

Responding to Offending in Residential Childcare- Next steps project Progress Report

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Executive summary

Building upon our previous research into offending and residential childcare [“Between a Rock and a Hard Place”: Responses to Offending in Residential Childcare](#), for the last year CYCJ, in partnership with Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum (Staf), has been working on the ‘Responding to Offending in Residential Childcare-Next steps’ project.

Thus far this work has focused on developing an understanding of, and influencing, local practice in four children’s houses from across three geographical areas.

This report will highlight the recognisable achievements made and learning gained both for practice with children involved in offending in residential childcare and in respect of the chosen methodology, before examining the project design and how the project was undertaken in practice.

Introduction

In 2016, the Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice (CYCJ) published a report into offending and residential childcare [“Between a Rock and a Hard Place”: Responses to Offending in Residential Childcare](#) (Moodie and Nolan, 2016). This report presented the findings from research that combined ‘police contact data’ for young people placed in two local authority run children’s houses over a period of six months, alongside information received from an online survey by house managers and interviews with 27 residential workers on decision-making in responding to offending behaviour.

The research found that 43% of the children within houses in local authority A, came to the attention of the police during the six-month period studied, with 46% of the incidents which lead to police contact taking place within the children’s house. Of these incidents, 70% resulted in the young person being charged (Moodie and Nolan, 2016). In local authority B, 50% of the children came to the attention of the police, with 88% of these contacts happening due to incidents which took place within the children’s house (Moodie and Nolan, 2016). These findings underline the critical need for multi-agency data gathering and monitoring on a local and national basis (Moodie and Nolan, 2016). Interviews with residential workers highlighted that decision making in response to offending behaviour was complex. It involved reconciling a range of dilemmas in order to provide an individualised response, requiring professional judgement (Moodie and Nolan, 2016). A range of factors were cited as supporting good quality, robust and confident decision making. These included situating practice within a positive, shared, supportive, and respectful organisational culture. An ethos where staff were empowered by their managers and could draw on a wide range of formal and informal, managerial and colleague support (Moodie and Nolan, 2016). Additional critical factors included the prioritisation of professional development, training and induction; staff having a range of de-escalation strategies and consequences available; the building and sustaining of good quality relationships between police, residential staff and young people and amongst colleagues (Moodie and Nolan, 2016). The report concluded that each of these factors were essential if the aim of police involvement being the option of last resort by residential child care workers responding to offending was to be made a practice reality (Moodie and Nolan, 2016).

The above research and subsequent report had been intended as a pilot study that would lead to a national research piece. However, on presenting the findings to a range of professionals, the conclusion was reached that a follow up project which focused on supporting the implementation of these findings in practice and embedding this learning at local and national levels would have greater impact on improving outcomes for children. As a result, the ‘Responding to Offending in Residential Childcare-Next steps’ project began in 2017 in partnership with the Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum (Staf). The project has thus far focused on developing an understanding of, and influencing local practice, by adopting an improvement methodology to work with four children’s houses from two local

authorities and one third sector organisation in Scotland. The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the progress made with this project over the previous year. This report will highlight the recognisable achievements made and learning gained both for practice with children involved in offending in residential childcare and in respect of the chosen methodology. The report will then go on to examine the project design and how the project was undertaken in practice. The conclusions presented have been reached through a process of ongoing reflection and critical analysis by the project facilitators. This has included the analysis of sessions held with participants throughout the project, drawing on our observations, materials developed, session notes and write ups, which have been collated and thematically coded. These written recordings have been supplemented with ongoing individual and joint reflection by the facilitators via a combination of debriefings after each session and at least monthly meetings to review the findings and progress of the project, alongside regular supervision with line managers. Moreover, these conclusions have been shared and sense checked with participants and partner organisations during the project and on completion of this report.

Learning and achievements

The 'Responding to Offending in Residential Childcare-Next steps' project has made a number of accomplishments and highlighted a variety of learning points. These have been differentiated below into: Learning for practice with children involved in offending in residential childcare; Learning in respect of the chosen methodology; and Recognisable achievements.

