

## Factors influencing the quality of residential child care



Leslie Hicks  
University of Lincoln, UK  
lhicks@lincoln.ac.uk

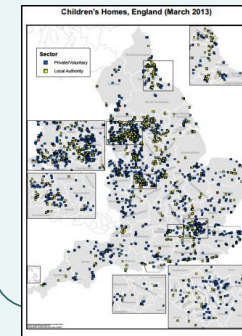
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## Presentation outline

- Quality issues in England
- Research overview: **Leadership, resource use and outcomes in residential child care** (some slides are background only)
- Key messages
- Prevailing issues for quality of residential child care

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## Residential child care: changing context



Size  
Purpose  
Organisation  
Standards  
Inspection

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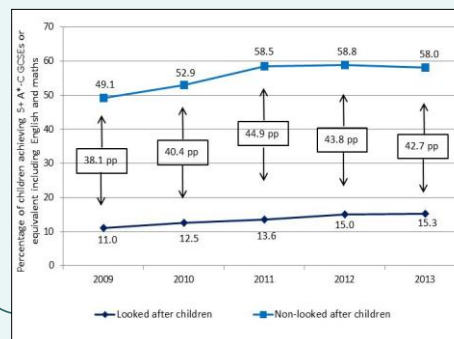
## Residential provision in England

- c6,000 live in residential homes (boys: 64%, girls: 36%)
- Most are over 12 years old (average age of residents: 14.6)
- Duration of placements is similar to foster placements, although fewer last longer than a year – 19% compared with 33%
- More than a quarter have at least five previous placements
- More likely to be living away from local communities (than foster care)
- 63% placed in private or voluntary provision
- High levels of emotional and behavioural difficulties
- Lower attainment levels in Key Stage examinations than other children

Source: DfE (2014)

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## Chief driver of reform: 'attainment'



## From government: How the new regulatory framework will make a difference

'An opportunity to move away from prescription and towards supporting professional judgement by:

- setting out in regulation the outcomes that children must be supported to achieve while living in children's homes;
- replacing the current National Minimum Standards with a Guide to the regulations that will explain and supplement the requirements stated in the regulations; and
- streamlining and modernising the current regulations on management and administrative processes to allow managers and staff in homes to focus on providing quality care for children.'

### Research overview

- Leadership, resource use and outcomes in residential child care
- Research team: Leslie Hicks, Ian Gibbs, Sarah Byford, Helen Weatherly
- Part of the government funded research initiative 'Costs and effectiveness of services for children in need'

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### In the 'Leadership' study we aimed to:

- Describe and measure the practice of managers, use of resources, and costs
- Assess the impact of these on: morale and unity of staff group; quality of the residential environment; changes in the young people over one year
- Assess the applicability of findings to practice and to the experience of staff and managers

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### Ways of thinking about quality of care in children's homes

- **Structure** – stable characteristics of providers of care, resources available, physical and organisational settings
- **Process** – activities that take place between those who provide care and those who receive it
- **Outcomes** – aspects of well-being (social, psychological and physical) that can be linked to care provided

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### Data collection and analysis

- **Quantitative** – use of 14 questionnaires at two points in time
- **Qualitative** – interviews with managers of homes and with staff groups
- **Economics** – costs data from each home and organisation
- **Multi-level modelling (MLM)**, nesting each level of analysis



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### Diversity: care hours (per young person per week)

	Range	Mean	Median	SD
<b>Care hours 1</b>				
Total staff hours to young people	37 - 254	83.4	71.5	52.2
<b>Care hours 2</b>				
Total staff hours to registered beds	37 - 221	65.3	57.2	34.5

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### Economic analysis: summary

- Higher costs significantly associated with location (South) and high staff:resident ratio
- Better outcomes associated with longer lengths of stay, for those who reported lower 'pressure to temptation' prior to entry to the home
- Total costs per resident per week **were not found to be related to young people's wellbeing**
- Costs and outcomes of homes were similar across sectors



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### What do effective managers of children's homes do?

- Much **more than** (but including) the administration of a **bureaucratic system**
- Create, maintain, develop and influence their staff teams – **coherence**
- Share roles and responsibilities – **empowerment** balanced with **responsibility and authority**
- Establish a **collaborative culture** which they lead and develop
- Enable **goal-oriented** practice
- Work across the boundary of the home, with wider networks, including parents and carers

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### Effective managers and their organisations

- Establish credibility
- Maintain autonomy
- Identify and access sufficient support
- Identify and access sufficient supervision
- Be involved in wider strategic management
- Identify and access external development opportunities



Feel valued and respected within the parent organisation

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### Effective managers' ways of working with young people

- Positive approaches
- Consistency across the group while focusing on individual needs
- Knowing and understanding young people's needs and characteristics
- Building relationships – internally and externally



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### Drawing together the different levels of analysis (MLM)

Where managers had clear well-worked out strategies for **behaviour** and **education**

**young people were:** less likely to be excluded from school, or convicted or cautioned while in the home; expressed more favourable views about the social climate of the home; were happier on some measures; were seen as functioning better by their social workers.

**staff:** had higher morale; felt that they received clearer and better guidance; felt that the young people behaved better.



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### Main findings



Major differences in ways homes function; outcomes not determined by numbers of staff, or by costs of homes

#### What matters?

Managers are accepted as embodying good practice from within a clear ethos

Managers have positive strategies for young people's **behaviour** and **education** and



**can enable staff to reflect/deploy these**

#### Main message?

The influence of process on outcomes is paramount

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### Prevailing issues for quality of residential child care in England

- **Managers:** selection and appointment; support and supervision; capacity building; monitoring and endorsing practice
- **Staff:** status, experience and qualification; risk; ratios; prior experience
- **Young people:** care in groups; placement duration; risk and procedural requirements; strategies and support for practice; relationship of residential care to what comes next
- **Training:** home and group oriented; learnings shared within homes; links between care standards, inspections, and providing care?



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**Last words...**

My link worker's just got the manager's job, we've broke up from school and I'm going on holiday at the end of August!

Young person

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### Bibliography

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### Themes to consider

- What do you think of as 'good leadership' (GL) in children's homes?
- What difference does GL make to staff teams (e.g. recruitment, retention, morale)?
- What difference does GL make to the quality of practice and outcomes for young people?
- What helps those working in children's homes to become good leaders?

