

Children's Homes Leaders' Conference 2026

The Complexity of Care: Excelling Amid the Challenges

Park Regis Hotel, Broad St, Birmingham Centre

September the 25th, 2026



CONFERENCE PROGRAMME



Children's Homes Leaders Conference Programme
The Complexity of Care: Excelling Amid the Challenges
 25th September 2026, Park Regis Hotel, Birmingham

9.00-9.30	Registration and Refreshments	
Time	Session & Content	Speaker
09:30 – 09:40	Welcome & Opening Address	Valerie Tulloch , Children's Homes Quality Director
09:40 – 10:10	Inspecting the Complexity of Care Ofsted share developments within the children's homes sector and how their inspection framework encourages and drives positive outcomes for children with complex lives.	Paula Lahey , Ofsted Specialist Adviser (Residential Care)
10:10 – 10:30	Reframing Complexity: From the Complex Child to Complex Systems Placement instability is rarely simply about "challenging children" but instead emerges when systems become overwhelmed, fragmented, anxious or psychologically disconnected from one another. IROC - a specialist service for children with complex mental health needs within residential care settings and Staffordshire County Council children's homes show how they work together to support children and stabilise placements.	Lisa McDonagh , Head of the Integrated Residential Outreach Care (IROC) Jo Spender – Senior Lead for Children in Care and Care Leavers, Staffordshire County Council
10:30 – 10:50	The importance of trauma-responsive residential children's homes Susanna examines how the physical and relational environment of a children's home directly influences trauma, behaviour and outcomes. This session inspires leaders to see their homes as active agents of change in a child's journey.	Susannah Smith Environmental Psychologist and Interior Designer
10:50 – 11:05	Panel Q&A	
11:05 – 11:25	Break	
11:25 – 12:10	Leadership – Navigating Complexity with Confidence Two-time Number 1 international best-selling author, motivational speaker and leadership coach with over 30 years' experience supporting individuals and organisations to thrive, Gina shares her journey and key messages for children's home leaders.	Gina Gardiner Motivational and Radical Change Catalyst Speaker
12:10 – 13:00	Workshop 1	
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch & Networking	

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Time	Session & Content	Speaker
14:00 – 14:40	I Was That Child Having lived in over twenty children's homes and often seen as a child with complex needs, he brings a powerful, first-hand perspective on what care really feels like and what makes the difference. Drawing on his journey from care to becoming a respected policy advisor and advocate, he offers a compelling insight into how the way children are cared for shapes the adults they become.	Koby Davies, Care Lived Experience Postgraduate Social Researcher Department of Sociology, Durham University
14:40 – 15:30	Workshop 2	
15:30 – 15:45	Break	
15:45 – 16:10	My Leadership Journey Head of Service at Wakefield Council and Winner of National Senior Leader Award 2023 & 2025, Samantha Jayne shares her leadership journey and her experience of transforming children's experience of residential care.	Samantha Jayne Walshaw Head of Service for Wakefield Children's Homes
16:10 – 16:30	Children's Homes Leaders Awards Categories: • Registered Manager of the Year Award • Responsible Individual of the Year Award • Regulation 44 Visitor of the Year Award • Promising New Manager of the Year Award	
16:30 – 16:50	The Work Starts Now – Turning Insight into Action 	Eithne Staunton, Children's Homes Quality, Training & Development Lead
16:50 – 17:00	Closing Connections - Last opportunity to network, exchange details and information with other delegates, speakers and workshop leaders	
17:00	Conference Closes: See you at the next one!	