Learning for practice with children involved in offending in residential childcare

The following is a collation of the key themes which were identified across children's houses involved in the project and are of relevance for practice in responding to offending behaviour more generally. It should be noted that a number of these themes are consistent with those identified in the original research report (Moodie and Nolan, 2016):

- Across all houses, the **desire not to criminalise young people** and an awareness of the possible impact of doing so for the young people and their future was highlighted. The potential **complexities** of police contact on **relationships** between young people and staff; between team members; and with managers and senior managers was also identified

In two of the four houses, staff reported responding to offending behaviour through **police contact was not an issue** and they felt **confident in their decision making**. Aligned with our previous research, **factors perceived to support** this included having a positive **organisational culture** within

which it was agreed that police contact would be the option of last resort; staff being **supported and empowered** by managers to make decisions; having an **experienced staff team**; and **shared expectations and understanding** of the roles and responsibilities of the **police**.

- The importance of staff having a **range of de-escalation strategies, tools and consequences** for responding to offending behaviour was reiterated. The impact on young people was questioned and limitations to what was available to staff, particularly where safe holding was not used, were highlighted. Linked to this, the ability to gain support from **external services** for young people such as education and mental health services was reported at times to be problematic
- **Consistency** of approaches within staff teams, including house managers, in responding to offending behaviour was reported to vary at times. Factors that could **support consistency** were reported to include clear, consistent and streamlined **communication**; **modelling** by managers; having a **good team** that knew each other and could compromise; having clear **boundaries, structures and routines**, including clear **expectations** of responses to certain offences; and the ability to access **external support** as needed such as on call services
- Staff spoke about the **balance between care and control**, demonstrating a high level of concern, compassion and understanding of the young people they were working with. Linked with this however, was the responsibility to all young people's **safety** within the children's house and the potential impact, including the risk of **traumatising and re-traumatising** other young people through witnessing offending and violent behaviour from their peers, as well as the need to uphold the **rights** of all young people and staff
- The general dilemmas and anxieties of responding to offending behaviour were heightened where staff reported that they did not feel **listened to and included in decisions**, either within the children's house or as part of the team around the child. This was particularly prevalent regarding placement decisions, levels of risk including when this became unmanageable, and risk management. Feelings of **hopelessness**, that there was little staff could do, and fears of what could happen to the young person were evident in these situations. This was compounded where staff had previously experienced serious and/or violent incidents and had been **inadequately supported**. Many staff described a level of **unresolved trauma** from such instances. Each of these factors brought frustration, anxiety, safety concerns and a detrimental impact on morale, which impacted on current practice and the welfare and wellbeing of staff members

The need to recognise the impact of **organisational issues** on staff practice and morale, such as staffing levels and arrangements was abundantly clear. In one area, the **ability of staff to determine and enlist when additional staff** were needed was positively highlighted, but this appeared to be unique to this house.

- Practice in respect of **post-incident support, debriefing and incident monitoring** appeared to be inconsistent. When completed, it was not always experienced as supportive to staff and is an area where additional focus is needed if our workforce is to be adequately supported

Inconsistency in **expectations and the perceived role and responses of the police** was reported both within and between individuals and areas, children's houses and police. In one area, it had been agreed that to address the issue of young people accruing unnecessary charges when this had not been the intention of residential staff, during police contact support to "**restore order**" would be requested, as opposed to reporting a crime. To support consistency, interest was expressed in developing further **procedural guidance** in respect of police contact and in **enhancing communication and informal contact** between house staff and police officers, which had reportedly reduced over recent times.

- Mirroring this, in three houses there was a question relating to the **safe disposal of drugs**, something staff were keen to be able to do with the support of the police, without always needing to identify the young person involved or to result in charges. Clarity with regard to the use of **discretion and consistency of approaches** by both residential staff and police officers was also sought. It was deemed this would support the aim of making corporate parenting more aligned with parenting within the family home
- The vital importance, but often lack of, **shared understanding** across agencies about the needs and experiences of looked after children; the impact of these experiences on young people, including their behaviours and communication; and the purpose of residential childcare and what individual houses were trying to achieve

