

Alternative Care & Attachment

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Alternative Care Strategy

Attachment

As attachment behaviour is rooted in the experience of seeking out a supportive attachment figure at times of stress, it is this dimension of subsequent relationships that is particularly important.

Seeking out people we know and with whom we have an emotionally significant relationship at times of difficulty is something that most human beings do.

The need for physical and emotional closeness with another human being when we feel stressed, frightened, overwhelmed, anxious or bereaved can be urgent at any age.

(John Simmonds BAAF)

Attachment Issues for CIC

- The Child's life experiences
 - Early Childhood experiences
 - Admission to care & reasons for the admission
 - Limitations of available placements
 - Disruptions
 - Multiple placements
 - Reunifications that do not work – further disruptions
 - Residential Care Experiences – Multiple care providers
- All have a questionable impact on the child's attachment experiences

Developing an Alternative Care Strategy

- Research
 - National Scoping Exercise
 - International Research
 - Extract the Learning from the Scoping and International Research
 - Consultation
 - Develop the Strategy

Focus of ACS Principles

1. The Need for a **Family** or Family Environment.
2. The **needs** of the Child and their **rights** shall be at the centre of planning.
3. We in Tusla must develop practice and models of care which reflect **best practice** nationally and internationally.
4. We acknowledge the importance of **relationships** in the lives of children and their families.
5. We recognise **individuality** and commit to ensuring that all our responses and interventions take account of diversity.
6. We will design, manage and evaluate services to support a culture of learning and development.

Learning for Research

- 6,400 Children in Care of the State
- 93% in Foster Care – Substitute Family
- 36% of those in relative foster care
- Approximately 400 in residential care (5%)
- Historic models of care
 - Eclectic
 - Not always specified
 - Generic in approach

Alternative Care Strategy

- Emphasises the importance of:
 - Appropriate **therapeutic interventions** for children in care to address:
 - Trauma
 - Attachment
 - **Permanency Planning**
 - Reunification
 - Guardianship
 - Long term foster care
 - Adoption

ACS & Attachment

- Two of the assessed needs of Children in Care (CIC)
 - Children need interventions to address **attachment** Issues
 - Admission to Care
 - Previous history of poor or disrupted attachment
 - Need for interventions to address any other **trauma**
- The need for a sense of belonging
- The needs for a sense of secure identity

Learning from Research

- **Attachment & Resilience** (Alwood; Taylor & Francis)
 - Links between **Attachment & Resilience**
 - For Tusla and our carers:
 - Awareness of the Issues and challenges
 - The need to develop and deliver appropriate interventions
 - In so doing we will:
 - Minimise the risks
 - Maximise the child's resilience

Learning from Research

- Importance of **Continuity of Care**
- **Permanency** & permanency planning
- Importance of maintaining significant **relationships**
- Importance of **reordering significant relationships** to help a child make sense of them in an age appropriate manner

Learning from Research


- (Alice Lieberman 2003) Adoption as a radical intervention
- Presence of an attachment figure i.e. A consistent loving, caring and protective adult figure

HELPS BUILD RESILIENCE



Important Messages & Learning

- Attachment is a significant issue for children in care
- We need to appropriately respond to the attachment needs of CIC
- We need to plan to mitigate the risk of further challenges to the child's attachment challenges

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- We need to devise a service which minimises the challenges in this area.
 - We therefore need to base our care on a model which
 - Values and protects significant positive relationships
 - Responds therapeutically to the attachment challenges
 - Provides care which minimises the potential for further disrupted attachments: Permanency Planning through
 - Reunification when appropriate
 - Long term placements
 - Adoption
 - Guardianship

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