



Hierarchy of needs for care experienced young people

Reflection on Parker SC

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What is this topic?

This guidance is based on the Hierarchy of Needs framework set by Maslow. This helps professionals who are working with children and young people who have experienced the care system and how to support and meet their individual needs. It highlights the importance of different levels of support and what is needed to meet each level. The hierarchy begins with physiological needs, followed by safety needs, integration and belonging, self-esteem, independence and autonomy, cognitive, knowledge and understanding, self-actualisation and fulfilling potential, and ends with transcendence and giving back.

The basic foundations are minimum requirements. It is useful to understand each level to best support the young people you are working with. Particular needs will be different for different individuals. It is important to talk to, and support, each young person to explore what the top of the pyramid looks like for them and how to unlock their full potential. Reaching the top requires feeling like you have everything you need and that you are able to achieve the things that you want to achieve and are happy in yourself.

What does Parker SC currently do to meet the topic discussed?

Parker SC adopts a therapeutic framework in how they care for and look after the children in their care. They use Playfulness Acceptance Curiosity and Empathy (PACE) and therapeutic parenting to support the children in their day to day lives and overall development. A large aspect of this is knowing the importance of the Hierarchy of Needs and how the children Parker SC cares for are usually at the lower end of the triangle due to neglect and abuse. Below is how Parker SC meets the layers of the Children's Commissioner's Care Experienced Advisor Board's adapted Hierarchy of Needs.

Physiological needs:

Parker SC understands that some of the children and young people who arrive to live with them have often not experienced some of their basic needs being met such as having food, a warm and safe environment to live in and experience physical comfort for this. Parker SC provides children with their own bedrooms and allows the children opportunities to decorate their bedroom with photos and choose their own bedding. Food is always provided for the children, and they are educated on what a healthy diet looks like. Parker SC often finds with children in their care, food can be tricky for them as they can worry the food will not always be available, therefore it is vital the children develop the trust that they will be cared for appropriately, however it is understood that this forms part of another layer of the hierarchy.

Safety needs:

Safety needs incorporate personal, emotional, health and financial aspects for the child. Parker SC meets the personal aspect by acting as the corporate parent for the child and often adopting trauma-informed practice that understands the complex needs and behaviours that arise from children who have experienced trauma. Over time, this approach allows the children to understand that adults can be predictable and trusting. Other ways the personal aspect is achieved by Parker SC is through liaising with relevant professionals involved in the children's care, maintaining family time and



ensuring the children remain in contact with their family, and support with the transition into the home and out, if this is something that occurs.

Parker SC strives to ensure the children in their care are healthy and they achieve this aspect through promoting exercise and providing access to this, work with relevant professionals or services to promote health, support children with receiving diagnoses, if appropriate, and provide the children with personalised support and allow them to be involved in decisions about their care. Parker SC prides itself on high-quality health plans that detail all health needs, both past and present, of the children in their care.

The financial aspect is dependent upon the age of the children Parker SC cares for. For example, older children engage in key work sessions and education around budgeting to support them in the next stage of their lives after our homes. This can also include educating on the cost of travel, the cost of living and how to have a safe home. Another example of how this is met with younger children is through providing them with weekly pocket money amounts that they can spend how they wish (with levels of supervision to ensure safety and appropriateness). All children in the care of Parker SC receive clothing, toiletries, and hair allowance as well as money towards holidays, birthdays and Christmas to ensure they have caring and enjoyable experiences.

The emotional aspect of this covers a lot of the daily work Parker SC does. An area of this is being open and transparent with the children and treating them as an individual. Parker SC strives to do this on a daily basis and feels it is highly important to have open and honest conversations with the children, in line with their understanding and stage of development. Through this, Parker SC feels the children build relationships upon honesty and this provides them with the belief that adults can be safe, predictable and can be trusted. Other ways the emotional aspect is covered by Parker SC is communicating with other professionals and holding them accountable if something is not appropriate, encouraging the children with whatever aspiration they have and helping them to achieve this and providing the children with regular check ins, whether this be whilst they are in their bedroom and just checking the children are OK, or if they are having sleepovers and messaging the children to check they are fine and safe.

