

**With the Care Review the social construction of the situation by the national and local state is absented - it is the antipathy to residential child care continued by other means.**

The experiences of children in care reflect the state's responsibilities to them.

It is remarkable that this is not the centre of the Care Review. The first act of the lead reviewer was to place the focus on private providers and outside of the DfE through involvement of the CMA.

The activity and responsibility of the national and local state have to be placed at the core of the Care Review activities and conclusions. If this does not happen then there will have been an enormous diversion from analysing the primary task, what is going on here and what is to be done.

Steadily since the 1989 Children Act the national and local state have been removed from view. At the time of the 89 Act there was little external provision, the independent sector was either voluntary organisations running services in parallel or as part of the local state. There was an exceedingly small private sector of children's homes. The 89 Act could have a firm focus.

It was the introduction of commissioning that has brought about the development of a private sector.

There has been a promotion of the 'arms-length' responsibility of the national and local state. The responsibility has been diverted to solely that of providers.

This cannot be the case as providers can only be reactive to the prior actions of the local authorities.

If LAs did not want to use private provision then they can do so and set up their own homes. It is not that LAs have to use external providers of any ownership.

The involvement of the state has been made further distant by the use of a regulator and of a contracting culture. The providers have been proscribed from acting independently of the contract, enforced through contract management, and regulations, enforced through regulatory activity.

The actions of the LAs need to be given close scrutiny as to intent and subsequent actions.

It is of no use solely looking at providers and absenting first the local state, who are acting on behalf and implementing directions of the national state, then absenting the originators, the national state. How the allocated funding is to be spent is determined by the national state in that it can determine if there is to be anything other than LA services. It also determines the actions of caring and contracting. It is a centrally determining position.

Previous reviews and inquiries have come about as a result of the realisation of systemic abusive institutional practice.

Safeguarding inquiries emphasised a child protection necessary perspective regarding residential child care in particular, less so on fostering, even less on kinship, and less again on adoption.

Providers have sustained high positive outcomes of their ability to demonstrate that they meet the standards required for the quality and safety of care.

No matter that this is the case these are given reasons for several of the current reviews into residential provision.

However, these are buttresses to the twin focus, fees, and availability. Expensive and lack of accessibility through lack of provision. The focus is on the economic.

Again, the active part of the LAs is absent, given they have the opportunity to open their own homes they determine the use and availability of the private sector. Providers are reactive to LAs.

Yet, the focus is on providers.

The social construction of the situation by the national and local state is absented.

The recent reviews (Narey and MacAlister) have not had a focus on the national and local state but on providers and carers.

The focus on the social care placements is to remove the national and local state from the picture whilst refocussing on the solution as family support.

There is a continued antipathy to extra-family care (would things be different if we now termed fostering and group living as 'extra-family care?' alternative, substitute, supplemental)

Terms of reference of the current Care Review

There is a symbiotic relationship between scandal, the Committee of Inquiry and public policy (Butler and Drakeford 2005 p4).

Inquiries further political agendas and act to create a 'master narrative', whereas once it was safeguarding, now it is extortionate fees and lack of access. These have been steadily developed and promoted by the national and local state over some years.

'Dissenting and questioning voices are to be discovered, submerged beneath the dominant discourse' (Butler and Drakeford 2005).

There can be a dissonance between what is said to be happening and what is actually happening.

In whose interests is the Care Review?

The Review is not neutral, its ToR demonstrably show this to be the case.

There is a lack of trust and of accountability apportioned towards providers projected from the national and local state who by doing so absent themselves from the picture. We ask the questions and provide the answers.

The Review can only be understood in the light of wider socio-economic and political-ideological context.

It is the antipathy to residential child care continued by other means.

This is done so for the disruption of the sector itself and in the doing so also of the wider care system as demands are placed on other services and precedents set in regard to residential child care are rolled across to other settings and services.

If one had a political project then residential child care would be a good place to start as it is only its existence that allows the rest of the care system to act as effectively as it does.

There is the fact that residential care has many detractors and luke-warm defenders.

**(Note: developed from a source document - Mark Smith 'Rethinking Residential Child Care' who is aware and agreed its use)**