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| Fieldnote Note | 2 | Date | 27/4/21 |
| Locations | Bungalow 2Residential Campus (outdoor) | Weather | Cold (11C) mainly rain and cloud |
| Child interactions | [one of the children], Dom, Junior, Eva | Staff Interactions | Ronnie, Quin, Helen, Thelma, Peter, Karly, Bob, Duncan, Florence, Martha and Heidi |
| Times | 1pm – 4.30pm | Total Time in field | 3.5 hours |

The weather was dreech today when I arrived on Campus. In Bungalow 2 I met Millerton on his way out the door and had a quick chat to say hello. There were a few new faces today. Martha is a part time worker who works a regular pattern and has just returned recently from Mat Leave – similarly, Florence has just returned from Mat Leave and I met her also today. Peter, Duncan and Heidi I had met in online meetings and was recognised and accepted very quickly by them. I gave out some information leaflets to Florence and Martha today and explained a bit about the project and consent.

After spending a bit of time chatting with Helen (15 years working here and discussed some of the changes in that time – which she welcomes. Discussed some older practices when she first joined that she didn’t like – rules for rules sake etc.) and Karly in the office I headed over to Bungalow 3 with Helen for the 1.30 meeting. Quin, Thelma, Helen and Florence were in this meeting. It followed a similar pattern to yesterday although the weather played a bit of a factor in the planning of activities. It was noted that [one of the children] had a difficult night last night and has generally been struggling as their birthday approaches – celebratory times can be complex in this setting as the young people are not with their family or there may be difficulties in ongoing contact there. I noted my interest in perhaps going out with a young person and a worker if they were going to an activity given that I would only be here till teatime today and there was general agreement that this could be organised. It sparked a conversation about consent for the children with Florence and Thelma agreeing to follow up on some of the other children to see if this could be achieved for a few more. I got some positive feedback on my dancing skills with Dom from last evening and he had a good night last night and I was commenting that he was probably knackered after dancing for some hours over the course of the evening. It was noted that some of the kids would likely be reluctant to go out in the weather as it was.

Back in bungalow 2 preparations for the children’s return from school were made including agreement about who would be taking which car and the specific arrangements for picking up the children (it was a two and two today for Bungalow two as Barry was out all day with his key worker Mick again today). There was discussion on the arrangements for when the children returned – Helen wanted to chat with [one of the children] as there was some concern that they were anxious about Barry’s move having lived with him for 4.5 years (in addition to their upcoming birthday), thereafter the plan was to see if they wanted to go out for a while. Some of the other plans that had been discussed in the meeting seemed to become a bit more ambiguous at this stage with the weather playing a part in the discussion as well as other factors (e.g. Martha has still to do an online hazard perception test which is required for staff to drive the project cars). It seems that the staff have to wait to see how the kids are before settling on any firm course of action.

Like yesterday, the bungalow got quiet as staff were dispatched to the school and preparations were made for their return. I chatted with Martha in the kitchen while she prepared some snacks for the children (fruit, cheese, crisps and juice). We discussed some of the children and the work here in general. There was a bit of a ‘past trauma focus’ when contextualising some behaviours. For example, we discussed some of the differences in food worries (noted in yesterday’s fieldnote) and why some children may have some difficulties eating too little or too much (or storing/hording food) and discussed how some of this could be related this to their past experiences while some of it may be typical behaviour for children.

[One of the children] and Eva returned first and mainly got on with getting in and putting stuff in their rooms etc. [one of the children] initially resisted hugs from Martha but then went and sought them after a few minutes. Neither of the children seemed particularly interested in snacks although later had some strawberries once some chocolate sauce was introduced. By contrast, Dom (who had subsequently returned with Junior) made short work of the crisps and was regularly asked to ‘take his time’ eating – the speed of his eating was a concern for Martha, Karly and Helen when they came and went from the kitchen. He took the opportunity to get some swear words in during brief moments when it was just him and me in the kitchen – sussing me out. After a short while, I was dragged from the kitchen by Dom to watch him dancing to the YouTube videos again – it seemed to me that this was an activity in which he could be the ‘lead’. All four children ended up in the living area with three staff and me and they were all taking part in the dancing, which I thought was a nice activity. This general equilibrium was maintained for about 15-20 minutes before some changes in behaviour [data removed as consent could not be established].

In the kitchen, Heidi had started preparing the tea and Helen was doing some laundry although she was in and out checking on the situations elsewhere in and around the bungalow (Dom was outside chasing chickens about). This gave me a chance to talk about the research in more detail with them and we discussed the nature of the research, the types of research that have been done (outcomes) and the methods used. The conversation naturally lent itself to an overview/assessment of residential childcare in general – Helen thinks all workers bring an individuality to the work regardless of the model used and that the DDP model is not used in every circumstance (discrete work again). She also felt that people bring their own values to the work and these interact in different ways with the models and practices in situ. Heidi was generally more critical of residential childcare as an approach and felt that children need to be in families and that there should be more general and specialist foster placements available. She was herself a foster carer and also provided mother and child placements in her home as well. She did not think that the group care model was particularly therapeutic – she intimated the changing staff rotas and the effort to think about dynamics between children were not ideal. Clearly she works in the sector and thinks they do the best they can for the children – her critique was directed more widely to the overall child welfare and protection ‘system’. She felt there was a role for specialist therapeutic services and noted that [one of the children] had no trauma work done even though they openly discuss their past and so may be open to getting some specialist support regarding it.

As it was getting to about teatime, I agreed to come back at 9am next Monday as it is a PH and so I can see what activities are getting put in place and then said my goodbyes. Dom was outside and gave me a hug and walked me down towards my car where he told me about the chickens and him having stashed a couple of eggs. When I checked if it was ok for him to be walking away from the bungalow he said Helen was giving him a bit more freedom today and that she was higher up than Heidi, so that was ok (Ronnie was behind us and heading to his car too, so I felt assured that it was ok for him to walk down). This got me thinking in the car about how aware he was of the hierarchical staff structure and also how he used language – to be allowed more freedom and what that meant in practice. I’ve noticed yesterday and today that some of the language the kids use sounds ‘social worky’ at times and not just in relation to themselves but also when they describe staff actions/practices. I made a circled jotting about this to think about during fieldwork.