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A View From The Ground

Residential child care workers observations
on the implementation of
Staying Put & Continuing Care



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9th June 2016

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Messages From Research

- *“Educational outcomes for young adults who remained under the care and supervision of the child welfare system were much better than those of young adults who had left care”(Wade, 1997).*
- *“Probably the most critical factor for children looked after is the age at which they move on from being in care to living elsewhere, compared with the population at large”(Broad, 2007).*
- *“Time and again, young people and workers told us about a strong culture that assumed **16** was the age at which young people should leave care” (SCCYP, 2008).*
- If we want to improve leaving care transitions, we need to improve the in-care experience (*Stein, 2012*)



Staying Put Scotland 2013: An Explicit Philosophy of Care

- **Staying Put:** looked after young people are *encouraged, enabled and empowered* to remain in positive care settings until they are *ready* to move on towards more independent living.
- **Graduated & Extended Transitions:** ensure the avoidance of accelerated, abrupt transitions from care settings for looked after young people and care leavers
- **Relationship-based practice:** in and beyond care settings

Staying Put Scotland Providing care leavers with connectedness and belonging
Guidance for Local Authorities and other Corporate Parents
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0043/00435935.pdf>





Continuing Care (Part 11)

- Duty on local authorities to provide care leavers whose final placement was 'away from home' with a continuation of the kinds of support they received prior to their ceasing to be looked after (including accommodation in a 'looked after' placement).
- Young person will have to cease to be looked after to be eligible for 'Continuing Care', but the day-to-day experience is same



Planning for Continuing Care: One Care Journey into Adulthood

Transition Into Care

Initial placement and care expectations
No rehab or return home..?
Longer term care planning
Permanence planning
Expectations and capacity of carers and providers
Induction, recruitment and ongoing L&D for foster carers
In-house provision
Commissioned/purchased placements

From day one...

Being Looked After

Stability & consistency
Felt Security – ‘claiming’
Educational experience and aspirations
Connection & belonging
Identity
Proactive planning for continuing care
Childs Plan until 18
Planning & preparation for ‘life’ - not ‘life after care/independence’

Staying Put & Continuing Care

Staying Put: philosophy & practice
Continuing care: mechanism not a placement
Care planning until 21
Explicit expectations
Consistency & predictability
Needs of carers
Financial modelling
Systems & structures
Culture & mindset

← Relationship-based practice →

- Social Work (Scot) Act 1968
- Children (Scot) Act 1995
- Supporting Young People Leaving Care (Regs & Guidance), 2004
- GIRFEC, 2006
- These Are Our Bairns, 2008
- Staying Put Scotland Guidance, 2013
- Children & Young People (Scot) Act 2014...?

- ADHD
- ADD
- OCD
- ODD
- IDD...
- ...Implementation Deficit Disorder

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The Study: Aims & Methodology

To gain an understanding of residential child care practitioners' views and perspectives of the blocks and enablers to the implementation of staying put and continuing care practice within three Scottish local authorities.