Learning in respect of the chosen methodology

In this project, an improvement methodology was adopted with the project design and how this was undertaken is explored in more depth later in the report. At this stage, the learning points from implementing an improvement methodology in practice will be highlighted which are of relevance both for this and future projects of this nature:

- Due to the chosen methodology and that tests of change would develop organically from sessions with the working group, the project inherently required to be **fluid and offered limited certainty** at the outset about what might emerge in engaging with staff; how long it might take; what changes may be proposed by staff; and what the outcomes might be. As a result, **good communication** of the project, aims and methodology was critical in securing **buy-in** across organisations. **Champions** within the participating organisation, partner agencies and individual children's houses had a critical role in **supporting and maintaining such commitment**
- **Multi-agency working** was necessary given the role of other agencies in responding to offending behaviour and the impact on the practice of residential workers. Experience re-affirmed that identifying tests of change that could be implemented in-house needed to be supplemented with a multi-agency governance group who could support change, including across organisations
- While necessary, **ensuring sufficient capacity** for the project proved challenging for various reasons, including the reality of the competing demands on the time of residential childcare staff; the wide range of changes and involvement in other projects experienced in some houses; time to build relationships with facilitators; and the inputs demanded by the chosen methodology. These factors may have been underestimated in the project design, planning and communication
- The **ethos of the project** being about reflection, sharing and learning from practice to enable change appeared at times to be removed from workers previous experiences of defending and justifying their practice and the apportioning of blame. In some areas, previous negative experiences of being involved in change projects were also evident. This, coupled with being cognisant of the fact that information shared would, albeit anonymously, be utilised to support the change process both internally and more widely, brought some hesitance and anxiety from participants, which should be factored more fully into future projects

Recognisable achievements

As detailed below, while the intended outcomes of the project have not been fully achieved, a range of achievements to be celebrated are evident, which include:

- The development of a **programme for improvement** in respect of responses to offending behaviour in residential childcare based on improvement methodology
- **Trialling** of this approach across four houses in two local authorities and one third sector organisation

- **Acceptance and enthusiasm** across organisations about the opportunity to be involved in a different type of project to affect change to ultimately improve practice and outcomes for young people
- **Capacity building** in each of the areas regarding improvement methodology
- **Reflection** on the challenges and implications of responding to offending in residential child care at a local level

Where such reflection has been **multi-agency**, this has positively impacted on networking and partnership working. For example, in one area where a multi-agency governance group was established, this project **opened lines of communication with police**, which had proved challenging prior to the project, and supported the **re-establishment of children's houses having a single point of contact** within the police.

- The importance of usable **data**, monitored by an appropriate body or individual in order to identify problematic changes or indeed areas of positive practice was discussed with each organisation and advice and support provided where necessary
- The receipt of valuable **information and learning to inform the national** phase of the project
- **Enhanced relationships with CYCJ** and understanding of what services and supports can be offered

The above learning has relevance for the broad range of practitioners working with children involved in offending and for those who may be undertaking improvement methodology projects in the future. The following sections will further illustrate how the above achievements and learning were made, by detailing the project design, methodology and how the project was undertaken in practice. This may be also useful for those intending to or currently undertaking similar projects.

Project Design

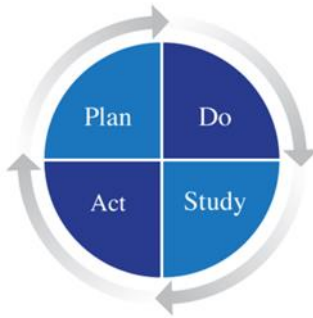
In developing the 'Responding to Offending in Residential Childcare-Next steps' project a partnership approach between CYCJ and Staf was adopted. This enabled the bringing together of the two organisations complementary knowledge, understanding and skills; contacts within the youth justice and looked after children/care leaver sector; and respective abilities to influence these agendas. We collectively reflected on the previous research outlined above, the feedback received on this and our respective understanding of the issues raised. With this, a project was designed with the objective of informing, influencing and supporting improvements to local and national practice in responding to offending in residential care.