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Workshop 1 (12:10 – 13:00) Title & Topic	Workshop Facilitator(s)
Radical Responsibility: Leading Through Adversity - Building on her powerful presentation, Gina invites leaders to explore how they show up when leadership is at its most demanding. This engaging and practical session will challenge thinking, shift mindsets, and equip delegates with realistic strategies to lead with confidence, clarity, and purpose—particularly in moments of pressure, uncertainty, and emotional intensity.	Gina Gardiner, Motivational and Radical Change Catalyst Speaker
The Digital World Through Their Eye- An energising and thought-provoking session that challenges our understanding of online risk, pushing leaders to stay as informed, agile and influential as the children they support. It explores what it really takes to stay ahead in a fast-moving digital world—shifting from fear-based responses to confident, relationship-led safeguarding	Andy Thompson, Co-Managing Director of CYP First
When Good Children's Homes Get into Trouble: What Leaders Can Learn from Ofsted Enforcement Cases - Even well-led children's homes can face enforcement action. Through anonymised case studies and real-world examples, this workshop explores the common themes, decisions, and organisational factors that can lead to this, helping leaders recognise risks before they escalate. Delegates will leave with a clearer understanding of how to strengthen compliance, evidence good practice and respond proactively to emerging concerns.	Neil Grant, Regulatory Lawyer, Gordons Partnership Solicitors
Bridging the Gap: Improving Transitions Between Children's Homes and Supported Accommodation - This workshop focuses on the perspective of a child's journey from children's homes into supported accommodation, and what young people need as they move towards independence. It explores their readiness, the risks they may face, and how regulation shapes their experience - all through a trauma-informed lens. It highlights how effective planning, shared language, and joint working between professionals can support smoother, safer transitions for each young person.	Peter Verity, CHQ Children's Homes Consultant Janelle Brindle, National Lead, NASAP (National Association of Supported Accommodation Partners)
Worry Assessments with Children and Young People - This workshop explores how to replace traditional risk assessments with "worry assessments," focusing on shared understanding between adults and young people. It emphasises involving children in identifying worries and co-creating safety plans, so they can actively help reduce concerns and build safer outcomes.	Rebecca Harrison, CHQ Consultancy Lead
Ofsted Open Space - This informal session is intended to encourage constructive dialogue, support shared understanding, and provide a valuable opportunity for leaders and the regulator to engage with each other beyond the formal inspection process.	Paula Lahey, Ofsted Specialist Adviser (Residential Care) Louise Redfern, Lead Professional (Regulation and Social Care Policy)

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Workshop 2 (14:40 – 15:30) Title and Topic	Workshop Facilitator(s)
Lovin' Care™ in the inspection framework - Enduring relationships are at the centre of social care reforms and the proposed new Ofsted inspection framework. The new SCCIF sets out a clear expectation that homes provide Lovin' Care™. This workshop looks at how a simple concept like love can be embedded in homes through whole-system scaffolding to better evidence its existence and impact.	Carla Keyte, CHQ Lovin' Care™ lead
Inclusive Trauma-Informed Practice: Understanding Behaviour When Disability Is Part of the Picture - Trauma-informed practice is essential, but it doesn't always fully account for how disability shapes behaviour. This interactive workshop explores how trauma and disability intersect, helping you make sense of behaviour and consider practical, inclusive, and effective ways to respond, with ideas you can begin to take back into your setting and a foundation for further development in practice.	Dr Natalie V. Bailey, Chartered Counselling Psychologist, founder of the Well Minds Together practice
How Trauma Responsive Is Your Children's Home? - In this interactive workshop, Susanna will invite leaders to reflect on how trauma-responsive their home really is – and what small, practical changes can make a meaningful difference. Drawing on neurodivergent and trauma-responsive approaches, the session will explore how the environment can strengthen safety, belonging, community and healing in everyday practice. Delegates will leave with practical ideas, reflective questions and guidance they can take back to their teams to help create environments where children are more able to thrive.	Susannah Smith, Environmental Psychologist and Interior Designer
Unstable Home, Unstable Learning - When children experience multiple moves and disrupted schooling, education can become about much more than academic success. Drawing on lived experience, this workshop offers honest insight into what helps children feel safe, valued, and able to learn, while providing leaders with practical approaches to strengthen educational outcomes, stability, and future opportunities.	Serena Richards, Trauma Specialist at InCare We Care
More Than Words: Co-Creating Values-Led Cultures - This workshop invites participants to look beyond polished values statements and ready-made definitions of culture and instead explore how culture is shaped through everyday practice. Together, we will consider how cultures are co-created rather than prescribed, how values can remain meaningful when complexity increases, and what helps culture stay grounded in integrity when systems feel messy or uncertain. Expect thoughtful reflection, shared insight, and an opportunity to think differently about how culture really comes to life.	Anne-Marie O'Reilly & Sharon Sparkes, Co-Founders, The Care Revolution Ltd

***Changes may be made to some workshops**

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*We are so looking forward to welcoming you on **25th September** for a day of connection, inspiration, and shared purpose. This conference brings together leaders who care deeply, think boldly, and are committed to creating homes where children truly thrive.*

Thank you for the work you do, the heart you bring, and the difference you make every single day. We cannot wait to learn with you, reflect with you, and celebrate the incredible impact of our sector.

See you in Birmingham!!
Valerie & Eithne Children's Homes Quality



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