

We went to the Hundred Acre Wood children's home and asked the people there to define the role of an English residential child care practitioner.

We were struck by how they described the role through the lens of their own unique personality and world view.

Here is how each character would describe the core purpose of the job:

Winnie-the-Pooh

"The role of a care worker is to simply be there, holding a hand when the world gets a bit too loud. It is not about having a big, clever brain or knowing all the complicated rules. It is about sitting quietly on a log with a child, offering a small piece of something sweet, and making sure they know they are completely safe, exactly as they are."

Core Philosophy: Unconditional positive regard, calm, non-judgmental

Christopher Robin

"Our job is to join them in their games, climb the trees they want to climb, and share their daily life without taking away their freedom. We are not there to rule over them like a strict king. We are there to build up their courage, guide them through the tricky parts of the forest, and safely walk beside them until they are strong enough to step into the big world on their own."

Core Philosophy: Shared life space, accompaniment, presence.

Eeyore

"I suppose the role is simply not to expect them to dance or smile when their house has fallen down yet again. It is staying close by, even when they are terribly gloomy and push you away. It is rebuilding their stick-house without complaining, and remembering to invite them to the party anyway. Even if it rains. Which it probably will."

Core Philosophy: Trauma-informed acceptance, patience, inclusion.

Piglet

"The role is to look after the very small, very frightened feelings. It is recognising when a child's heart is fluttering like a trapped bird, and walking right next to them so the big, scary shadow looks a little bit smaller. It is holding onto them tightly until their breathing slows down and they realise they aren't alone in the dark."

Core Philosophy: Emotional co-regulation, support, scaffolding safety.

Rabbit

"Organisation! That is the role. A proper home requires carefully scheduled mealtimes, clear boundaries, and an orderly leader to keep things from turning into total chaos. However... I suppose one must also learn to adjust the ledger when a Tigger bounces through the front door. Routine is vital, but we must have just enough flexibility so we do not snap when things go awry."

Core Philosophy: Structure, boundaries, safety, and continuously adapting.

Tigger

"The job is all about finding out what makes a kid want to bounce, and then making sure they have a safe place to do it! You shouldn't try to lock up their energy or tell them that bouncing is a bad thing. You just have to guide them away from the breakable stuff, find out what they love to do, and bounce right along with them!"

Core Philosophy: Channelling, reframing, positively and actively.

Kanga

"The role is to provide a warm sanctuary where a child always knows where their next meal is coming from, where their scrapes will be healed, and where they will be tucked in at night. It is about offering a parental safety net that wraps around every single child who enters the home, making sure their basic human rights to comfort, love, and care are fiercely protected."

Core Philosophy: The Key Worker, emotional warmth, nurturing care.

Reflections by Roo and Owl

Roo — Child at the Home

I liked hearing how everyone explained what the grown-ups are meant to do here. It made sense to me in different ways.

Pooh's bit felt like when someone just sits with me without asking loads of questions. Sometimes I don't need fixing, I just need someone to stay.

Christopher Robin sounded like when staff join in my games instead of telling me to calm down. That makes me feel like I'm not weird for wanting to play

Eeyore's part made me think about the days when I'm grumpy or sad and don't want anyone near me. It helps when adults don't get cross about it.

Piglet's bit felt true too — sometimes my chest goes tight and I don't know why, and it helps when someone notices before I have to say anything.

Rabbit made me laugh because the routines do help, even if I pretend they don't.

And Tigger... well, that's like when staff let me run around outside instead of telling me off for being "too much".

Kanga's bit felt the safest — like knowing someone will always check I've eaten and that I'm okay before bed.

I guess all of them together feel like what I want from adults here: people who stay close, don't give up, and help me feel like I belong even when I'm having a hard day

Owl — Responsible Individual

Listening to everyone I'm struck by how accurately they see the *essence* of residential child care, not as a technical role, but as a deeply human one.

Pooh reminds us that presence and unconditional regard are foundational. Before any intervention, there must be safety, attunement, and acceptance.

Christopher Robin captures the shared life-space model: we do not supervise children from a distance; we live alongside them, co-creating meaning and confidence.

Eeyore's reflection speaks to trauma-informed patience — the understanding that behaviour is communication, and that consistency matters most when a child is at their lowest.

Piglet highlights emotional co-regulation: the practitioner as a steadying nervous system when a child's own is overwhelmed

Rabbit reminds us that structure is not the enemy of care but its container. Boundaries, routines, and predictability are essential, yet must be flexible enough to hold the unexpected.

Tigger brings in the importance of reframing energy and individuality as strengths to be channelled, not problems to be suppressed.

And Kanga articulates the core of the key-worker role: nurturing, advocacy, and the fierce protection of a child's rights, dignity, and wellbeing.

Taken together, here is picture of what it means to be an English residential child care practitioner: a blend of warmth, structure, attunement, playfulness, therapeutic insight, and unwavering commitment to each child's safety and growth.