

Key Principles of Residential Care

Let's start at the beginning...



Key principles of residential care



Key Principles of Residential Care

- Principles for residential child care
- 1.10 The principles upon which residential child care is delivered are important elements that underpin the Regulations and this Guide. The principles below, originally drafted by NCERRC2, have been amended for use in this document following contributions before and during our consultation period by the residential child care sector. We would expect all homes to apply the principles below, and to ensure that residential child care is a positive choice for children and young people where a children's home is the best placement to meet their individual needs.



Residential Care – key principles

1. Children in residential childcare should be loved, happy, healthy, safe from harm and able to develop, thrive and fulfil their potential.
2. Residential childcare should value and nurture each child as an individual with talents, strengths and capabilities that can develop over time.
3. Residential childcare should foster positive relationships, encouraging strong bonds between children and staff in the home on the basis of jointly undertaken activities, shared daily life, domestic and non-domestic routines and established boundaries of acceptable behaviour
4. Residential childcare should be ambitious, nurturing children's school learning and out of-school learning and their ambitions for their future.
5. Residential childcare should be attentive to children's need, supporting emotional, mental and physical health needs, including repairing earlier damage to self-esteem and encouraging friendship.
6. Residential childcare should be outward facing, working with the wider system of professionals for each child, and with children's families and communities of origin to sustain links and understand past problems.
7. Residential childcare should have high expectations of staff as committed members of a team, as decision makers and as activity leaders. In support of this, children's homes should ensure all staff and managers are engaged in on-going learning about their role and the children and families they work with.
8. Residential childcare should provide a safe and stimulating environment in high-quality buildings, with spaces that support nurture and allow privacy as well as common spaces and spaces to be active.



Key changes in SCCIF 2026 for children's homes

- **1. Stronger emphasis on children's day-to-day lived experience**
- The largest change is in the section on **“evaluating the experiences and progress of children.”**
- The updated framework now places greater weight on:
 - what daily life actually feels like for children
 - the warmth, stability and atmosphere of the home
 - the quality of relationships between staff and children
 - whether children feel safe, listened to and valued
 - how well staff understand each child's identity, communication style and trauma history
 - how children's progress is recognised over time, not just formally recorded
- This represents a shift from:
 - “Can the home evidence this?”
 - to:
 - “What is the child's real experience of living here?”



2. Greater focus on belonging, stability and identity

- The revised criteria now more explicitly assess whether homes:
 - promote a sense of belonging
 - provide emotional security and continuity
 - help children build positive identity and resilience
 - maintain meaningful relationships and family connections where appropriate
- Inspectors are expected to explore:
 - how children are welcomed into the home
 - how endings and moves are managed
 - whether children feel “part of” the home
- This links to wider national reform themes around placement stability and reducing disruption.



Ideas to do with the team

- Think about Principle's go over them in team meeting with the staff
- Reflect on their thoughts around them
- Break them off into small froups and ask kthem to think about :
- How do we show we meet these
 - How would we see this in our home?
 - How would we be able to evidence this in our home?



Management tasks

- Review the SOP – does this capture the ethos of the Key principles
- Do your staff know and understand this key document and it's importance
- Task management team members to review principle 7 – training of the staff
 - evidence of this is held where?



Next steps

Think about actions you can take forward led by the team giving them responsibility

Link the Key principles to the SCCIF updates

How can you involve the children and young people in how they feel about the home?

What do you do now? Any good practice people want to share ?