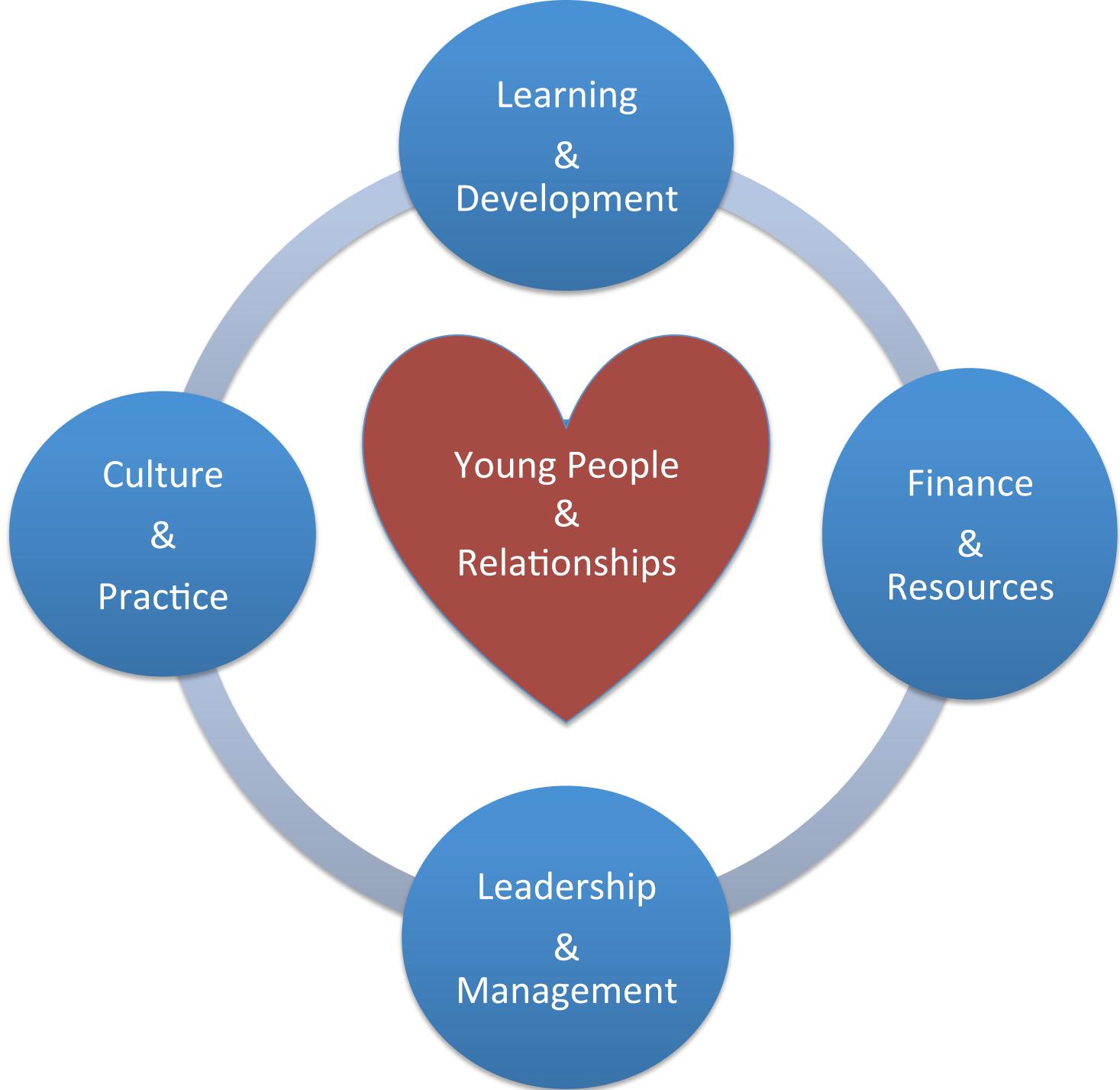
Qualitative study

- 3 local authorities
- 5 children homes
- 9 residential staff

Process & Methodology

- Literature & policy review
- Semi-structured interviews
- Thematic analysis
- Findings & recommendations







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Learning & development

“...being entirely honest with you, the only reason I read a wee bit was because I knew that was what you were coming out to speak to me about, which is probably not ideal ‘cos I should really kinda know”



Learning & development

"I have like a layperson's working knowledge of it"

"There's been no training on it or discussion, or literature...it's something we've had to seek ourselves"



*“Imagine how good we'd
be if we'd had all the
knowledge”*



Leadership & management

“Because we've never been briefed with management it's hard to know their opinion”



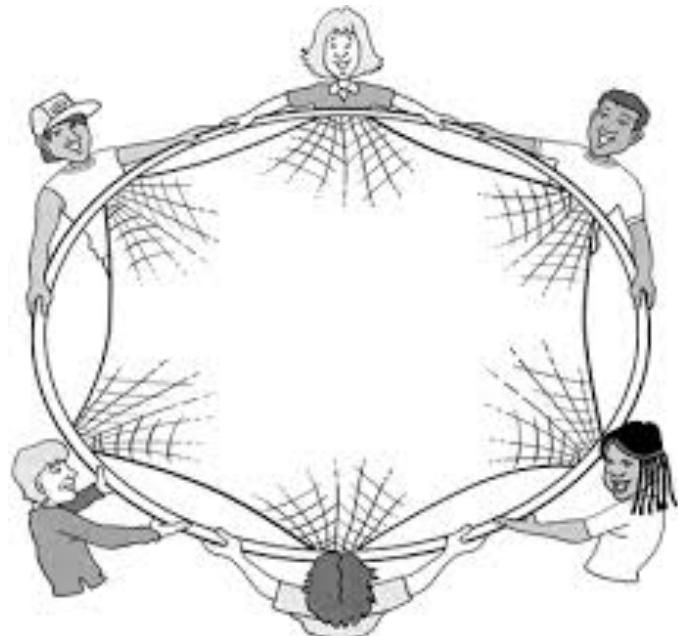
“We don't know what management's view is but we know what the law is”

