
**Longitudinal evaluation of the post-leaving outcomes for
young men who have been in receipt of Kites' Children's
residential and/or aftercare services**

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1. Evaluation Purpose

The overall purpose of this research is to assess the long-term effectiveness of Kites' residential and After-Care placements for young men displaying inappropriate sexual behaviour. It seeks to provide indicative evidence of achievement and areas for development in terms of ex-residents' views and outcomes.

2. Context for the Evaluation

For 23 years, Kites Children's Services has sought to provide quality residential services for children and young people aged between 11 and 18 years, who display sexual development problems and who may have a history of sexually harmful behaviour towards others. These services comprise two residential homes, one with an accompanying Ofsted-registered school (with a 2018 rating of 'Good') and the other constituting supported independent After-Care accommodation. The young men interviewed for this study have been the recipients of one or more of these services. Following an evaluation of its specialist fostering services (Boswell & Wedge, 2012), Kites has commissioned the present evaluation of its residential services with a focus on longer-term outcomes for ex-residents.

3. Research Method

In order to ascertain the feasibility of conducting longitudinal research on this ex-resident population, Kites staff were able to identify nine young men over the age of 17, who were both contactable and agreeable to participating in the research. The aim was for the researcher to interview them between September and December 2017 and, if this proved workable, to seek their further consent to be re-interviewed in 12 months' time, to test the viability of longer-term follow-up. This method proved viable, and all nine young men were re-interviewed between September and December 2018. In addition to a semi-structured interview, they each completed a checklist relating to key aspects of their residential placements, and a further checklist relating to key elements of their current lifestyles and well-being. Standard ethical research principles were followed throughout this process (BSA, 2017).

Complementary documentary evidence, where available (some case records having been returned to the Local Authority) was elicited, notably from therapy reports, where ERASOR scores (Worling, 2011) are recorded for the purpose of ongoing risk assessment. The ERASOR could not be re-applied at the research interviews, but key elements of risk at those times were identified. Where external professional support was ongoing, and the relevant personnel could be contacted (in 2 cases only) their

telephone and email assistance was sought in ascertaining the current whereabouts of the young men, and verifying their criminal justice status.

Drawing on the findings from the methods described above, this report provides a holistic review of the effectiveness of the service provided by Kites for this group of children and young people.

4. The documentary evidence

4.1 The studied material: The information in this section is derived from the documentary material which provides a context for the appraisal of the 9 cases in this cohort. It summarises the processes involved in a Kites residential placement, and sets out the chief characteristics of this cohort at the time of their residency. All names given in this report are pseudonyms.

4.2 Entering a residential placement: Local Authority Children's Services refer young men to Kites via one of two orders under the Children Act 1989. Section 31 is a full Care order, while Section 20 is essentially an accommodation order made by the Local Authority, where there is no-one with parental responsibility, or the young person is lost or abandoned, or those with parental responsibility are not able for whatever reason, to provide accommodation or care. In some of these latter cases, these adults are unable to cope with their child's sexualised behaviour but, where feasible, may retain full parental responsibility and involvement with the young person. The placement panel assesses all referrals for suitability and, if acceptable, the young person will be matched to the most suitable residential home, based on age, needs and risks. As they get older, and as part of a staged progression towards greater independence, some young men may move from the residential home to an individualised foster placement, while others may move to the staffed After-Care service, where they live independently in one of 3 flats, but with support always available. The therapist's assessment report also makes recommendations about contact with family, leisure pursuits and education, training or employment. For those whose needs and/or behaviour problems would prohibit attendance in mainstream education, Kites has its own Ofsted-registered school (Estuary High) for 10 pupils, with a high teacher-student ratio, where pupils' individual needs are addressed in parallel with the requirements of the National Curriculum.

4.3 The treatment process: At the beginning of each young man's residency, an integrative therapeutic treatment plan for the overall placement is set out and reviewed regularly both internally and via the Local Authority's LAC (Looked-After Children) Review system, which also invites the young men's feedback. The treatment plan incorporates the 5 Common Assessment Framework components, derived from the 'Every Child Matters' agenda (Children Act, 2004; DfES, 2004) - i.e. be healthy; stay safe; enjoy and achieve; make a positive contribution; and achieve economic well-being. It offers one-to-one therapy as well as an ongoing therapeutic approach within the residential placement, support worker input and, where appropriate, external consultant support. Therapy typically comprises a cognitive behavioural approach, with attention to the aetiology of the sexualised behaviour, and a 'third strand addressing secondary, yet fundamental aspects of the young man's global delay'. These aspects notably include self-esteem, self-confidence, family dynamics, communication, emotional literacy, intimate and non-intimate relationships, social skills, decision-making skills, moral development, assertiveness skills, anger management, healthy sexuality and sexual identity and attachment issues.

4.4 The risk assessment process: An assessment of each young man's current level of risk of reoffending/recurrence of sexually harmful behaviour within the next year forms a major component of the therapist's report to the LAC Review. Over time, Kites has drawn on a range of assessment tools. For the last 10 years, however, the main form of risk assessment employed has been the empirically-guided and internationally-used ERASOR (Estimate of Risk of Adolescent Sexual Offence Recidivism) for 12 – 18 year-olds, developed in Canada (Worling & Curwen, 2001; Worling, 2004, 2011). The ERASOR contains 25 risk factors clustered within the following 5 headings: sexual interest, attitudes & behaviours; historical sexual assaults (static risk factors which do not change); psycho-social functioning; and family-environment functioning.

4.5 The ERASOR scoring system: Each of the 25 risk factors is scored, and forms a central tenet of the treatment plan, which is intended to be evaluated on a 6-monthly basis within the report to the LAC Review. The scores serve to indicate any progress made in reducing the identified risk factors, of which 16 are dynamic factors which (based on the ERASOR authors' research reviews) suggest increase the risk of repeat sexually harmful behaviour if left unchanged. Worling (2007:1) nevertheless cautions that the overall category of risk to be arrived at is 'a structured professional judgment based on the combination of risk factors that are present'. Clinical appraisal, therefore, remains of the essence in the assessment process.

