

Workforce Wellbeing in therapeutic children's homes

Dr Sarah Parry and Tracey Williams



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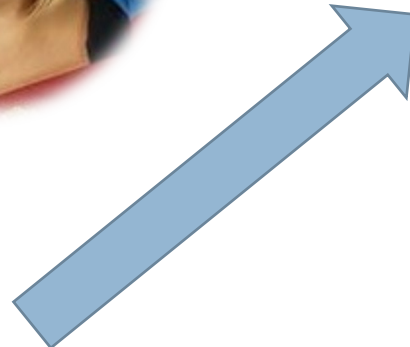
@drSarahParry
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Welcome!

Dr Sarah Parry
Clinical Psychologist and Researcher



Tracey Williams
PhD Researcher and Trainee Counsellor



CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL WORKFORCE WELLBEING CHARTER

We recognise that our profession faces a unique set of challenges alongside immense potential to improve the lives of vulnerable young people through organisational and individual efforts. Collectively, we have a responsibility to create an environment that promotes wellbeing and that proactively supports positive health for all, now and in the future.

As an organisation, we will:

Create a nurturing and inclusive organisational ethos, which respects individual differences, diversity and collaborative collegiate practices.

Provide therapeutically-informed supervision that nurtures belongingness, hope and professional pride, enquiring how supervisees are, rather than only what they have done - checking in, rather than checking on.

Have a staff wellbeing and mental health policy, accompanied by an implementation plan, which will be reviewed through the annual PDR process and during supervision following critical incidents.

Nurture the health of our staff through senior management and organisational initiatives to promote their wellbeing and enable them to be emotionally available and attuned to the needs of the children.

Recognise that the emotional and physical wellbeing of our staff are both affected by and essential to their working role.

Promote equality of opportunity and proactively challenge stigma, discrimination and threats to wellbeing.

Recognise the skills, knowledge and expertise within the workforce and the benefit of peer-led mentorship and support.

Perceive learning as an ongoing process, providing appropriate training and reflective spaces for staff to access tailored trauma-informed training and opportunities for peer-led experiential learning and support.

As a practitioner, I will:

Employ reflective and supportive practices to proactively contribute towards a culture of resilience, belongingness and hopefulness.

Identify stressors and threats to my wellbeing that could contribute towards ruptures in relationships with colleagues and those in my care, with a view to taking preventative actions.

Engage in protected time initiatives for reflective practices with colleagues to enhance wellbeing and professional practices.

Monitor my own wellbeing following incidents and communicate my needs clearly and quickly to a senior manager, who will discuss a support plan.

Communicate my needs, concerns and possible solutions with regards to my physical and emotional health, promoting my overall wellbeing.

Give myself the care and support I would provide others to be comfortable and healthy in myself, recognising my personal qualities are an essential part of what I bring to my working role and the vulnerable children I care for

Recognise the value of and need for restorative practices, such as reflection, emotional space to talk freely and professional pride in myself and my colleagues.

Our Workforce Wellbeing Charter
Thanks to funding from the Nuffield Foundation



Co-produced with workforce members. Funding from the Nuffield Foundation. Acknowledgement to Dr Sarah Parry and Tracey Williams (2020) Correspondence: CCRG@mmu.ac.uk Twitter: @InCareResearch

Why develop a Wellbeing Charter?

- Residential children's home workers have been systematically overlooked in terms of research, adding to the challenges of supporting them to care for our most vulnerable children throughout the pandemic and related hardships.
- Even under typical working conditions, the demands on residential children's workers are extremely high, involving long hours, low pay, and responsibility for safety, emotional support, discipline and boundaries, and managing crises.
- This valuable but overlooked occupational group often experience high levels of stress at work and subsequent burnout.
- Burnout affects emotional availability and therefore therapeutic outcomes for children.



The therapeutic relationships that children have with residential staff are incredibly important for healing, regulation, and development.

