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Function, Quality and Outcomes of Residential Care: Findings from a Rapid Evidence Review

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Agenda

- Context for the research
- Terminology and definitions
- Function of residential care
- Quality
- Outcomes
- Methodology
- Conclusions

Context and Background

- Prevalence of Children in Alternative Care worldwide
- Debates/ strategies on reform of child protection and alternative care systems
- UNCRC and UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children
- Broad agreement on need to phase out institutional care
- Role of residential care within a range of care options?

Function of Residential Care

Reasons for children coming into care:

Situational, such as:

- War, displacement/ migration, economic circumstances

Relational, such as:

- Family breakdown, incarceration, dependency/addiction, violence, abuse or neglect

Linked to the needs of the child, such as:

- disability, trauma, 'range of adversity and behaviour difficulty'

Function of Residential Care

Specific reasons for placement in residential care:

- To provide intensive support or treatment
- For recovery and rehabilitation
- To provide respite
- When identifying, securing, or in preparation for family-based care
- When a family-based placement has not sustained, or is unlikely to
- In preparation for independent living

Geographical context connected with reasons for coming into care, and with age profile of children

Quality of Residential Care

Key domains of quality:

- Setting, staffing, safety, treatment, outcomes
- Importance of environment, staff and relational aspects in determining quality of care
- Involvement of children and young people in assessing what quality care means for them (Quality of Life, subjective well-being)
- Need to ensure effective participation of children and young people in determining quality of their care

Outcomes

- Overall
 - Evidence of detriment as a result of institutional care
 - Some evidence of negative impact of residential care
- Wide Range of outcomes studied
 - Behavioural, psychological, emotional
 - Predominantly “deficit-based”
 - Predominantly short-term outcomes
- Mix of methods/methodologies
 - Challenge of attribution to the care received or prior experiences
- Influence of BEIP
 - Large number of articles, strong RCT methodology
 - BUT: Do these results tell us about modern residential care?

Methodology

- Followed Khangura (2012)'s 'Rapid Review Methodology'
 - Uses systematic searches, but not as thorough as a full systematic review.
 - Focus on meeting needs of the 'knowledge user'
- Search Process:
 - 5 year review span 2015-2019 inclusive
 - Searches in English, French, & Spanish
- Review Process
 - Initial abstract review for inclusion/exclusion
 - Full text review – using pro-forma to collect relevant information
- Analysis of extracted data by research team

Khangura, Konnyu, Cushman, Grimshaw, & Moher (2012) 'Evidence Summaries: the evolution of a rapid review approach'. *Systematic Reviews* 1(1).

Conclusions

- Terminology
 - There are no clear definitions used of residential vs institutional care
- Geographical coverage
 - Strong prevalence of European/North American studies
 - Contexts and cultures affect the purposes and understanding of residential care
- Challenges to providing quality
 - Continuity of carer, staff training/understanding, emotional connection
- There are some key areas for development:
 - Linking quality of care to outcomes
 - Focusing on the views and experiences of children and young people directly
 - Examining impact for brothers and sisters,
 - Increase in perspectives from outside Europe/North America
 - Understanding for whom residential care does and does not work, and in what circumstances



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Thank you!

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