Integration and belonging:

It is important for Parker SC that the children they care for have a sense of belonging in their homes. They achieve this for the children by providing them with encouragement to take part in clubs in the area to build local links, supporting them to make friends or maintaining previous friendships, and celebrating personal or religious traditions that the children have and supporting children with learning about other's traditions and beliefs too.

Self-esteem, independence, and autonomy:

With the above, it is hoped the children's self-esteem will rise as they will feel they are a valued and cared for individual. Their levels of independence will hopefully increase in a positive and healthy manner and Parker SC supports this through providing the children with choice, whether this be through the food for the week, their activities, or their own path in life and what their wishes and feelings are, rather than what their family or previous carers want. This is also achieved through providing the children with education on independence that is tailored to their level of understanding and development, supporting them with their identity and what is important to them and working with them to understand their morals and values in life.

Cognitive, knowledge and understanding:

This aspect appears to be prominent amongst older children who will be preparing for adulthood or going through options for their GCSEs, however understanding can continue to be developed upon among the younger children as long as it is in line with their understanding and is appropriate for their age. Parker SC supports the children with this aspect by knowing what options are available for further education or career paths, supporting the children with application writing and applying for jobs and helping them to make informed decisions about their lives. This can be done through key work sessions and incorporating what is important to the individual children to make it more relatable and beneficial for the children.



Self-actualisation and fulfilling potential:

This stage is where the care provided by Parker SC allows the children to know who they are and what they want from life. From this support, it is hoped the children cared for by Parker SC are able to rise above challenges through the development of healthy coping mechanisms, achieve their goals and aspirations through planning and goal setting and to be aware of the person they are and what is important to them.

Transcendence and giving back:

It is believed through the previous steps and care provided that the children will then feel they belong to the wider society they are in and will seek out opportunities to give back to those who have cared for them.

What do we need to do to improve how we meet the topic discussed?

Parker SC prides itself on providing trauma informed care and through this ensures the children's needs are met from the first level of providing basic needs. Parker SC feel they meet the topic discussed in this well, and feel this way through how often they listen to the children's voices, wishes and feelings in order to gain an understanding to what is important to the children and to gauge where they are in their development. This allows Parker SC to always be looking at what the next step is for the children in their care and what support they can give them to ensure this is achieved.

However, it is recognised that within this guidance there is one comment from a young person who stated they did not have a good relationship with the system, and this impacted upon their relationship. It is therefore acknowledged by Parker SC the importance of ensuring this remains in the forefront of minds, so that children and young people in their care never feel they do not have a good relationship with those who care for them.

Strengths of the research:

The strengths of this guidance are that it continues to recognise the hierarchy of needs as current and important in today's society and highlights how this can be specific to children in care and who have experienced trauma. The Hierarchy of Needs can often be generalised, and it is positive to see this being adapted to include further aspects for children in care and how meeting specific needs can be achieved.

Another strength of this guidance is that it provides the reader with direct quotes from care experienced children and what they feel is important from their own experiences. Through young people becoming involved, their voices can be heard and needed change can be made.

Flaws of the research:

The last layer of this hierarchy assumes the children and young people will go on to give back to those who have cared for them and will make a difference in society. However, this is a strong assumption and is rather generalised. The former steps are appropriate and reflect a natural trajectory of how the right level of care allows children and young people to develop. This model puts emphasis on to the children developing their own goals and aspirations and Parker SC will always support the children in the career goals they wish, rather than expecting them to support those in the care system because of their personal circumstances.

Overall analysis of the research, and how we meet topics discussed in the research:

The overall analysis of this guidance is positive. It highlights the importance of providing appropriate care but in important stages, acknowledging the individual steps it takes and how these interlink with each other. For example,



children cannot move up through the hierarchy without feeling secure in the previous section. Therefore, this will allow children and young people to develop a sense of belong, self-esteem and an identity for who they truly are.

In regard to Parker SC, they meet this guidance by ensuring they meet each aspect and layer of this hierarchy on a daily basis. They put emphasis on the physiological and emotional needs of the children and young people they care for and feel these are the most important layers for the children to grow, achieve and thrive in life. Emotional support is provided on a daily basis and it is important for Parker SC that the children and young people develop an understanding that they are safe, cared for and that adults can be trusting and predictable, as their early experiences often make them feel they are not.



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