4.6 Chief characteristics of the cohort of nine: These characteristics have not been related to specific youngsters, in order that their anonymity remains protected. All came from damaged and frequently abusive backgrounds. All had displayed sexually harmful behavior towards children, ranging from inappropriate touching to oral rape, and including the increasingly prevalent viewing of abusive internet images of children. Only 3 of the cohort had been criminalised for their behaviour, a reminder that, as in other studies of similar young men, it can often be a matter of chance, local culture or postcode lottery, as to whether they are then taken through the courts or through the Child Protection/Safeguarding process (Boswell & Wedge, 2012; Boswell, Wedge, Moseley *et al.*, 2014). Their residential placement lengths ranged from 18 months to 4 years, with the average length being 3 years. After the residential placement, four young men moved to the Kites' supported After-Care homes (three in the neighbouring flats, one in other local supported accommodation), and onward to independent or semi-independent accommodation; four went to individualized foster placements, run by Kites' sister organization, Mosaic Fostering and onward to independent accommodation; and one went directly to Local Authority-supported semi-independent accommodation in his home area, against Kites' recommendation. At their most recent ERASOR assessments prior to reaching the age of 18, this latter young man was deemed to be at high risk of re-offending; 3 others at moderate risk; one at low to moderate risk, and the remaining 3 at low risk.

5. First interviews after leaving Kites

5.1 Ethical considerations. The ages of the cohort members at the time of first interview, ranged from 18 – 24 years. They were all interviewed for about one hour, either in or near their current accommodation, or in the Kites' offices, according to practical or geographical preference. They had already agreed to participate in the research, but its purpose and content were again explained, together with the principles of confidentiality and anonymity, before being asked to sign a consent form. Following this first and the subsequent interview one year later, they were provided with High Street vouchers to the value of £10, in recognition of their time and ongoing commitment to the research process.

5.2 The interview process. It is noteworthy that all members of the cohort arrived promptly for these- first interviews, and that all responded to questions courteously and reflectively, suggesting that their social skills had been well-developed or well-sustained during their time at Kites. Successive research has shown that accommodation, employment/education, and some level of family contact are vital elements in successful resettlement for Care-leavers (Broad, 1999; Laub & Sampson, 2003; Lösel & Bender, 2003; Stein, 2005; Boswell, Wedge, Moseley *et al.*, 2014). Thus,

the initial part of the interview focused on these issues, and was followed by questions inviting them to reflect on their residential placements at Kites, and then to complete a checklist rating a range of aspects of these placements. Their responses are set out in the following paragraphs.

5.3 Accommodation. Of the four 18-year-olds, two were on the point of leaving the Kites independence After-Care flats, one had recently left this facility and moved to semi-independent Local Authority-supported accommodation in his home area, and one (referred to above) had moved directly to such accommodation on reaching 18 years. Of the two 19-year-olds, one had moved from the Kites After-Care flats also to Local Authority-supported accommodation, and the other had moved directly to an independent adult foster placement. All three young men in their 20s (variously aged 21, 22, and 24) were now living in stable independent accommodation, though they had all had several moves, and two had experienced homelessness before achieving this. One said the experience had given him resilience:

When you've slept in bins to keep warm, park benches, sofa-surfed, you learn to do something rather than nothing, to pick yourself up.

5.4 Employment and Education. Of the four 18-year-olds, two were attending college and two were working. Of the two 19-year-olds, one was on Jobseeker's Allowance and the other was at college part-time and in a part-time voluntary job. Of the three in their 20s, two had stable employment (both on zero-hours contracts but with regular full-time work) and the third was just completing a course which he expected to lead to a job. For the younger contingent, whether or not in jobs currently, future employment given that some would have to move to different areas, and in the present economic uncertainty, could by no means be guaranteed.

5.5 Family contact. Most of these young men had experienced fractured family backgrounds, and so those they counted as 'family' ranged from one or both birth or adoptive parents, siblings, half-siblings and step-siblings, aunts and uncles, grandparents, current partners and partners' families. Each member of the cohort had some level of contact with one or more of these family members, and though not always straightforward, the existence of these links were clearly of great importance to all. As time had gone on and, some felt, much-helped by the therapy they had received at Kites, most had reached a better understanding of the events of their childhood, as one young man in his 20s reflected:

I used to feel that my Mum had abandoned me in my childhood because she did nothing when my Dad abused me. I didn't want to see her. But I now see that he was abusing her too and that was why. I see her a lot now, as well as my Nan and Grandad and brothers and sisters.

5.6 Looking back at the residential placement(s): the best thing (if any). All nine of the young men's comments are represented in quotations, given that their number is

small. Their responses are set out in age order, so that the length of time on which they are looking back is apparent. It can be seen that the best thing for most of them was the staff, the other residents and the activities. It should be noted that the After-Care facility did not exist during the residency of the 3 respondents now in their 20s.

Roy (18) - *In the residential home it was the staff and the boys. They were always there to help. I was unpopular at my previous school – I don't know why – but there I had friends. In the flats it's the same, and the rules are very relaxed. You don't have to go to bed at a specific time. I go to bed around 1.00 a.m. and I am an early riser.*

John (18) - *All the support from the staff in both places. Although you get down and do stupid things, they're always there to help you get back up again. 'X' (staff member) is like a Mum figure. 'Y's therapy is really helpful, going through different things.*

Dean (18) - *The staff are OK. Going out with them to town on a Saturday.*

Charlie (18) - *In the residential home you are never left out of anything – there are no favourites. I could go and say 'I'm struggling' to staff, and they would always support me. I was told I was one of the more mature residents – could hold an adult conversation with them. It changes you.*

Joe (19) - *All of the staff in both places. They are nice, kind, and have helped me out a lot. Even when I thought they were nagging, I came to realise they were helping me out. They still do (in adult foster placement).*

Ian (19) - *The friendship with the other residents and staff – the good banter. Such fun, especially at weekends when the support workers took us out into the town, and when we played games, jigsaws, and had karaoke.*

James (20s) - *The residential home was the best. I loved the atmosphere, the activities, the karaoke nights. Christmas Day was brilliant – so many presents. I also really liked the Estuary High school – liked the teaching and having my own desk.*

Zak (20s) - *Leaving the residential home and the school with all their rules, and going to 'Z's adult foster placement where I had more freedom.*

Anthony (20s) - *The therapy, because of the type of person 'Y' is. He's so warm and helped me understand what has happened in my life. He helped me to progress to freedom via the traffic lights system. I didn't much like the residential home, so moving to 'Z's adult foster placement was the best too.*

5.7 Looking back at the residential placement(s): the worst thing (if any). The responses below show that not all could identify a 'worst thing', but where they did, it tended to centre around house restrictions and access to social activity, which given the nature of this clientèle were probably understandable.

