

## **Moral Distress in residential Child Care**

Neoliberalism has ushered in a rise in managerialism, technocracy and bureaucratisation in residential child care where economy, efficiency, and effectiveness have been prioritised over the moral imperative to care. One implication has been the commodification of children who are traded in a culture of procurement and commissioning compounded by a climate of austerity, and where moral regulation has been replaced by contractual regulation. The impact of this upon the care that children receive has raised concern. The impact upon frontline carers of intractable moral challenges which this climate presents in their role of caring each day is less well understood. The naming of an experience can provide an important starting place to understanding and challenging it. This presentation draws upon the phenomenon of 'moral distress', which is well documented in the medical field, and considers the transferability of this phenomenon from nursing to residential child care. It proposes that moral distress discourse may provide a language to residential child care workers through which their experience of the betrayal of the moral fabric of their work may be articulated and challenged.

## **Presenter:**



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I have been employed in the field of childcare and protection working primarily on residential child care issues since 1991. During this time I have held a range of positions including direct practice, management, research, staff learning and development, and international consultancy. In addition to my substantive post as Executive Director at a multi service children's charity in Scotland, I am an independent international child protection consultant. I have consulted on a number of projects relating to residential child care with Save the Children International in East & Central Africa and China, and with UNICEF in Indonesia, Turkey, Pakistan, Myanmar, Vietnam, Laos, Ukraine and Belarus.