The aims of the project were defined as:

- Improving the support available locally to residential staff in decision making and managing the multiple tensions faced when responding to offending behaviour
- Increasing opportunities for building relationships between police and residential staff and with young people
- Increasing the availability of information to professionals and young people about the differences between, and the implications of offences dealt with via, the Children's Hearings System and adult court
- Improving local and national multi-agency data collection regarding the numbers of looked after children being criminalised with a longer term aim of reducing these numbers

While the project has aims and objectives spanning both the local and national level, the two are inherently linked with all local practice being situated within, and influenced by, the national context as well as local practice helping to identify what within the national context, could support improvements to practice and outcomes for looked after children. As a result, the decision was made to initially focus on developing an understanding of, and influencing, local practice.

To achieve the above and provide structure to the project, an improvement methodology was adopted (see Appendix 1). Improvement methodology is fundamentally about making changes that result in improvement, being underpinned by five fundamental principles (Langley et al., 2009). These principles of improvement begin with identifying why something needs to be improved and establishing a way of gaining feedback (or measuring) the outcome of that change to identify if this leads to improvement (Langley et al., 2009). Having done so, change believed to lead to improvement can be developed and planned, which is then tested on a small scale and learned from in a structured way (Langley et al., 2009). If the test indicates such change has been effective and manageable on a small scale, it could be implemented on a broader scale and spread throughout the organisation (Langley et al., 2009). This structure allows stakeholders (frontline staff, managers and other involved partners) the opportunity to see if the proposed change will succeed and evidence impact prior to wider roll out, providing a powerful tool for learning from changes that work, as well as those that do not. The approach is captured in the PDSA (Plan, Do, Study, Act) framework for improvement attributed to Deming (Moen and Norman, 2010), which was adopted in this project. The PDSA cycle is shorthand for:



- Testing a change by developing a plan to test the change (Plan)
- Carrying out the test (Do)
- Observing and learning from the consequences (Study)
- Determining what modifications should be made to the test (Act) (Langley et al., 2009).

In this project, two slight amendments to the traditional improvement methodology and PDSA cycle detailed above were made. Firstly, it was difficult to establish objective measures of success to evaluate changes against (Langley et al., 2009). Although we believed that over time a more confident and well supported workforce would involve the police less frequently, we did not want our focus to be solely on reducing police contact due to the identified importance of the context of responses (Moodie and Nolan, 2016). As a result, it was agreed our measure of success would be more subjective and come both from observed changes and feedback on practice from the staff and management we were working with. Furthermore, an initial preparation stage prior to commencing the PDSA cycle was introduced given the importance within improvement methodology in securing the interest, buy-in and involvement at all levels of the organisation in each areas involved in the project (CELCIS, 2014). This stage also enabled the key components of the project to be established, these being a **working group** of residential childcare workers who would identify areas for improvement and change, develop a plan to test the change and carry out the tests. We deemed this significant involvement of practitioners to be critically important, given their unique position as experts in their role; their own organisation; and the factors that supported or hindered confident decision making in responding to offending, thus being best placed to identify the changes that were needed. Also, in order to sustain change, these staff needed to be the ones who made and took ownership for driving change forward (Moodie and Nolan, 2016). However, as we had learned, the critical factors influencing decision making, may be out with the sphere of influence of residential childcare workers, meaning we also needed managers within the organisation, as well as from other partner agencies to have a level of oversight of this work and to be in positions to support change (Moodie and Nolan, 2016). This was achieved through the establishment of a **governance or steering group** of managers and other individuals in key roles across professions involved with looked after children who had the ability and remit to make wholesale change a reality if the tests of change

supported that. As such, the role of the CYCJ facilitators was one of being supporters and enablers, as opposed to leaders on this journey, who would capture, document and share learning from this process.

Contact was made with the University of Strathclyde Ethics Committee and School of Social Work and Social Policy Ethics Committee, with agreement reached that the project was one of quality improvement supported by researchers as opposed to research, and thus specific ethical approval was not required.

Stages of the project

The following section will provide information on how the preparation and planning stage of the PDSA cycle were completed, with these regrettably being the only two stages that were completed in this phase of the project.

