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| Fieldnote Note | 18 | Date | 12/7/21 |
| Locations | Bungalow 3, Campus, Bungalow 1 | Weather | Warm and cloudy |
| Child interactions | Dennis, Graham, Red, [one of the children], Anna | Staff Interactions | Sammy, Avril, Christopher, Donald, Monty, Laney, Casey, Cheryl |
| Times | 11am – 4pm | Total Time in field | 5 hours |

Arrived on campus today with Sammy, Avril and Donald packing up a car outside Bungalow 1 – turns out Sammy and Avril are taking Dennis and Graham away for a few days holidays later today. Dennis came out and said hello and, after my offers of help were refused by Avril and Donald, I headed into Bungalow 1 to say hello. Christopher was in the lounge watching Dennis play Minecraft which Christopher finds ‘riveting’ (tongue firmly in cheek). Dennis was caught up in a game and whatever it was that Graham shouted down the hall that he wanted to show me had to wait until he had done whatever it was that Sammy was trying to get him to do! I said I just popped in to say hello and then made my way over to Bungalow 3.

Red was on his way out of the bungalow and asked if I would be there today and, when I confirmed, he asked if I would like to come with him on his ‘independent time’. I said that I thought that would defeat the purpose of independent time. He preceded me into the bungalow where I found Monty and Andy in the staff room. Red came in and interacted with Monty, who was firm and fair with him telling him that he has to show he can manage some time by himself, that he couldn’t take a bike on the main road because ‘it’s really important that I need to know that you’re safe’. There was physical contact and play fighting and also cuddles before Red left. Andy left shortly after this and I had a very interesting conversation with Monty joined after a while by Laney and then a little after that by Casey.

The discussion kicked off with Monty noting he was tired having come off the sleepover where he was ‘on the buzzers’, which means he gets alerted when room doors are opened and has to get up and check on the children – usually they are just going to the toilet but doors have to be reset etc. He then went on to discuss how things can be quite centrally controlled here and talked about other residential units that he worked in where he had more flexibility in the budgets to spend more on clothes etc for the children.

As we were joined by Laney the conversation moved on to everyday care and how that looks, how the children understand what’s happening around them and how we, as adults, sometimes think about children in problematic ways. We also discussed the ‘refreshed care’ comment he made to me recently (because I asked him specifically about it) – because some of these children can have quite extreme behaviours, it can arguably be more difficult for one or two foster carers to sustain over time, whereas, in residential, staff can move about on shift and then are replaced at the changeover.

Monty also mentioned a couple of things today that I’ll ask him about again later (the conversation moved on and I never got a chance to go back). When talking about the children developing trust and ‘putting down an anchor’ he said if one of the girls was moved now “she’d need to tell her story again, well, her story’s still to be told” and then later “his story is just starting to come out”. I’m interested in this notion of story and what that means for Monty – is this what everyday care can do that’s ‘therapeutic’? Allow a child’s story to emerge – for them to verbalise it? Casey came in a little after this when the conversation had moved on to us lamenting how some decisions are resource-led however they are ‘dressed up’ in other language and that money is a big factor in some decisions. We also discussed the new element of the service that is to be developed and Monty’s interest in working there.

Red returned from his independent time and organised for him to make us all toasties for lunch. He was busy chopping onion in the kitchen and getting me to grate the cheese – keen to be in control but also keen to involve the adults in the activity. After this, over the course of a couple of hours, he was in and out of a big paddling pool set up out the back, played an extended game of Marco Polo (version of hide and seek) and then tig-hide-and-seek with me. I was a little more self-conscious of running around campus with him given my slightly anxious experience with Norman last week, but it seemed to go well. He seemed to need someone to witness his activities today and, also, a play mate as campus was really quiet actually. Various children were away on holidays, camping, out on activities and I was struck by how quiet the place was for most of the early afternoon. Laney mentioned that Red doesn’t always seem to ‘know how to play’ and so she enjoyed seeing him play games with me today.

After some time on the bikes in campus where he showed me how to ‘turn properly’ and do wheelies, he agreed to sit and watch some TV by himself for a while and I chatted with Laney in the office. She asked me how to refer to me in Red’s daily observation and I hadn’t thought about me being a character in them – this led to an interesting conversation about the different ways in which different workers approach the daily obs which, while a letter addressed to the child, also are used to help compile the monthly report – more than one audience being thought of. When Cheryl had come back in the office, Laney noted that Casey was back from leave today and they discussed how ‘good’ she was – when I asked about what made her good, they discussed how she managed to balance different qualities – playfulness, calmness, firmness in boundaries, etc. Laney mentioned that Casey had extensive training in DDP and thought some of her skill was related to this.

[One of the children], who had been at family contact, arrived back with Cheryl and promptly got herself sorted for pool. Casey eventually arrived back and was due to take Red out cycling although she was effective in getting him to apologise for hitting Cheryl in the face with a ball when she came in – he hadn’t apologised and had a bit an attitude when he was initially asked to. He was in the process of delivering his apology in private when I made my exit for today.