Roy (18) - Sometimes if the staff are in a bad mood, they show it more than they should. But they are under pressure and I totally get that. They don't bubble-wrap you – they tell it to you straight and sometimes it hurts. But you learn from it.

John (18) - Nothing. Kites is just brilliant!

Dean (18) - Staff badgered me a bit. Not allowed to go out much. They said 'Don't go into the park', there are children, but I knew that already! My freedom needed to be more gradually paced, and we needed more activity and access to social groups. I was 18 and nearly moving out and I needed some friends.

Charlie (18) - There is no worst thing really. At first, I did want to shut myself away, didn't care about anything, but I came to trust the staff and could go to them with anything. The therapist, my keyworker, and the other lads all helped. I'm still in touch with some. They do teach you budgeting but nothing prepares you for the reality of coping with the whole thing on your own, and maybe they need to give more help with that.

Joe (19) - Absolutely no worst thing!

Ian (19) - At the residential home, all the times you had to stay in your room, especially if activities got cancelled because someone had a meeting running over, or whatever.

James (20s) - I hated the residential home at first. I had much more freedom in my previous foster care placement, so I found the restrictions very hard for the first few months – I was confused, resentful, and just wanted to get out. But when I realised I had to work with them, I started to grow up.

Zak (20s) - At the residential home, being stuck in my bedroom a lot, with little opportunity for socialising. And though 'Z' (adult foster placement) was great, she molly-coddled me a lot, so between the 2 experiences, I didn't have enough preparation for adulthood.

Anthony (20s) - The residential home felt militarised – like a prison! Understandably you couldn't go out on your own. I felt uncomfortable with some people, though I could talk to 'Q' (staff member). You always got sent to your room for 2 or 3 hours at changeover time while the staff sat and gossiped. There weren't many activities. I'd have loved to play football.

5.8 The difference (if any) that your Kites residential placement(s) is making to you now. While some concern is expressed about budgeting, the responses below indicate that preparation for key aspects of independence, and access to therapy, were the most influential aspects of these respondents' residential placements.

Roy (18) - In the [after-care] flats, I have more freedom, able to live my own life more. I can have my own phone now and it's up to you whether you look at inappropriate stuff or not – so I don't. I try to budget but am not very good at it. I have only £1 left to my name at the moment and I need to pay my TV licence. I think Kites could have given us more advice about budgeting to get us ready for independence.

John (18) - The [after-care] flats have given me my independence, getting me used to my own space, though I was on anti-depressants when I first moved there because I don't like change and it's difficult being on your own.

Dean (18) - Learning to be independent. Now I'm away from Kites, I can deal with having my own freedom. I'm quite happy living on my own and going to college. I love it!

Charlie (18) - Kites changed me! They taught me to be independent. I like my flat very much and I have made it my home. My girlfriend may move in soon.

Joe (19) - Kites showed me how to find a job (through carers, job agents, and Job Centre), as my Social Worker won't fund a return to college. I learned how to look after myself and to realise who my friends are, so I won't make wrong judgements in the future. And they taught me 'Don't put yourself first – think of others'. And I do!

Ian (19) - Being here in my current flat has got me thinking about life at Kites over the last few years. They taught me manners and respect for others. I do miss the staff. The therapy helped a lot – the last year towards the end was best. I understood more about what had happened, and we were able to move on to talk about other things than sexual offending. But I learned about ACE in Probation – Avoid, Control, Escape - and I still use that now. I liked the School and both that and going to college were good for me.

James (20s) - Learning to be independent. And 'Y' (therapist) really helped me to understand my past. People who have grown up with their parents don't know how lucky they are. My years with Kites have made a real difference to my life. Now I love freedom and being with my girlfriend.

Zak (20s) - Preparing for freedom. And I liked seeing 'Y', the therapist, though it was sometimes difficult that all the focus was on sexualised behaviour. And he had a dolls house for boys! It wasn't for me, but 'Y' said it was a way of relaxing which helped some others.

Anthony (20s) - The therapy made the most difference. Because 'Y' helped me to trust a bit more, I give people more of a chance now. I have a clear DBS.

5.9 The Cohort's Ratings of the Kites Residential Service. After they had spent some time reflecting on their residential placements at Kites as a central part of their interviews, the cohort members were asked to rate numerically a range of aspects of life within these placements which could be expected to equip them ultimately for independent living. Clearly, the physical experience of living in the residential home or the After-Care flats, was not a stand-alone function, but depended for its success on relationships with a range of internal and external professionals, and a number of complementary facilities and activities, notably educational and social.

The checklist at **Table 1** below shows the respondents' scores of key aspects of the Kites residential service, based on a 5-point scale, where 1 = not at all helpful, and 5 = very helpful. Of course, this is a small sample of ex-residents, and results should

be treated as indicative rather than definitive. However, the majority of ratings (76%) between 3 and 5 (with a preponderance at 4 and 5) across almost all aspects of the residential service do provide an overall positive evaluation of this service, substantiating many of the comments made at 5.6 and 5.8 above. There were 9 ratings at 2, and 2 at 1 (12% altogether) largely reflecting one person who did not enjoy his schooling experience at Estuary High, three who did not feel supported by their Social Workers who either changed regularly or maintained minimal contact, one who did not remember receiving health advice, and six who felt there could have been more help for them to develop a social life and leisure and sports interests. Additionally, one person did not feel that he had participated in any group activity and so ticked 'Not Applicable' in this category.