The preparation stage

In identifying participants to be involved in the local stage of the project, alongside an input at the Staf Mangers Forum in February 2017, a call for interest was put out via the CYCJ and Staf websites and e-bulletins. A range of organisations came forward, resulting in an initial meeting with managers from one third sector organisation and two local authorities in April 2017. At this session, initial information was shared which enabled each of those represented to make the informed decision to participate in the project, which all representatives chose to do. Subsequently, the managers identified four children's houses from across three geographical areas who they thought would be appropriate to participate.

Follow up contact was completed with the respective managers of each of the four identified children's houses, each of whom identified their full staff team as the working group. An introductory session was undertaken with the working group and managers in which the facilitators introduced the project, gave an overview of the previous research findings and explained the format of the sessions. To support consistency and provide terms of reference, a guidance document was developed for partner agencies, which introduced the basic concepts of improvement methodology; the various stages of the process; clarified roles and responsibilities; and processes for sharing learning (see Appendix 1). This document was shared with managers, governance group members and each participating member of staff. It was agreed that it would not be practical in terms of capacity to fully teach the methodology and instead the facilitators would guide and support participants through the work. It was made clear at this point that all discussions would be anonymous (individuals would not be identified) but that emerging themes and resultant tests of change would be shared, both with the governance group overseeing the work and more broadly in the national strand of, and in the documenting of the project. This enabled informed consent to be gained from participants. It was agreed that subsequent sessions with

the working group would be completed without managers being present to enable free discussion and for any concerns or anxieties to be openly discussed.

Although the intention was that meetings with the working group would be protected time which did not interfere with that already assigned, for other reasons, such as staff leave or team meetings, it was quickly apparent that this was unachievable in practice. It was therefore agreed that scheduled team meetings were the best opportunity to access the largest group of staff at any one time, with meetings held within the house itself for between 90 minutes and 2 hours.

Each manager was also asked to establish a multi-agency governance group, either as a new entity or via existing groups that would meet on a quarterly basis to provide an overview of the project and findings of the working group, support the implementation of tests of change both on a small-scale basis or in rolling out as deemed necessary and to promote the sharing of good practice.

Phase 1: The planning stage

Different stages were reached by each working group throughout the life of the project. In one house, it was not possible to move beyond an introductory session and in another, one further session was completed which focused on supporting staff to reflect on how best they could support a particular young person. In the two other houses, multiple staff sessions took place, usually on a monthly basis.

Improvement methodology can take many forms with multiple techniques (Langley et al., 2009). In this project, simple flow charts were chosen to give structure to the initial working group sessions and help identify the potential tests of change. This method was chosen as flowcharts are recognised as a useful tool in the initial phases of improvement work as well as in breaking complex processes down, with responding to offending being one such process (Institute for Healthcare Improvement, 2017). Flowcharts can add clarity and aid the development of a shared understanding to said processes, identification of barriers or issues, and support the identification or creation of new processes (Institute for Healthcare Improvement, 2017). Therefore, in two of the houses, the facilitators and working group co-produced various flow charts to enable the staff group to describe, reflect on, and analyse individual incidents of responding to offending behaviour that they felt had concluded positively or incidents they felt could have been handled differently. Three to four sessions followed the same pattern of:

1. Identifying an incident
2. Describing each aspect
3. Focusing on decision points where staff had a choice in how to respond which could have impacted on the outcome of the incident
4. Clarification of points
5. Reflecting on the outcome, if it could have varied, at which point and how

These discussions worked best where membership of the working group was consistent and when there were multiple staff members present who knew about the incident being described, either by being present during or following this because they could bring their own perspective or memory of the incident. At this stage, it was evident that various similar themes or issues were appearing across different incidents and houses, as discussed above.

The intention was that on completion of a number of sessions, determined by the facilitators in consultation with the working group, these themes would be reflected back to confirm that they had been accurately captured. This would enable reflection on what was currently working in supporting staff to respond to offending behaviour and thus could be developed further, or alternatively that which could be improved. From these discussions, following the PDSA cycle, ideas for change would be planned and developed which would be discussed with the governance group and carried out by the working group, studied to learn whether they had resulted in improvement, and either modified or implemented more broadly as required. However, on reaching this stage, one of the organisations withdrew from involvement in the project due to capacity issues and competing organisational priorities. In the other organisation, it was acknowledged that working group members were finding it difficult to engage with the project as they did not deem there was an issue regarding staff responses to offending behaviour due to the infrequency of police contact. Gaining consistent staff representation at sessions was also problematic. In the remaining organisation, the project had yet to move beyond the preparation phase and the organisation concluded at the current time due to capacity issues it would be impossible to do so. As a result, no organisation was able to continue with the project beyond this stage.

