

The Hundred Acre Wood children's home consider the role of Residential Child Care

The scene is the staff room of the Hundred Acre Wood children's home. Christopher Robin, the manager, has called a team meeting to review the home's Statement of Purpose and define their roles as practitioners.

Christopher Robin: (Leaning forward, looking around the table) Thank you all for coming. It's that time of year when we review our Statement of Purpose. As every year I remind you the SoP is about the primary task, that which cannot be compromised. We review and revise in relation to the children we have with us now. As children don't stay fixed, so a SoP doesn't stay fixed. It's how we know what we are supposed to be doing, and how. No drift. Meeting needs how they need to be met is efficient and effective care. It's who and what and how we are.

I want us to strip away the institutional jargon for a moment. In your own words, what is our primary role here?

Rabbit: (Tapping a pencil sharply on a clipboard) It is order, Christopher! It is structure! The role of a residential practitioner is to establish clear boundaries, predictable schedules, and an organised environment. If the children do not know exactly what time tea is served, or what the house rules are, the home descends into chaos. My role is to maintain the framework that keeps them safe.

Tigger: (Bouncing slightly in his swivel chair) Oh, administrative fluff, Rabbit! You can't just lock kids into a calendar! The real job is about *energy!* *These kids come to us with a lot of bounce built up inside them from a lifetime of being told to sit still. Our job isn't to stop the bouncing; it's to bounce with them! We have to find out what they love doing and channel that wild energy into something grand before they crash into your neat little shelves!*

Rabbit: (Sighing heavily) Channelling it is fine, Tigger, but without my rules, you would bounce right through the greenhouse glass. There must be a boundary.

Winnie-the-Pooh: (Humming softly to himself, looking up) I think... if I may... the role is much quieter than that. When a child is sad, or their tummy is rumbling with worry, they do not need a schedule or a big bounce. They just need a bear. Or a person. Our role is to sit on the log beside them. To be completely there, to be present, not thinking about the next meeting or the paperwork. Just holding a hand and offering a small piece of something sweet to comfort them. It is making sure they know they are liked, just as they are, even if they are a bear of very little brain. And they know that, feel that, warm inside, even when we are not there. They feel it unconditionally, uninterrupted.

Piglet: (Squeaking softly, twisting his scarf) Pooh is right. Oh dear, he is so right. Because the world is terribly big and frightening for the children who come to live with us. They see monsters in every shadow because of what they've been through. Our role is to notice when their hands are shaking. It's to walk right next to them, very closely, so they feel small acts of bravery grow inside them. We are their safety net when everything feels like it's tumbling down.

Eeyore: (Speaking slowly from the corner of the room, staring at the floor) Well..... Even if you hold their hand, sometimes the house tumbles down anyway. It usually does. If you ask me, the role is simply not expecting them to smile about it. When a child arrives and sits in the corner, cold and gloomy, the worst thing you can do is tell them to cheer up. Our job is to let them be miserable if they need to be. We build their stick-house back up when it blows away, we invite them to the table, and we don't complain when they say the food tastes like thistles. We just stay. We don't leave them behind just because they aren't polite.

Kanga: (Nodding warmly, pouring tea for everyone) Eeyore speaks a beautiful truth. Our role is to create a sanctuary. It is the domestic warmth, the hot bath, the clean sheets, the plaster on a scraped knee, even the metaphorical one. Every child needs a primary anchor, a Key Worker, who fiercely protects their comfort and checks on them when they are tucked into bed. We are here to parent the unparented, ensuring their most basic human rights to safety and affection are never questioned.

Christopher Robin: (Smiling, looking at his notes) All of you. This is exactly it. Look at what we've built together. It's all of it. Rabbit gives us the safety of structure, but Tigger reminds us to leave room for joy. Piglet shows us how to co-regulate fear, while Eeyore reminds us to respect trauma without demanding instant fixes. Kanga holds the nurturing core, and Pooh brings the unconditional presence that ties it all together.

Our role isn't just one of these things. It is using our shared life space to walk beside them until they are ready to step out of the woods and into their own future.

There's lots of ways to describe it, a therapeutic community, facilitating environment. But really, it's just us. Doing what we do. Meaning it. Meaning making. Knowledge expertise. Extraordinary looking ordinary. Complex difficult things looking simple, easy. Best job in the world.

Now let's hear from 2 important people in the life of this home

Roo (child living at Hundred Acre children's home)

Tone: honest, warm, a bit tentative but hopeful.

Sometimes I get scared that grown-ups will change things without telling me, or that I'll get in trouble for stuff I don't understand. But when you sit with me and explain things properly, it feels different. It feels like you actually see me, not just the things I do wrong. I like when you ask what I think before you decide things. It makes me feel

like I matter here, like this is my home too. I still get worried, but it helps when you stay calm and don't give up on me, even when I'm having a hard day.

Owl (Responsible Individual)

Tone: steady, reflective, accountable, child-centred.

Roo, I hear you. It's my responsibility to make sure the adults here don't just make decisions *about* you, but *with* you. You deserve clarity, consistency, and adults who don't disappear when things get tough. I want you to feel safe enough to speak your mind, even when it's uncomfortable for us to hear. My job is to ensure the home stays a place where you are held in mind, where your voice shapes the day-to-day, and where every adult understands that care is something we do *with* you, not *to* you. You are not an afterthought in this home; you are at the centre of it.