Table 1: Checklist ratings of aspects of Kites' residential services, by cohort members at 1st interview. 1 = Very unhelpful and 5 = Very helpful (n = 9).

Rating scale:	Very unhelpful.....Very helpful					
ASPECTS OF KITES RESIDENTIAL SERVICES	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Overall residential experience	-	-	3	2	4	-
Therapy	-	-	2	1	6	-
Time spent with Support Worker**	-	-	3	4	2	-
Schooling/college	-	1	2	3	3	-
Group activity	-	-	3	3	2	1
Help to prepare for independent living	-	-	5	3	1	-
Support from Social Worker	-	3	1	5	-	-
Help to keep healthy	-	1	1	4	3	-
Help with social life/friends	2	2	1	1	3	-
Help with leisure interests/sports/hobbies	-	2	1	3	3	-
TOTAL SCORES	2	9	22	29	27	1

5.10 Biggest worry since leaving Kites. Having reflected on their experiences at Kites, and bearing in mind that these young men would all be interviewed again in 12 months' time, they were asked to consider their ongoing situations in life, by identifying both their main worries and their main achievements since leaving (or in two cases being about to leave). In relation to their worries, the comments below show that three respondents had re-offending at the top of their list, but that two used the ACE system to avoid this, and one was motivated by the probable loss of his family if he did re-offend, but felt he had needed more help to understand why he offended. Employment, accommodation and budgeting worries also featured, as did socialising and social isolation, all bearing out research findings (cited at 5.2 above) on these matters.

Roy (18) - *Being on Income Support. It's £115 every 2 weeks. I have to pay £30 bills, £11 TV and food costs. I tend to live on pizza, ready meals, chicken nuggets though! But my friend in the other flat is a good cook and he is going to help me learn to cook and clean. We help each other in different ways. I try to give him confidence when he's down – for example reminding him how fit he is through all the sports etc he does. We will be friends after we leave the flats.*

John (18) - *At first, reoffending (though I haven't so far). It's still a worry but I have coping mechanisms now. I use ACE (Avoid, Control, Escape) and it has helped every time. And now I have a worry about my job, as I've been off ill, and also will be moving from these flats soon.*

Dean (18) - *Re-offending. Losing my family if I do and then go to prison. I didn't have much chance to test it out at Kites, I was so contained during the placement. I needed a chance to go and test it out on my own. I don't think the therapy went into the roots of my offending enough.*

Charlie (18) - *Finding work. With my background, it's really hard, having to declare convictions etc.*

Joe (19) - *Getting to know new carers. I don't like meeting new people. But it's fine now.*

Ian (19) - *Reoffending – in all my 3 settings. Whether I can stop myself – but ACE helps.*

James (20) - *Being homeless – I faced this fear twice. But you do what you gotta do.*

Zak (20s) - *At first, not ever finding a partner in life, but I have now. And also not having real friends. My work colleagues are my friends, but it's not the same thing.*

Anthony (20s) - *Being unsociable. At first, I just trapped myself in my room to get away from people. This can still have an impact. Sometimes, I just stay indoors because I feel safer. The other worry was getting behind with the rent! One of my landlords took me to Court. Kites tried to teach about budgeting, but what they did was give us £25 for a food shop, but they need to teach people more about how to handle bills, Council tax, and rent, and what happens if you don't pay them!*

5.11 Biggest achievement since leaving Kites. Apart from one young man who didn't feel he could name an achievement, the responses below tend to indicate that education and training, coping independently in their own flats (in 3 cases within partner relationships), and avoiding friends who were bad influences, were seen as the main achievements of these respondents. Unprompted, three people described their achievements as stemming from what they had learned from the Kites residential experience.

Roy (18) - On 2 occasions I have fought hard to get a place in college. I kept phoning till I got an interview. The course I wanted was full, so I went to ask about the ICT course and got on that and started the very next day!

John (18) - I got 4 GCSEs, Maths, English, Art, Media, all at Estuary High. Also got qualifications with St John's Ambulance, Prince's Trust, Kites Challenge. All gave me the confidence for going to college, gaining Level 2 in Sports, then getting a job. Now I'd like to train in Hairdressing.

Dean (18) - I don't really know.

Charlie (18) - Moving into my flat, learning to cope on my own (though it was very hard), cooking for myself. Kites helped prepare me for that.

Joe (19) - Staying away from friends who got me into trouble.

Ian (19) - Maturity! 'X' at the After-Care flats said to me 'You're so mature now Ian'. And I remember most things staff said to me so I try to carry out their advice in my life now.

James (20s) - Getting my flat. Maturing - growing up. My independence - doing my own washing. Taking turns to cook with my girlfriend - I did a roast dinner the other day! I've just done a 4-week BT course and I need a driving licence, but it should lead to a job.

Zak (20s) - Becoming an adult. Learning to live independently. Cooking and doing my own shopping, though my partner pays the bills.

Anthony (20s) - Proving myself in the residential placement, in order to progress to the adult fostering placement, and then on to my independence now with my job, my flat, my partner and my child.

5.12 Young men's self-description. Developing a self-image which is not merely confined to the labels, 'offender' or 'Care-leaver' is important to these young men's evolving identity, and so they were asked how they would describe themselves now to someone who didn't know them. Their responses below show that they mostly have a positive, but also realistic view of themselves as human beings.

Roy (18) - A good guy who's made some bad decisions. I know I can be a good person and be someone people can trust. I wouldn't take back any of my mistakes, except for the people I've

hurt, because they've made me what I am today. In relation to a previous girl I fell in love with, I would not now ask her 'Do you like me?', I would ask her out!