Only one organisation was able to establish a multi-agency governance group during the life of the local phase of the project. This group met on one occasion where terms of reference were agreed and initial exploration of the key issues in this area of practice began.

Conclusions and future actions

This paper has documented the process, progress and recognisable achievements and learning made from the first year of the 'Responding to Offending in Residential Childcare-Next steps' project. Having developed, secured buy-in and trialled a programme for improvement in respect of offending in residential childcare, the project thus far has focused on reflecting on, developing an understanding of, and influencing local practice in three areas of Scotland. The information and learning gained from this work has valuable implications for the national phase of the project but also more broadly for those involved in residential childcare practice and/or working with young people involved in offending behaviour, as well as utilising or intending to develop a project of improvement methodology.

For residential childcare practice and professionals working with young people involved in offending behaviour more broadly, the project has further underlined the need for police contact to remain the option of last resort and the importance of not unnecessarily criminalising young people. However, it has again highlighted the challenges in achieving these aims and the complexities and dilemmas faced in this area of practice. Factors that can support the achievement of these aims and promote consistency in practice have been reiterated. Such factors include the critical importance of listening to staff, including regarding the impact of organisational issues on practice; really including staff in discussions about care and risk planning; the role of organisational cultures; staff having a range of strategies available to them in responding to offending behaviour; good communication; clear expectations; and having a good team, with managerial and external support available. It is important that residential childcare providers can reflect on the extent to which these factors are evident and available to staff within their own organisation.

While the themes of safety and rights were again apparent, the theme of trauma was particularly evident in this work. Trauma which young people had previously experienced and the risk of further trauma should offending behaviour not be appropriately responded to, but also of that experienced by residential workers in responding to offending behaviour. This underlined the critical importance of post-incident support, debriefing and incident monitoring, the availability and quality of which was found to vary significantly and the implications of which are clear. These findings also reiterate the need for staff to have a range of formal and informal, colleague and managerial support available. Ultimately, caring for our carers must be prioritised if we want residential childcare workers to have effective care both of themselves and the children they are caring for. It is imperative that organisations across the youth justice and looked after children sector reflect on the extent to which they devote attention to these matters and really engage with their staff, to find out how these experiences impact on them and how support could be made more effective.

This project has reiterated the need for multi-agency working, with particular factors identified that can support the achievement of a joined-up approach to responding to offending behaviour. Of paramount importance is each agency having a clear understanding of their own role and responsibilities in responding to offending behaviour. This can in turn be shared with other agencies to develop a consistent and shared understanding of what each agency can do and the limitations of their role. Additionally, this will aid understanding of what different agencies can expect from each other. To achieve this, all agencies have a role both internally and externally, locally and nationally. Critically, reaching a shared understanding about the needs and experiences of looked after children across agencies should be a priority. This may include joint training; sharing of information and knowledge; and developing opportunities to bring different agencies together in safe and enabling space to discuss in practice what is working well, what could be improved and how this could be achieved.

Aligned with previous CYCJ research, the issue of procedural guidance in respect of police contact, including regarding specific offences and in enhancing communication and informal contact between the police and residential childcare workers has been raised. Both of which should be explored on a local and national basis. Moreover, there are still agencies with whom further efforts may be needed to secure their full engagement in working with looked after children involved in offending, namely education, health and mental health services.

The chosen methodology has underlined the need for good communication and the vital role of individuals as champions at each level within organisations to support change, particularly in a project which inherently had to be fluid. It demonstrates that such projects cannot be undertaken without the involvement of partner agencies. Furthermore, experience has highlighted some of the challenges specific to undertaking such a project in residential childcare. These have included the inherent difficulties of ensuring capacity when services are faced with multiple competing demands, the need to take account of workers previous experiences particularly where the ethos of the project is markedly different, as well as the complexities of anonymity. With hindsight, these issues may have been underestimated in this project and should be more fully factored into future projects of this nature.