“We've just got a new manager in place and they've got a very different mindset to the previous person that they took over from”



Leadership & management

"We need more knowledge, more training, and a kinda safety net, you know, if someone maybe does support a young person they kinda need a wee bit of a safety net, you know not reprisals, just in case they get a bit of heat from management, going against the grain"



Leadership & management

“We've had quite a few changes in our upper management in the last few months ... and I'm not making excuses for them but it's that old school don't always move with the times either”



...and that comes from management and filters down, we're not coming up with any barriers from management



Key questions



How can staff implement a policy consistently and effectively if they have had little or no learning and development opportunities as a staff team?

Whose responsibility is it for ensuring that front line practitioners have these opportunities?

Resources & Finance



"In the past six weeks we've had three kids sleeping on the couch 'cos there's no beds

"Life doesn't stop just because the council's skint... that's no use to our kids"

"...like we have regular updates from our Chief Exec regarding our budget situation and money.... its cash before care and that's the case"



Resources & Finance

"There's a pressure, somebody else coming in, somebody else down the road who could have that room... a couple of eleven year-olds' that need our help too but does that mean we just get rid of ... (current young people)... what message does that send? "



"If there is any pressure to move a young person on it doesn't come down to us"

Culture & practice

“I think residential (practice) is based on opinion which causes conflict, contradiction, inconsistencies and all that kind of stuff”

“I wouldn't say that residential is the forgotten sector but it always seems to be at the tail end”

“... like if that (young) person is hearing us harp on about how they should be doing more and maybe subconsciously we're pushing them out the door and we're telling them to 'be an adult, be an adult'... so maybe they're like that, 'oh, I've got to go'"

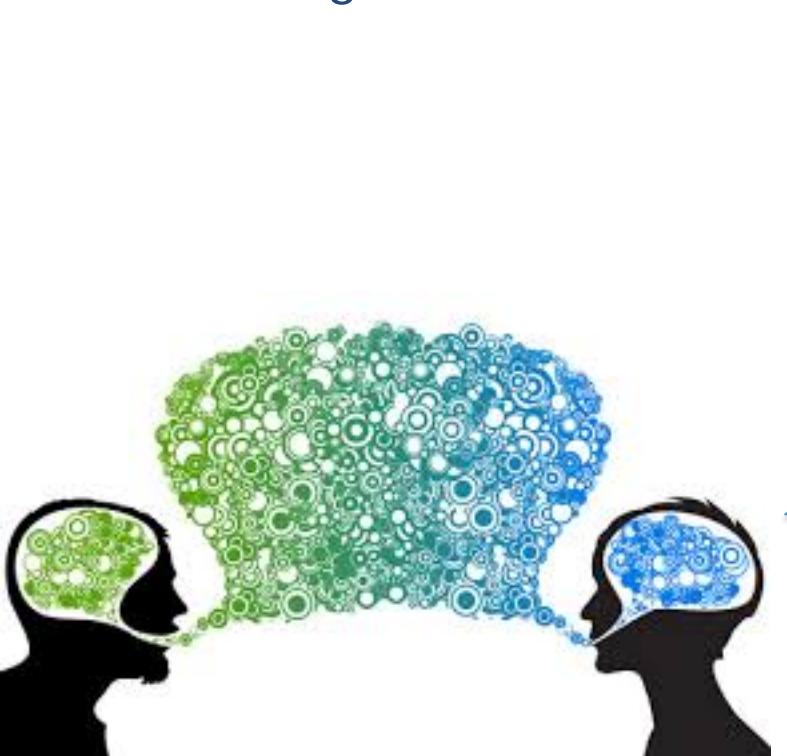




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Culture & practice

“On our level some people's attitudes, their thinking process...it's like people are the biggest barrier, their values and how they think things”



“...it's about having that open honest culture where we can talk it through”



“Oh yes without a doubt, out of the six kids I've got I know for a fact all six would stay as long as they could... they might give a bit of bravado saying I want out of here, blah de blah, but they would stay I know they would... they feel safe here, it's their home”

“The house is just a house, the big thing is the relationship ... if we're going to do it properly the big thing has to be the staff, people you know and trust, they are the continuing care that you really need”