John (18) - *Caring, outgoing type of person who tries to be funny and make light of certain situations. Creative.*

Dean (18) - *Kind, good sense of humour, helpful, reliable (though a lot of people would say I'm not!), immature at times.*

Charlie (18) - *Easy to get on with. Adaptable – I've had to be!*

Joe (19) - *Kind, caring, nice to get along with, funny, hardworking, can be lazy, too soft*

Ian (19) - *I'm alright. I have my moments. I can act a bit strange sometimes because of my disabilities and mental health conditions. But I can be fun to be around, and very kind and outgoing when I want to be. I like all songs from the '60s onwards.*

James (20s) - *A caring person. I would help someone in the street who needed it. I have empathy because I've been in their shoes. I'm looking at the possibility of being a Keyworker and am in touch with a charity about this.*

Zak (20s) - *A flamboyant person!*

Anthony (20s) - *Confident, humorous, an empathetic person – willing to help but not to get too involved, since I've been able to understand myself outside of the Care environment (the Kites therapy helped with this).*

5.13 Advice for anyone considering going into a Kites residential placement.

The first interview concluded by asking cohort members if they had any advice for other young men for whom a placement in a Kites residential facility might be an option. All had some pointers to offer, most including the importance of taking staff advice but also expressing feelings to them openly and without anger. Being sociable and learning good social skills was also advised, while one dissenter (who had earlier expressed frustration at the residential restrictions) promoted foster placements over the residential home.

Roy (18) - *Take every piece of advice staff give you. It may seem stupid now, but in the long run you will appreciate it.*

John (18) - *Make the most of it. It's literally the blink of an eye and then it's over. I said this to another lad of 16 – 'Think how quickly your 16 years have gone by. Two years to 18 is nothing'. You get a lot of responsibility. I'd like to go back and do it again. I think it's because I didn't really have a childhood. My Mum would be out at work. My dad has a shop and at the age of 11 I was working it. And I had my childhood taken away by my abuser.*

Dean (18) - *If you have something to say to the staff, say it. I didn't because I was worried it might hurt them, or I might be sent to prison!*

Charlie (18) - Listen to all the advice you are given because it will take you a long way. I remember 'Q' (residential home staff member) saying 'If you can't tell someone what you are thinking of doing, don't do it!'. I've stuck to that.

Joe (19) - Go, listen to staff, get it done, be the best you can be, go to school/college and get your education (3 years ago, I wouldn't have said this – I never went to school before). Try and get to green (traffic lights trust system) as soon as you can!

Ian (19) - At first you'll be nervous, but hang in there although it may be tough. Staff will do their best to help you keep happy. There will be rules, but they will help you move forward. Try and hear staff's views, but also make sure you get your own views across, and try to reach some compromise with them. Keep the staff happy at all times! (I was very good – I never abused staff, never swore, never ran away, only got a bit agitated in the last 6 months because of the uncertainty as to what was going to happen next and where I was going). Also, Kites will help you with budgeting, but when you leave, be prepared for the real thing, which is really hard.

James (20s) - Don't be angry or confused. If you have any questions, ask people - the residents, the staff. Don't bottle it up – it doesn't help. I got so angry, I broke down, and that was the point when I realised I needed to talk to someone about it.

Zak (20s) - Don't go to residential! Fostering is better, and the hostel even better than that – an independent life but with support.

Anthony (20s) - Try and be sociable. Try to understand the different people you will meet. Learn good social skills.

5.14 In summary. At first interview, all members of the cohort were in independent or semi-independent accommodation and all had some level of contact with those they counted as 'family'. All but two were attending college, employed, or in voluntary work. All nine had experienced placements in the residential home, where they most appreciated the staff and the activities, and least appreciated the levels of restriction, though some had come to a better understanding of the reasons for this in retrospect. Preparation for key aspects of independence, and their experience of therapy, were the elements in both the residential home and (for the three who had placements there) the supported After-Care facility, that still influenced them in their lives now. High checklist ratings bore out most of these comments, though small numbers gave low ratings to health advice, help with social life and leisure, and Social Workers who offered insufficient support (not, of course, the responsibility of Kites). Independent living was seen as their main achievement, though most of these young men still worried about the future in terms of employment, accommodation and budgeting. Three also placed their risk of re-offending at the top of their 'worry' list though, impressively, they also cited the use of strategies they had been taught to address this risk, which is encouraging for public protection purposes.

6. Second interviews one year on

All the young men in the cohort had consented to be contacted and re-interviewed twelve months on from their first interview. Contacting them in some cases took tenacity, since several had changed mobile 'phone numbers, email and/or postal addresses. Nevertheless, by a range of means, they were all tracked down and interviews, averaging 70 minutes in length, were conducted either in or near their current accommodation.

6.1 The changing situations of the cohort since their first interviews. The second interview, together with a review of cohort members' ratings in the checklist they had completed last year, invited further reflection on the Kites residential experience, now that they were further down the line from it. Interview questions, with further checklist completion, also sought their accounts of their current situations in terms of resettlement outcomes, of their lifestyles and well-being.

6.2 Reviewing the checklist ratings of Kites residential services. One year on, three members of the cohort (one from each category of 19-year-olds, 20-year-olds, and 20+years), said they would not change any of their (largely high) checklist ratings.

I still feel very positive about Kites and the residential home and what they did for me [20-yr-old]

Ratings which moved down (all by one figure) were in the following categories with accompanying comments. Numbers of respondents making changes are in brackets.

The overall residential experience (1) – Towards the end of being in the After-Care flats, the staff forgot my birthday, didn't wish me a Happy Christmas or buy me a present. I was on my own all day. And the only reason my birthday was not completely awful was because one of the other people who had left the flats came back to see me. I felt they had lost interest in me because I was leaving [19-yr-old]

Therapy (1) – Because I've reoffended now, I look back and think he didn't talk enough about my offending and the reasons for it [19-yr-old]

Social Worker support (2) – He never got in touch and that was really bad [20-yr-old]

She was supposed to come and see me before I left but didn't, and since then was supposed to help me get a housing grant now I've got my own place, but she hasn't been in touch, and she's never there when I ring [20+]

Help with social life/friends (1) – 'W' (staff member) discouraged a new friendship I made with the greatest guy I ever met, because she thought he couldn't be trusted [19-yr-old]

Help with leisure interests/sports/hobbies (1) – We weren't helped to continue these when we moved to the After-Care flats [19-yr-old]

