

## Residential Care for Children in Care in England

### Who are What Works for Children's Social Care

WWCSC seeks to improve the lives of children and their families through setting standards in research and generating and collating the best evidence in children's social care.

### The importance of evidence based policy in children's social care

Children's services are complex, and our research helps policymakers, practice leaders, and practitioners understand how services work and what their outcomes are for children. By understanding which interventions work, and in what context, we can better support children and families, prioritise the most cost effective interventions, and affect meaningful change..

### What we did:

As part of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, WWCSC undertook research to:

- Provide an overview of the use of residential care and describe the children who experience it.
- Outline the pathways of children into residential care and compare the journeys of children with different demographics.
- Determine the factors that predict entry into residential care for children in care.

### What we found:

- **Boys and White children are overrepresented in residential care**, and girls and Asian and Black children tend to be underrepresented.
- **Over 90% of children living in residential care have been recorded as receiving provision for a Special Educational Need.**
- Children who have lived in residential care **spend longer in care and experience more placement moves** during their care journey, with an average of 6.7 placements. Residential care is often **used as a "last resort", after other care placements break down.**
- **Outcomes are worse for children who have ever lived in residential care**, compared to average outcomes for children in care. **51% of children who have ever been in residential care were in education, employment or training (NEET) at age 18.**

### How you can help:

- **Policy makers and commissioners need to consider carefully what the purpose of residential care is.** A shared understanding of this would help ensure placements can meet the needs of children and young people.
- Decision-makers in **local authorities should consider current placement matching processes as well as support given to children after a placement move** to help ensure greater placement stability for these young people.
- Further **research is needed to identify what works to support residential care leavers at the stage of transition**, such as expanding the Staying Close programme.