“

we play a key role to a forgotten/unheard of group of vulnerable people

- Kate

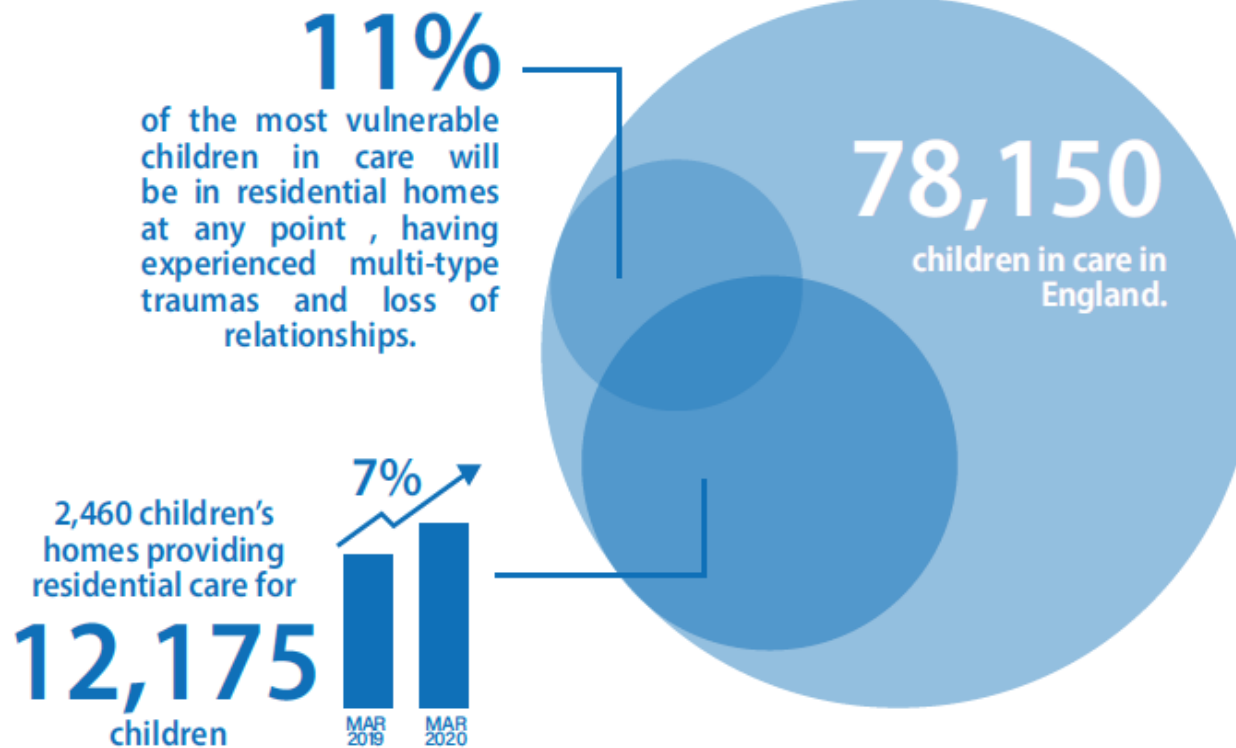
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“

the young people are being taken care of [...] but who's looking after me?

- Tas

”



Children in care are overly represented across youth and adult forensic services and homeless populations.

Secure and positive relationships in childhood can reduce these risks and protect against further victimisation and exploitation.

“

the way that the stresses of the work and simply of our lives rattle about the community

-Darren

”

“

the use of reflective practice and supervision to consider the emotional impact of the work on myself

-Chris

”

Why develop a Wellbeing Charter?

- There are frequent staff turnovers in residential children's care due to burnout, compounded by recruitment and retention challenges during COVID-19.
- Traumatic stress specifically attributed to role-related stress may also go unreported across caring professions and thus under-supported, resulting in accelerated burnout and stress-related leave.

Therefore, it is essential that the children's residential care workforce is supported during and after the pandemic due to existent risk factors, which are likely to be significantly exacerbated due to COVID-19.