These reduced ratings and accompanying critical comments from 6 of the 9 cohort members indicate reinforced impressions of negligible social work contact and support, a memory of restriction on friendships, a realisation that a greater therapeutic emphasis might have helped to avoid re-offending, and some concern about decreased interest by staff and access to Kites activities after young men have moved to the flats. Unfortunately, the lack of sufficient social work contact is a recurring theme in recent research with vulnerable young people, including those in need of mental health support, as some of these cohort members are. (Children's Commissioner for England, 2016). Sometimes this may be to do with austerity-based staff cuts and turnover, with resulting high thresholds for referral and support, and at other times related to poor professional practice. Clearly, it is not the responsibility of staff providing residential placements, but it can have a serious knock-on effect for any good work done with young people on Care orders, which is not effectively accompanied or followed through post-leaving by external professionals. In terms of restrictions on friendships, this follows a general theme of unhappiness by some of the cohort about lack of freedom of movement in their residential settings, but this is a function of the necessary tension between resident need and public protection. It is, perhaps, particularly unfortunate when it comes to the potential social isolation that such restrictions can lead to. The concern about loss of staff interest and access to activities after young men move to the After-Care flats, may be related to the increased emphasis on them doing things for themselves at this point in their development, but it is perhaps a question of balance which may be worth reviewing. The young man who had re-offended and was now in custody (see further discussion below **Table 2**) was reflecting on how more attention in therapy to the reasons for his offending might have helped him avoid it. It would be surprising, however, if therapy had not covered this, and it may have been a question of the young man's readiness to hear and work on the issue at that stage in his development.

As recounted at **5.9** and in **Table 1** above, the majority of checklist ratings were already between 3 and 5, with a preponderance at 4 and 5 at the high end. Only 3 people (one from each age category), said that on reflection, they would raise their checklist ratings of last year:

Help to keep healthy (1) - I now realise that Kites tried to encourage me in this. (Rating moved from 3 to 4) [19-yr-old]

Help with social life/friends (1) - I can see now that all the trips out and the Kites Challenge were ways of helping me to learn to be sociable and friendly. (Rating moved from 1 to 4) [Same 19-yr-old as above]

Help to prepare for independent living (1) - Last year I wasn't properly remembering how important this had been. Being in that residential home helped me so much - more than

any foster placement ever did. I want to go and see them with my Dad and girlfriend soon, and tell them this. (Rating moved from 3 to 5) [20+]

Help with leisure interests/sports/hobbies (1) – *I remember now that they helped me to get into badminton, army cadets, and volunteering, which I still do. I understand more now about what they were trying to do because now I have more maturity. (Rating moved from 2 to 3) [20-yr-old]*

Although the above ratings and comments come from just 3 people in the cohort of 9, it is encouraging that within each age group, they are still reflecting on the work Kites did with them, and they with Kites, and that as time goes on, they come to understand much more about its meaning and importance for their future lives.

6.3 Key resettlement outcomes. Table 2 below sets out the changing situations of the cohort over one year in terms of accommodation, employment/education and family contact, three critical aspects of resettlement as noted at 5.2 above.

Table 2: The changing situations of the cohort in terms of resettlement (n= 9)

KEY ASPECTS OF RESETTLEMENT	AT FIRST INTERVIEW: AUTUMN 2017			AT SECOND INTERVIEW: AUTUMN 2018		
	AGE GROUPS			AGE GROUPS		
	18yrs(4)	19yrs (2)	20s (3)	19yrs (4)	20yrs (2)	20+ (3)
Kites after-care flats	2	-	-	-	-	-
Semi-independent housing (LA)	2	1	-	-	1	-
Independent adult foster placement	-	1	-	-	-	-
Independent housing	-	-	3	2	1**	3
Custody	-	-	-	2	-	-
Employment	2	-	2	2	-	3
College/training	2	1*	1	-	-	-
Voluntary work	-	1*	-	-	1	-
Partner	1	-	3	2	-	3
Other family contact	4	2	2	4	2	2

* = one 19-yr old in part-time college & part-time voluntary work

** = one 20-yr old living independently within family house

Table 2 above shows the age groups of the cohort at the time of both interviews. Thus, in the second vertical column, the 18-year-olds of the first interview have become 19-year-olds at the second interview, the 19-year-olds have become 20-year-olds, and those in their 20s have remained in their 20s, but one year older. In terms of accommodation, **Table 2** above shows that at the time of first interview, two 18-year-olds (on the point of leaving) were living in the Kites After-Care flats, and two were in Local Authority-supported semi-independent flats, one of these latter very much against the advice of Kites staff, who felt he needed the continued structure of their after-care service. Unfortunately, this young man re-offended sexually on two occasions, serving 6 months' Youth Custody, reoffending almost immediately on release, and was now serving an 18-month sentence for this (non-contact) offence and for Breach of License. The other young man in a Local Authority-supported semi-independent flat had not committed a new offence, but had breached a major condition of his Sexual Offences Prevention Order (SOPO) and was now serving a sentence of 20 months in a Young Offender Institution. It is worthy of note that these young men constituted two of the three who had already been criminalised for the offences which led to their Kites placement, lending weight to existing evidence both about conviction escalation once young people have been entered into the Criminal Justice system, and the way in which those coming from residential care may become fast-tracked into custody (Collins, Schwartz & Epstein, 2001). Of the two young men from the After-Care flats, one was living independently and working in his home area in close proximity to his family, and the other was also living independently, just coming to the end of a period of employment, and with some limited contact with his family. Of the two 20-year-olds, one remained in almost exactly the same situation as last year, with semi-independent accommodation, voluntary work and good family contact, while the other was living independently within the family house, but partly for health reasons was not currently employed. Of the three cohort members already in their 20s, all remained in the same stable accommodation as last year, two with the same partners (and one now with 2 children), while one had changed partners. All of them were also in stable employment.

6.4 The lifestyle and well-being of the cohort at second interview. In addition to their further reflections on their Kites residential experience, members of the cohort were asked to complete a 2-page checklist. Its contents were derived from the five key principles set out in the 'Every Child Matters' agenda set out at **4.3** above. Respondents were asked to rate a range of factors on a scale of 1 - 5, where 1 meant 'Very good/No Problems', and 5 meant 'Very bad/Many problems'. **Table 3** below shows the ratings for each of these 26 categories. Where accompanying comments were made, these appear below **Table 3**.

