

The Authentic Warmth Dimension of Professional Childcare

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Summary

The emotional, social and academic problems of children and young people in public care have long been documented and many researchers have named the chief culprits as a deeply flawed corporate care system and an unsympathetic education establishment. While the need for major improvements to both corporate care and education is recognized, in this paper, a perspective, which links early childhood experiences with restricted life outcomes, is presented and it is argued that it is parental rejection (often accompanied by abuse and neglect) which is a major mediating factor in the often restricted life outcomes for many of these children. The approach described here is designed to empower residential staff and foster-carers to provide not only high-quality parenting, but also the sensitive support which can enable children and young people in care to cope with parental rejection, abuse and neglect. It is also argued that these two tasks (good parenting and appropriate emotional support) are key factors in promoting the successful emotional, social and academic development of children in public care.

Keywords: children in public care, residential and foster-carers, parenting, post-trauma support, improving outcomes for vulnerable children

Introductory comments

Recognizing the Child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1990, preamble).