professional residential childcare practitioner who forms part of a supportive team, it is vital, that not just you, but that every member of your team understands their roles and responsibilities.

Children and young people need to be reassured in the knowledge that, as a professional you are able to undertake accurate and concise reporting/recording of their development through the many stages of their troubled journey through life. They rely on your professional support and approach to monitoring and observation of them at all times. A positive experience comes from the support you also provide when they are not there. Looking after their well-being whilst at school requires effective collaboration and even more effective lines of communication.

The attitudes and values of all team members need to enable children and young people to have a positive experience of the care setting, settings should adopt a policy of embracing diversity and recognising and promoting equality for all. This can be brought about through developing mutual respect and tolerance, through developing and maintaining non-judgemental attitudes.

A positive experience of care services for children and young people requires anti-discriminatory practice at all levels. It requires each team member to understand the importance of challenging overt and covert discrimination. In some instances, it may require staff to promote self-assertion and self-belief which build self-confidence.

A positive experience of care services for children and young people requires staff not giving unambiguous messages, be honest and above all be trustworthy, understanding and supportive. Instil a culture of motivation and determination. Develop a wide range of interpersonal skills, demonstrate competence and a full comprehension of each child or young person’s needs, their abilities and their preferences.

Remember children and young people in care have rights.
Understand planning frameworks for children and young people in residential childcare

As a professional residential childcare practitioner, it falls to you to understand the purpose and features of plans required for children and young people in residential childcare.

The planning frameworks and the individual plans that can be attached to each child’s care can be full of complex issues dependent upon each individual’s circumstances. Here are some of the plans you may experience in your role as a carer:

**Placement Plan**

Every Child looked after MUST have a placement plan, completed by the child’s social worker with support from other professionals from Children’s Residential Services and Fostering Services. The Placement Plan sets out the day to day arrangements for the care of a child. It includes amongst other things:

- How on a day-to-day basis the child will be cared for and the child’s welfare will be safeguarded and promoted by the appropriate person, including any relevant risks which may be identified for the child
- Any arrangements for contact between the child and parents/anyone with Parental Responsibility/any other Connected Person, including, if appropriate, reasons why contact is not reasonably practicable
- Arrangements for the child’s health (physical, emotional and mental) and dental care, including the name and address of registered medical and dental practitioners, and arrangements for giving/withholding consent to medical/dental examination/treatment
- Arrangements for the child’s education and training, including the name and address of the child’s school/other educational institution/provider and designated teacher
- The arrangements for and frequency of visits by the child’s social worker, and for advice, support and assistance between visits.

**Statutory Care Plan**

One of the key functions of the Care Plan is to ensure that each child has a Permanence Plan by the time of the second Looked After Review. Care Planning is a crucial ingredient in the preparation of a local authority’s application to Court for a Care Order because it explains how the proposed Care Order will be implemented in order to achieve specific outcomes for the child. Before making a Care Order, Courts have to be satisfied that the Threshold Criteria are satisfied, having regard to the Welfare Checklist.

The child’s overarching care plan should include:

- Placement Plan (setting out why the placement was chosen and how the placement will contribute to meeting the child’s needs);
- Permanence Plan (long-term plans for the child’s upbringing including timescales);
- Pathway Plan (where appropriate, for young people leaving care);
- Health Plan or Personal Education Plan.
Of course, there are a great many forms and types of plans that can be attached to individuals, it is vital that each child is not stigmatised or simply labelled by this.

Part of your professional development is to understand why children and young people should be supported to understand their own plans. Every child must be made to feel inclusion. It is important that you adopt and implement a child/person centred approach to individuals support. Adopt and approach that promotes motivation and want to achieve. A child centred approach requires involvement of the child, you need to understand their preferences, abilities and pursue all the options available to them.

You will need to demonstrate a complete understanding and the importance of ‘permanency planning’ for children and young people in care. This involves strategies that call for:

- Consistency
- Continuity
- Assessment of needs and abilities
- Needs being met, abilities being stretched and developed

Most of all care planning is not done for the child or young person, it should always be child/young person led, allow for full inclusion and be monitored for effectiveness on a regular basis.