Table 3: Checklist ratings of aspects of current lifestyle & well-being by cohort members at 2nd interview. 1 = Very good/No problems and 5 = Very bad/Many problems (n = 9).

Rating scale: Very good/no problems..... Very bad/many problems						
ASPECTS OF LIFESTYLE & WELLBEING AT 2nd INTERVIEW	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
College						9
Employment	2	2	2	2	1	-
Housing/Accommodation	2	3	3	-	1	-
Professional support	2	2	-	-	3	2
Family contact/support	3	2	1	1	2	-
Friends' support	4	1	2	-	1	1
Local community support	2	1	4	-	1	1
How safe you feel in life	4	1	2	2	-	-
How much you enjoy life	3	1	3	2	-	-
How much you give to/support others	3	4	1	1	-	-
How much you've achieved in life	-	2	6	1	-	-
Finances	-	2	3	2	2	-
Physical health	2	2	2	3	-	-
Mental health	2	1	3	1	2	-
Depression	3	1	3	2	-	-
Self-harm	6	1	1	1	-	-
Anxiety/panic attacks	4	3	1	1	-	-
Healthy eating habits	3	-	5	-	1	-
Self-esteem	1	2	4	1	2	-
Sexual health	5	2	1	-	1	-
Involvement in drugs	7	1	1	-	-	-
Alcohol/drinking	5	2	1	1	-	-
Gambling	7	1	-	-	1	-
Death of someone important	1	-	3	-	1	4
Loss of contact with someone important	-	1	1	3	-	4
Anything else you feel applies to you	-	-	-	-	-	9

Table 3 above shows that less than half of the cohort rated any category at the high end (4 or 5) of the problem scale and, perhaps unsurprisingly, the ratings of the two 19-year-olds in custody featured strongly here. However, when the middle rating (3)

is also taken into account, 10 of the 26 categories were rated as at least somewhat problematic. These categories, followed by the numbers who rated them between 3 and 5 are: employment (5); local community support (5); how much you enjoy life (5); how much you've achieved in life (7); finances (7); physical health (5); mental health (6); depression (5); healthy eating habits (6); and self-esteem (7). Apart from one young man in his 20s who scored exclusively at the low end (1s and 2s), cohort members across all age groups had entered ratings between 3 and 5 for some of these categories. Employment, local community support, enjoyment of life, physical health and depression tended to be rated problematic by the two younger groups, rather than by those in their 20s, who were more established in life and mindful of the need to stay healthy. Although all members of the cohort had had adverse and frequently abusive childhood experiences, it was encouraging to note that the oldest group had managed to overcome these effects to the extent of being able to lead relatively stable lifestyles. Nevertheless, two of this group still had some element of struggle with one or more of the categories of finances, mental health, achievement in life and self-esteem, budgeting being a perennial problem for these cohort members generally, and the other categories tending to follow from their overall life trajectories. Some illustrative comments follow from across the age groups, each covering several of these categories.

[19-yr-old] I'm in prison because I got into a relationship with a girl who had two younger sisters, and I didn't tell the PPC (Public Protection Officer, who operates under the auspices of MAPPA) I wasn't offending in any way, but I took them all into town one day and the PPC saw us getting on the bus. I got 20 months for Breach of SOPO, but I will do 10 and the other 10 on licence. I wasn't liking where I was living, as after leaving Kites, I wanted to go and live with my Dad, but wasn't allowed to because it was near my original victims. This made me depressed as I felt I wasn't getting a chance to get back on my feet. I still can't go to where my Dad lives when I leave here, but this time I can go and live with my girlfriend on the other side of town, away from bad influences. Here in the prison I'm a print shop orderly, a literacy mentor to other prisoners, and go to the gym on 3 days. I've passed an interview with a firm that employs ex-prisoners. So I'm using the time here to motivate myself, get into a working routine, do something to help others, and get into a better position when I get out.

[20-yr-old] I am still volunteering which I really like, but would still like a proper job. I'm going on a Prince's Trust course soon, which might help. But the problem I have is that if I earn over £16 per week, I will lose my ESA (Employment and Support Allowance for young people over 16 years, unable to work because of a disability or health condition). I have some mental health problems and am on anti-depressants, though I still get depressed. I like to cook, but the depression leaves me without motivation either to tidy my flat or to cook properly. So I mainly eat junk food even though I know it's not good for my health. I gamble online too, mainly to try and pay off some debts, as I'm not good at budgeting my finances. I see my Dad and two of my brothers quite often which is good. And I

had a girlfriend for a few months earlier this year, and lost my virginity to her. I told her about my past offences and she was OK with that but, because she was under-age (17), MAPPA had to tell her parents, and they wouldn't let her go on seeing me. I do use ACE (Avoid, Control, Escape) to stop me re-offending, and I haven't done, but I do sometimes self-harm when my mind's all over the place. I do know what my problems are but I can't always solve them!

[20+] *I have a regular job but it doesn't cover all our outgoings, so UC (Universal Credit) covers the rest of the bills. We haven't had any problem claiming it. I am having driving lessons as I would like to change my job in the future. My partner is on anti-depressants and wasn't coping with our toddler and the baby, so we asked for help from Social Services and got it. Our family don't live in this area, and we can't afford to pay anyone to babysit, so we rarely go out, but we are having one night out next month for my birthday, it's a chance for us just to be together, and we are really looking forward to that. I find it difficult taking my children to the park on my own, because of what I did before I went to Kites [though he is not on any statutory order in respect of this]. I feel I have to be very careful where there are other children, staying put, not running around after my own kids too much. I wish there had been more advice about how to handle this when I was at Kites. I do a lot of gaming (not gambling!) which causes rows with my partner. I know I should do less and am trying to. We are lucky with our family and our big flat, and managing to pay our bills. And I am someone who smiles and looks cheerful for others, but this hides the fact that I do feel down sometimes.*