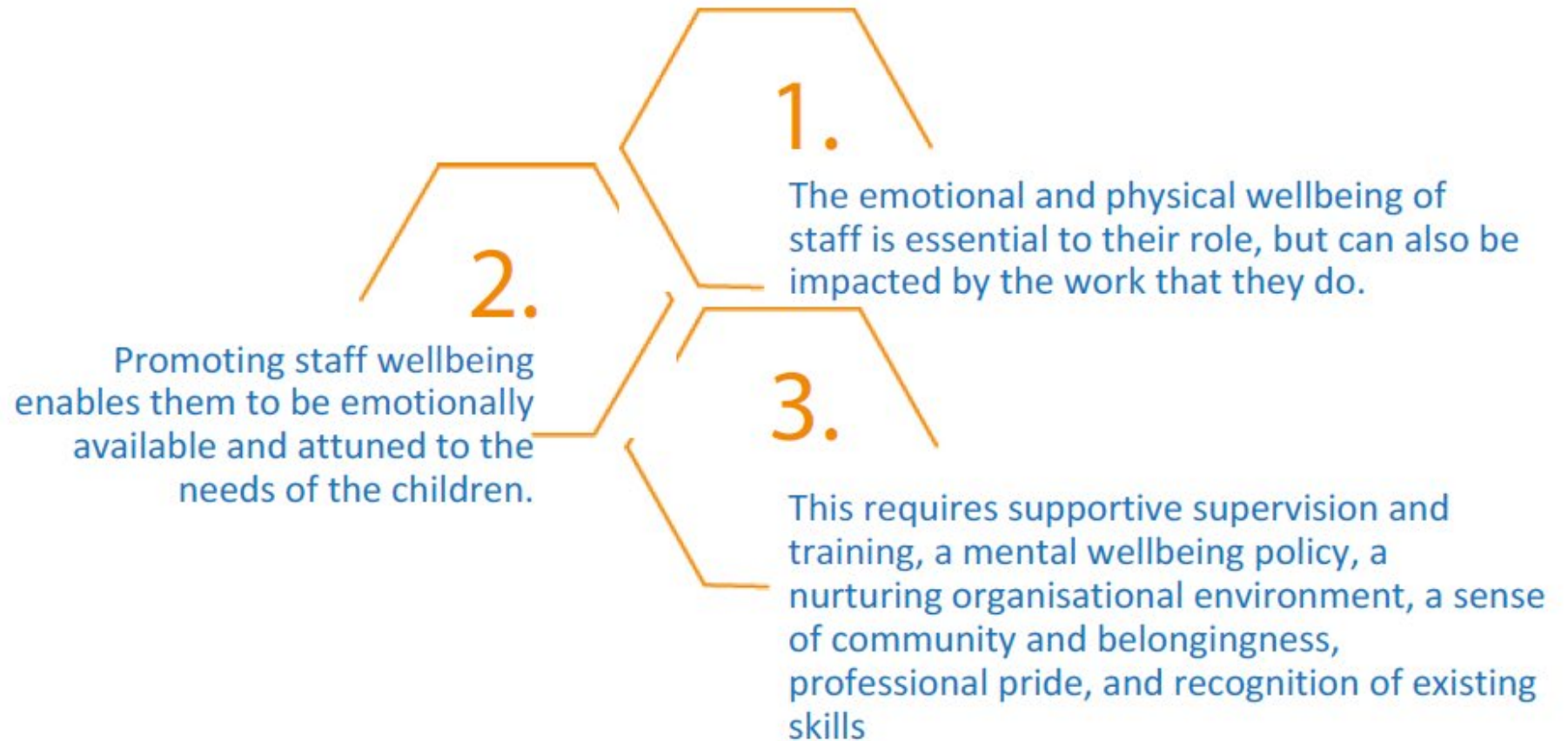
Research that involves residential children's home workers is essential to understand what support they need when caring for our most vulnerable children, throughout the pandemic and beyond.

“

I think people forget about the key workers in care roles (particularly with looked after children) and can't comprehend the impact of working alongside raw, unprocessed trauma

-Sarah

”



What did we do?

- 33 participants took part in the survey and teleconference conversations, providing in-depth feedback on the situations they faced.
- A stakeholder advisory board supported the project, including frontline staff, care leavers, service managers and policy researchers.
- The advisory board assisted in triangulating the data from the survey and interviews to generate a complete analysis, informing the development of the Charter.



What did we find?

“I think people forget about the key workers in care roles (particularly with looked after children) and can't comprehend the impact of working alongside raw, unprocessed trauma of children at any time, let alone during a virus pandemic. I'd like the public to know that my colleagues are awesome and have consistently shown up and delivered every day”



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What now, what next?

- The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed professional, financial and environmental inequalities in the therapeutic care of looked-after children.
- Change is needed within and across services to care for the carers!
- We need to recognise that many of the trends we see across health and social care in terms of staff wellbeing and outcomes for patients are also relevant for therapeutic residential children's care.

Therefore, service providers should also embrace their duty of care for their staff.



Thank you!



- Visit our [Research Webpage](#) for more information and our resources
- Please consider taking part in or sharing our [current research study](#)

