

# ICHA Autumn 2016 position statement and commitments

## Certainty in Uncertain Times

### Partnership for the future of children and children's services

#### Introduction

In the current post-referendum turmoil, it could be easy for the social care and especially Residential Child Care agendas to be set aside as 'something to be considered after the big things are resolved.'

There is now ample evidence that the care system 'works' and many vulnerable children are better off being in the care system than left outside of it.

There is now ample research and regulatory evidence that Residential Child Care options for children overwhelmingly provide good quality of care and positive outcomes, including most recently in Sir Martin Narey's report on Residential Care in England.

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/534341/Residential\\_Care\\_in\\_England\\_and\\_Sir\\_Martin\\_Narey\\_July\\_2016.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/534341/Residential_Care_in_England_and_Sir_Martin_Narey_July_2016.pdf)

The ICHA is committed to working harder than ever to ensure the message received is that the future thinking and planning of Residential Child Care has to be taken forwards with confidence, so as to ensure certainty of supply to meet the demands made of the sector. What is happening today is about what will happen on all the tomorrows that follow.

Caring for the most vulnerable children in our society requires not only a caring and committed workforce, but this most important of tasks can only achieve success within a richly resourced environment, in which children can be nurtured and grow. This is not a choice. This is sound child care theory and practice.

Over the past few years, the ICHA has relentlessly been calling for realism, in analysis, in policy, in planning. We have affirmed the positive use of Residential Child Care and consistently reaffirmed the actually existing evidence. We have consistently stated that it is evidence and analysis that leads to positive planning.

In the current situation, the ICHA understands the need to communicate core messages. These messages will tell the story of care the ICHA see as necessary to be told by policy, media and politicians. Our social world is shaped by narratives. We need to ensure we are all acting to shape a common narrative. A shared vision will lead to a shared responsibility and actions. With regard to Residential Child Care, there are things that are essential that have to be argued for in the here and now. The ICHA is not indifferent to the achieving of these.

Lorraine Andrews Chair ICHA

Jonathan Stanley CEO ICHA

## Certainty through collaborative working

The ICHA is reaffirming its message, made recently with its colleague provider organisations NAFP and NASS, calling on the ADCS to invest in the future of children and Children's Services creating certainty through collaborative working.

The ICHA sees the partnership for the future as one of working together to ensure the certainty of the wellbeing of fostering, children's homes and residential special schools that are critical for the growth and protection of our most vulnerable young people.

Children's services are now a multi-ownership multi-sector provision. Care for children is increasingly a partnership between the sole purchasers, the local authorities, and the independent sector. The ICHA sees certainty come through ensuring, the choice that this diversity offers in meeting the needs of young people.

The ICHA sees the future and certainty of children's services being addressed through a jointly designed and delivered strategy that combines all services and settings. A positive partnership-created sector-led plan is needed combining leadership of ambition and practicality. Together, local authorities and providers have to agree, create and sustain positive collaborative systems and organisational culture. As the Ofsted Social Care report 2016 advises, there must be a 'golden thread' of a clearly thought-out, coherent, vision made evident both strategically and operationally.

Through the original NCERCC report on commissioning a decade ago, through the ADCS position statement 'What is care for?' and now in the Ofsted Social Care report 2016 and in the Sir Martin Narey's review of the place and use of Residential Child Care in current children's services, the importance of key decisions is observed.

- the decision to take young people into care is made at the right time;
- they go to live in the place that is right for them;
- they get the right support they need.

The ICHA is committed to collaborative leadership, creating a strong common culture, clarity of open, transparent communication, support to understand and use evidence and an unassailable joint commitment to children and to the partnership.

## Policy

Knowing what services to invest in is essential. Together, we need to be analysing needs and co-producing responses using evidence and experience informed methods.

## Practice leadership

The Ofsted social care report 2016 distils what has is being learned from inspection that successful organisations create the right environment for excellent practice and developing excellent practitioners.

From our many discussions with others, especially our common partner Research in Practice, we are convinced of a commitment being necessary to evidence-informed practice, meaning the triangulation of research evidence that is relevant and fit for purpose, practice wisdom (professional expertise) and service user experience. We believe that practice, services and outcomes are improved through drawing on all three sources of knowledge, and by using them together to construct new knowledge.

As a Research in Practice presentation regarding evidence based practice shows:-

- We're more likely to achieve the outcomes, if we know more about what's likely to work best;
- It's at the heart of continued professional development;
- It supports transparency in decision-making of the organisation and gives us the opportunity to explain to families/users/carers how decisions are made;
- It equips us to make cases for investment.

## **For the Autumn 2016, ICHA is making the following commitments for certainty in uncertain times, for a partnership for the future of children and children's services**

### **Children and Young people**

We need to invest in young people's future, no matter what the starting point.

We must never give up on young people. We are providing the belief in a positive future being possible.

A positive view of young people and services is essential. There is an all too common challenge that we must overcome in our culture and practice, this captured in a recent quote from a provider:-

*Children should be treated as a child of the authority they belong to and nurtured, not as a problem that needs moving, sorting.*

### **ICHA Commitment to young people**

We want you to be happy and have a choice of where you live. We commit to only placing children in a children's home where we are sure that you will be well looked after by caring staff, who will help you to feel safe and who will encourage and support you to achieve your goals.

### **Providers**

We need urgently to create a sustainable culture for children's homes providers. This is as much to do with morale as it is financial. This comes through a clear strategy directing time, skills, knowledge and investment wisely to achieve the outcomes we jointly set.

It also comes through a culture, where all partners are equally respected, listened to, and valued.

### **Commitment**

As partners in care, we hold our sector and the wider system to account to ensure that children and young people's journey through care is always a positive one.

### **The Residential Child Care sector**

The residential child care sector has proven its ability and resilience. Its diversity is an asset and shows response to need.

The people involved in delivering the quality care noted by Sir Martin Narey see the job as a profession and also as a vocation. These need to be recognised as vital positive attributes.

Providers need to explain and social workers/commissioners need to understand the theory and evidence base across the diversity of residential child care.

### **Commitment**

We are committed to the recovery of the positive use of Residential Child Care options and will continue to challenge all and every use of our sector as a provider of 'last resort.' We seek all placements to be planned, for all transitions moving in and moving on to be in the best interest of the young person and made at the assessed 'right' time.

### **Social care/work**

The provision of care is a joint endeavour as one provider explains:-

*We aim to offer your children and young people the best possible care experiences, in safe, warm and loving homes. We can only do this if we work in partnership together.*

The responsibility and authority of a Registered Manager made clear in the Quality Standards has to be asserted and acted upon strongly. A culture of equal professionalism and respect is needed.

We welcome Sir Martin Narey proposing experience by social workers in children's homes in order to be seen as qualified and will look forwards to receiving invitations to further this objective.

We need to be collectively accountable for the assessment of progress. Better, meaningful and consistent assessment tools are needed.

### **Commitment**

To even more actively seek to ensure that Residential Child Care is an equal partner.