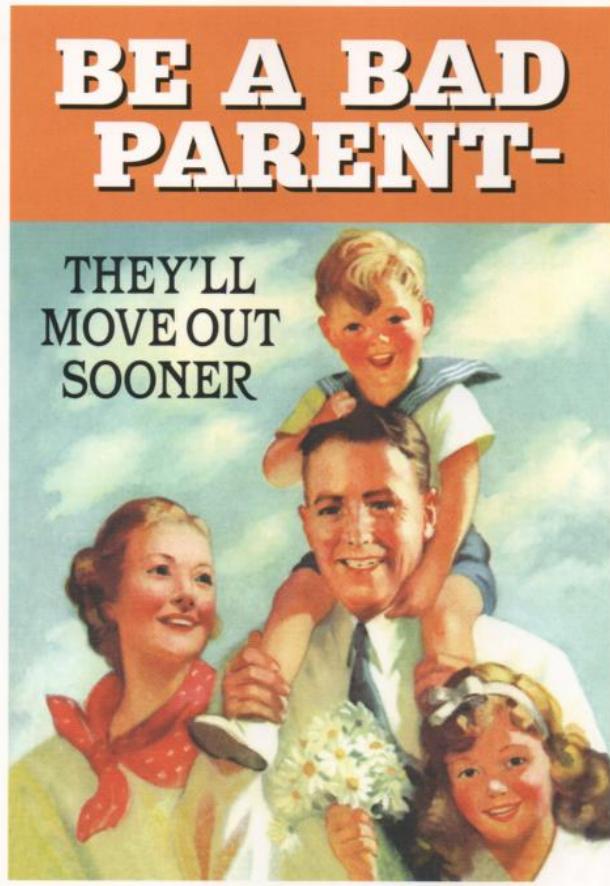
“...but here we have the best tool, we have some sort of relationship with them”

“The main factor for me would be staff. The goodwill and caring nature of the staff we have ”

“Managers need to get more involved and know the kids”



For some people, the emotional content of the work of residential child care can be at times overwhelming and committing emotionally to a healing therapeutic relationship *can* become an emotional risk for staff, particularly given the uncertainty over their future (Steckley 2010):



"I find that really challenging"

"Well, you see, we build a relationship with these young people and you have an idea whether a young person could survive on their own or not"

"Correct me if I'm wrong but I've never heard of a child that's died because they can't wash their clothes or they don't know how to do the dishes..."



...they die because the emotional support is ripped out from underneath them and we're that emotional support, that's what we're there to do"

Changing culture & practice... towards a new 'norm'

Implementing policy effectively is a recognised challenge. Child care policies, particularly for care leavers, can take a long time to become part of mainstream everyday practice. Successfully and meaningfully implementing the Act needs on-going political commitment, with leadership at national and local level to support organisations and services to go beyond mere compliance to aspire to excellence'

(SCLC, 2015).

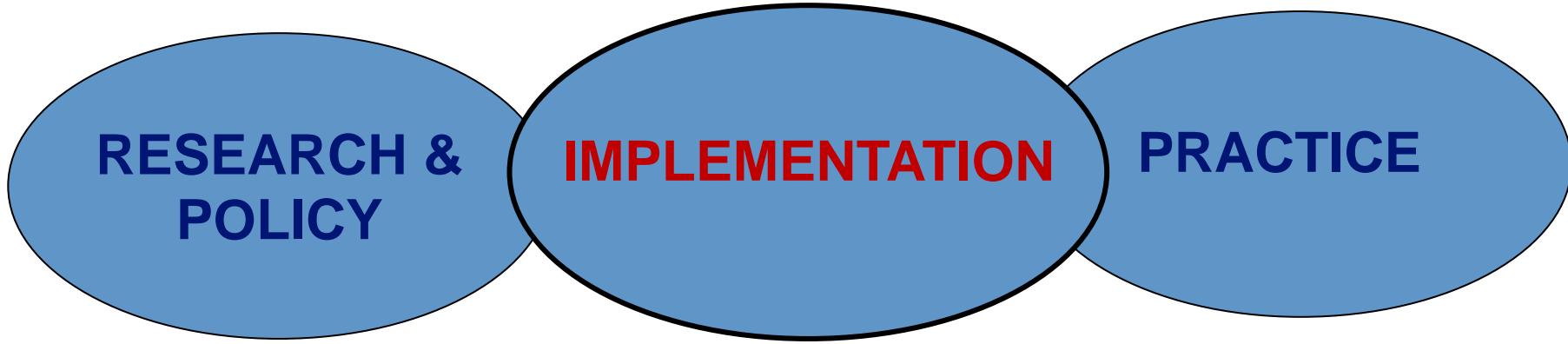




Blocks Enablers

- Learning & Development
- Leadership & Management
- Resources & Finances
- Culture & Practice
- Young People & Relationships