The crucial information and learning gained from the local phase of the Next Steps project will be fed into the national phase of the project, which will explore how the implementation of these findings can be supported at a national level. This will include individual and collective discussions and reflection with organisations such as Police Scotland, the Care Inspectorate, Community Justice Scotland, COSLA and Social Work Scotland. CYCJ will continue to offer support to those organisations who participated in this project, but also more widely to those working in this area of practice, which could include the provision of advice and guidance, providing inputs on these findings and supporting the facilitation of multi-disciplinary events. We will continue to seek creative means of sharing this learning, having already completed an [information sheet](#) on this topic; published an article in the Scottish Journal of Residential Child Care entitled [The Duality of the Corporate Parenting Role: A Delicate Balancing Act](#); and recorded a [podcast with residential workers and IRISS](#) discussing the initial report, as well as a [webinar](#) with Kibble more specifically focusing on the implications for practice. These stages of the project will be reported on in due course.

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Appendix

Guidance and expectations of the 'Responding to Offending in Residential Childcare-Next steps' project: Kristina Moodie & Debbie Nolan, June 2017

The 'next steps' project is a collaborative project, where CYCJ and STAF will work alongside a number of organisations to explore and support the implementation of the findings of the research into the decision making of practitioners and the criminalisation of looked after children in residential care.

The project will adopt an approach which recognises the role of participants as experts in their own organisations; how the organisation works; the young people they are working with; and how gaps and good practice can be identified, and as active participants who will take ownership for driving forward change. The role of CYCJ will be as supporters in this journey of change and in documenting the process and learning from this, rather than leading on the work.

Aims and objectives

The objective of this project is to inform, influence and support improvements to local and national practice in the criminalisation of looked after children in residential care, towards the aims of:

- Improving local, multi-agency data collection regarding the numbers of looked after children being criminalised and reducing these numbers;
- Improving the support available locally to residential staff in decision making and managing the multiple tensions faced when responding to offending behaviour;
- Increasing opportunities for building relationships between police and residential staff and with young people;
- Increasing the availability of information to professionals and young people about the differences between, and the implications of offences dealt with via, the Children's Hearings System and adult court.

As this is a collaborative project, participants may also bring their own locally defined aims and objectives.

Methodology

The project will have a variety of phases, which although presented in a linear fashion will involve moving back and forth between stages, and adopt an improvement methodology, the PDSA cycle.

Improvement methodology

PDSA (Plan, Do, Study, Act)

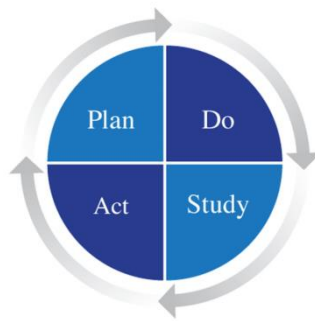
The PDSA cycle is shorthand for:

- Testing a change by developing a plan to test the change (Plan)
- Carrying out the test (Do)
- Observing and learning from the consequences (Study)
- And finally determining what modifications should be made to the test (Act).

The PDSA Cycle

The four stages of PDSA mirror the scientific experimental method of formulating a hypothesis, collecting data to test this hypothesis, analysing and interpreting the results and making inferences to iterate the hypothesis. The intended output of PDSA is learning and informed action. No change is made more broadly across an organisation until it has shown to be effective and manageable on a small scale.

With regard to this project the PDSA cycle has been used as the guide for the phases of work, as described below:



Preparation stage:

One of the key aspects of this improvement methodology is ensuring the interest, buy-in and where appropriate, involvement of the whole organisation. This will be achieved with the sharing of level appropriate information and discussion.

A governance group should have an overview with planned meetings quarterly, while the working group should meet more regularly (around monthly) and have a hands-on role in the work. It may be possible to do this via existing groups and workstreams.

