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#### SURROGATE PARENTING IN RESIDENTIAL CARE

Developing the Link Worker Model in Barnado's Croxteth Park Project for Children with Profound Learning Disabilities

As part of the general initiative to move all children out of long stay hospitals in England, the Department of Health and Social Security provided Barnado's, a major voluntary child care agency, with the funds to set up a community based unit for eight children with profound learning disabilities and additional physical disabilities. The project was located in two pairs of bungalows on a new owner-occupier housing development in Liverpool. It was monitored and evaluated by a DHSS funded research team based at the University of Hull. In this paper, we document one distinctive feature of the project, the relationship between staff and children, which was a unique method of working.

The central activity of a residential project is providing care for its residents. Given that this is predominantly provided by care staff, the relationship between them and the children is therefore vitally important. In traditional facilities, care staff were often provided with little positive guidance on ways in which to develop relationships. In the Croxteth Park Project, the managers drew on progressive elements of social work practice to provide care staff with positive guidance on their interactions with the children. In particular they adopted a surrogate parent model of practice in which each child had a link worker. These workers were expected to form emotional bonds with their children and to prepare them for placements in families.

There can be no doubt that the processes were successful in both enhancing the children's development and in enabling them to move into their own substitute families. The model of work, however, was highly demanding both for care staff and managers, the link workers having to make a high commitment to the children. In exchange for this high commitment they tended to experience a high level of satisfaction. Managers had to ensure that link workers had the necessary resources and support.

Our paper will describe both the policy and practice and provide insight into the evaluation of this model of staff/child relationships in residential care. The presentation will be augmented with audio visual aids including video tape and overheads.

*Im Mittelpunkt dieses Referates stehen die Beziehungen zwischen Erziehern und Kindern in einem Heim für schwer lern- und körperbehinderte Kinder in Liverpool. Mit der Unterstützung eines Begleitforschungsteams der Universität Hull wurde das Konzept des "Link worker" ausprobiert, welches darin besteht, jedem Kind eine Bezugsperson zur Seite zu stellen mit der Aufgabe, emotionale Beziehungen zu dem Kind herzustellen und seine Eingliederung in eine Ersatzfamilie vorzubereiten.*

*Cette conférence donne un aperçu sur une expérience menée à Liverpool dans une petite unité pour enfants à handicap multiple. L'expérience concerne les relations entre enfants et éducateurs et fut évaluée par un groupe de recherche de l'université de Hull. Il s'agit d'une sorte de tutorat mettant à la disposition de chaque enfant un éducateur avec la mission d'établir des relations émotionnelles avec cet enfant et de préparer son transfert dans une famille d'accueil.*