Closing the Implementation Gap



**RESEARCH &
POLICY**

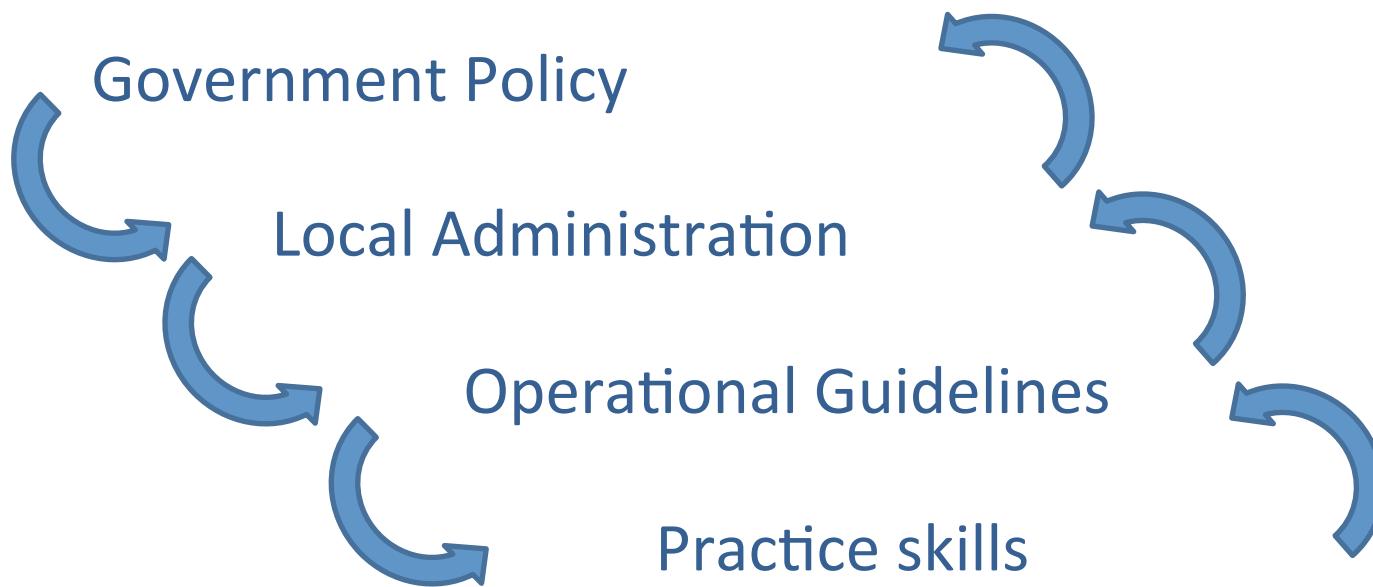
IMPLEMENTATION

PRACTICE

Implementation is defined as ***a specified set of activities*** designed to put into practice an activity or program of known dimensions.



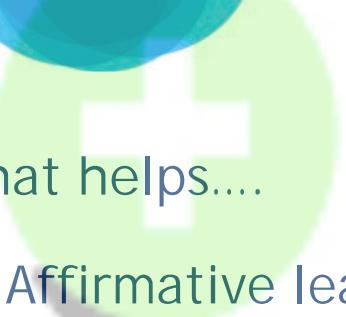
Building the Infrastructure for Change



“...we cannot skip links in the chain of logic and expect to achieve outcomes without the intervening steps.”

http://tapartnership.org/enterprise/docs/RESOURCE%20BANK/RB-SOC%20APPROACH,%20DEFINITION,%20HISTORY/General%20Resources/Updating_SOC_Stroul_Blaau_NTAC_2010.pdf

Implementation Challenges



What helps....