Phase 1: Planning - Reflect on the research findings particularly regarding data collection, support to staff, and multi-agency working and how these apply within your organisation

What CYCJ will do	What will be expected from your organisation / the working group
Provide ongoing support throughout this phase, which will include a combination of regular phone/email check-ins and face-to-face contact, including attendance at monthly working group and quarterly governance group meetings	PLAN Attend monthly working groups and quarterly governance meetings
Share the documents we used in gathering data and to gain insight into staff practice and perceptions	PLAN Sharing documents and information
Undertake a follow up one-to-one planning session with interested parties	PLAN Attending planning meetings
With CYCJ support Support the establishment of data recording processes	PLAN To look at existing data capture mechanisms
With CYCJ support Help to explore and as necessary assist with the facilitation of mechanisms to gain	PLAN

information from staff on available support and multi-agency working (e.g. through facilitating staff sessions etc)	To explore existing supports to staff and as necessary gain further information from staff on what is currently working or not
With CYCJ support As above	PLAN To explore existing multi-agency working arrangements and what is working or not
With CYCJ support	PLAN Explore any other aims and objectives in this area in your organisation
Provide ongoing support throughout this phase, which will include a combination of regular phone/email check-ins and face-to-face contact, including attendance at monthly working group and quarterly governance group meetings	PLAN The prioritisation of the areas of good practice and change
With CYCJ support	PLAN Decide what needs to be done under each of the above and develop small tests of change
Review the roles taken on by both CYCJ and the organisation to ensure clarity and confidence in going forward.	

By the end of this stage, the aim will be that participants will be developing an understanding of current practice in data capture, supports for staff, multi-agency working and/or any other areas of concern and have begun to identify areas of good practice and where improvement could be made.

Phase 2: Doing and studying - Explore how good practice can be built upon and/or what change is required at a policy and practice level; plan how this can be achieved; and carry out tests of change

What CYCJ will do	What will be expected from your organisation / the working group
With CYCJ support	DO For each test, develop an action plan of how this will be implemented; who needs to be involved; what support is required and from whom; and how will change be tracked and reviewed over time
With CYCJ support	DO Disseminate this information to relevant people in your organisation and make the (test) change
With CYCJ support	STUDY After a period of time (one week/two weeks/one month) come together to determine whether the test has been effective or not and if this should be implemented on a larger scale in your organisations

Support contact with other participants (although this will be in providing opportunities to learn from each other and share information rather than comparison as the direction of the project in each area is likely to be different)	
CYCJ will on an ongoing basis write up the process of the project through the above involvement in each area and identify any learning points	
Review the roles taken on by both CYCJ and the organisation to ensure clarity and confidence in going forward.	

By the end of this stage, the aim is that participants will have chosen, planned and undertaken various small tests of change to improve practice in their organisation and will be identifying changes that could be implemented on a larger scale. These changes need to be purposeful, manageable and lead in an incremental way towards the main goals/objectives.

Phase 3: Act & Implement

What CYCJ will do	What will be expected from your organisation / the working group
Provide ongoing support throughout this phase, which will include a combination of regular phone/email check-ins and face-to-face contact, including attendance at monthly working group and quarterly governance group meetings	ACT Raise concerns at an early stage and commit to attending working group/governance group meetings and carrying out tests of change.
With CYCJ support	ACT Implement on a larger scale the agreed changes
With CYCJ support	ACT Develop tools and methods to monitor, review and evaluate implementation, and action this
With CYCJ support	PLAN – DO – STUDY - ACT Move back between stages 1 and 2 as necessary
Support contact with other local authorities or organisations taking part, if this would be felt to be helpful	
Compile a written report on the progress of the project and achievements, as well as how any future work will be taken forward or learning rolled out	
Review the roles taken on by both CYCJ and the organisation to ensure clarity and confidence in going forward.	

Time commitment

The length of time for this work will depend on the various aims of the organisations involved but we would anticipate at least 6 months to a year in order to complete tests of change and to enable implementation and embedding of practices. We would, however, be flexible and responsive to the needs of the organisations themselves.

We anticipate the monthly meetings to last 2-3 hours with additional time given over for staff members to prepare or carry out tasks/ tests of change between those meetings. For those additionally attending governance meetings, this would include a further meeting every quarter.