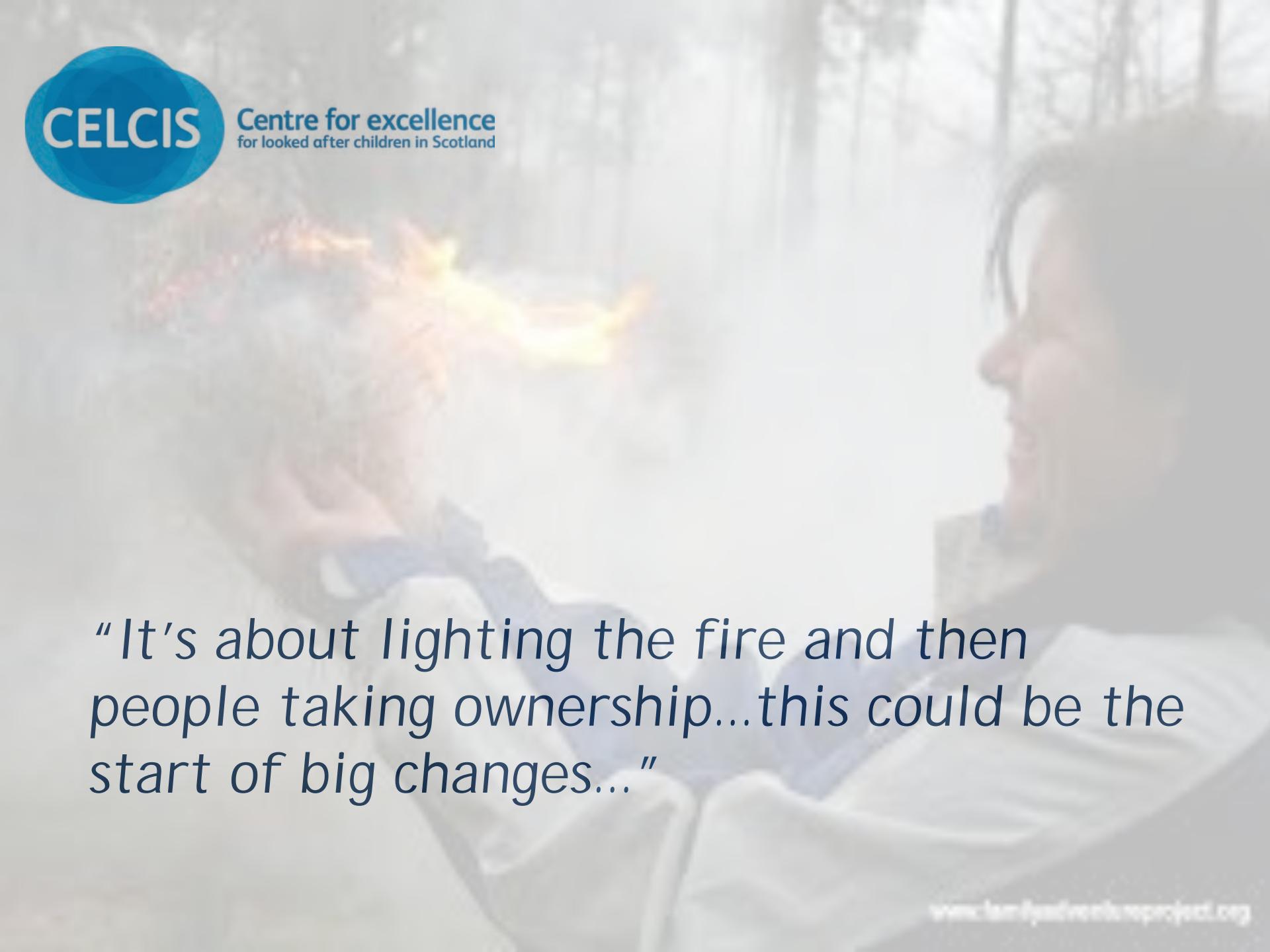
- Affirmative leadership
- Clear messaging
- Enabling culture
- Early planning
- Claiming & connection
- Empowering staff and young people



What hinders

- Lack of vision
- Lack of L&D opportunities
- Culture & expectations
- Inconsistent and contradictory messaging
- Disconnect between strategic decision-making and care planning

The overwhelmingly consistent narrative is of a complex, contradictory, nuanced context within which residential child care practitioners operate.



A blurred background image shows a person from the side, wearing a dark jacket, sitting at a fireplace and lighting a fire. The flames are visible and glowing orange and yellow.

“It's about lighting the fire and then people taking ownership...this could be the start of big changes...”