On the other side of the coin, more than half the cohort across all age groups rated 11 of the 26 categories at the low end (1 or 2) of the problem scale. These categories, followed by the numbers who rated them at 1 or 2 are: Housing/Accommodation (5); Family contact/support (5); Friends' support (5); How safe you feel in life (5); How much you give to/support others (7); Self-harm (7); Anxiety/panic attacks (7); Sexual health (7); Involvement in drugs (8); Alcohol/drinking (7); Gambling (8). Accommodation for all of them at the time of the second interview was fairly stable, though a minority still hoped to keep improving their housing situations. Those reasonably settled in their communities appeared to have at least one or two friends, and some more of a friendship group, and these two factors contributed to their sense of safety. All of them, including those in prison, said that they gave to-supported others in their lives, and it was clearly important to them to do so. Self-harm, anxiety/panic attacks, poor sexual health, alcohol, drug and gambling problems may well have been some of the features of these young men's earlier lives, but most were at considerable pains to indicate that, if this had ever been the case, they did not feature now. They seemed well aware of the dangers of lifestyles which incorporated any of these elements and as one observed:

[20+] *The freedom I had after Kites made me think I could drink heavily, get girlfriends, smoke some weed, gamble a bit, but after a while I remembered what they had said – that any of it could lead me back into trouble, so I got more careful and just have the odd drink now.*

6.5 Risk outcomes. Based on the most recent ERASOR scores and therapeutic reports (which would have been conducted some months before they left the Kites residential home), 4 of these young men appeared to have been assessed as at low risk of re-offending after they left, 3 at low to moderate risk, one at moderate risk, and one at high risk. Given that 7 of the 9 were not, as far as was known, re/convicted, the first two sets of assessments appear to have been correct (and, interestingly, none of the 3 cohort members who had placed risk of re-offending at the top of their 'Worry' list in the first interview, was known to have re-offended, suggesting that their anxiety and their awareness had been their saviour). The young man assessed as being at high risk (also referred to at 6.3 and **Table 2** above) and moved from Kites against their assessment and recommendation, had re-offended twice very quickly. The other, who breached his SOPO (also referred to at 6.3 and **Table 2** above) had been assessed as being at medium risk. Thus, these last two assessments were also correct. Largely because of their earlier offences, both these young men, at the age of 18 years, had been placed by their Local Authorities away from their families, in areas where initially they knew no-one. The combination of vulnerability at the point of leaving residential Care (Broad, 1999; Stein, 2005) and the known prevalence of social isolation among adolescent (and other) sexual offenders (Worling & Curwen, 2001; Veneziano & Veneziano, 2002) seems likely to have been instrumental here.

6.6 In summary. At second interview, the two young men (now 19) who had been about to leave the Kites After-Care flats at first interview, were now in independent and semi-independent accommodation respectively. Both had jobs, though one of these was about to come to an end. Both had new partners, though not living with them, and both had some level of contact with their families. Sadly, the other two young men, now aged 19, were both in custody. Of the two 20-year-olds, one remained in semi-independent accommodation, working part-time as a volunteer, and in regular touch with family, while the other was not working, but living independently within the family house. Of the three young men already in their 20s at first interview, all remained in the same stable accommodation as last year, two with the same partners (and one now with 2 children), while one had changed partners. All of them were also in relatively stable employment. Most, on reflection, did not want to change last year's ratings of Kites residential services, with those that did only moving their ratings up or down by one number, with the exception of 'Help with social life/friends', being moved up from 1 to 4, and 'Help to prepare for independent living' from 3 to 5 in one case each. Scores for the checklist about current lifestyle and well-being, showed that less than half rated any category at the high end of the problem scale, while 10 of the 26 categories (employment; local community support; how much you enjoy life; how much you've achieved in life;

finances; physical health; mental health; depression; healthy eating habits; and self-esteem) were rated as at least somewhat problematic.

More encouragingly, more than half the cohort across all age groups rated 11 of the 26 categories (housing/accommodation; family contact/support; friends' support; how safe you feel in life; how much you give to/support others; self-harm; anxiety/panic attacks; sexual health; involvement in drugs; alcohol/drinking; and gambling) at the low end of the problem scale. Risk of re-offending outcomes by the time of second interview were very much as assessed through the ERASOR and therapist's reports before the young men left the Kites residential home. It should be emphasised that the notion of cause is too elusive for the lack of re/conviction in 7 cases to be directly and solely attributed to the residential experience at Kites. However, the combination of quantitative and qualitative data at second interview stage, while showing that these ex-residents' lives are not problem-free, does also show that the majority are currently coping in sometimes testing circumstances, without offending, and with some explicitly drawing on tools and learning with which they felt their time at Kites had equipped them.

7. Summary and Implications

7.1 Kites Children's Services was set up in 1995 and provides a range of services for children and young people who display sexual development problems and who typically have a history of sexually harmful behaviour towards others. It runs two residential homes for young men aged 11 to 18, one with an accompanying Ofsted-registered school, and the other constituting supported independent After-Care accommodation. The young men interviewed for this study have been the recipients of one or more of these services. Following an evaluation of its specialist fostering services (Boswell & Wedge, 2012), Kites has commissioned the present evaluation of its residential services with a focus on longer-term outcomes for ex-residents.

7.2 This evaluation is based on three survey methods. In addition to responding to two semi-structured interviews, one year apart, each of 9 young men completed a checklist relating to key aspects of their residential placements, and a further checklist relating to key elements of their current lifestyle and well-being. Complementary documentary evidence was elicited, notably from therapy reports and ERASOR risk assessment scores. The evaluation's key findings are summarised in the following paragraphs.

7.3 Chief characteristics of the cohort of nine. All these young men came from damaged and frequently abusive backgrounds, and all had displayed some form of sexually harmful behavior towards children. At the commencement of the evaluation, four cohort members were 18, two were 19, and three were in their early 20s. Six had come to Kites through the Care/Safeguarding system, while only 3 had been criminalised for their behaviour. Their average residential placement length was 3 years. Afterwards, they had moved variously through adult Mosaic Fostering (Kites' sister organization) and Kites supported After-Care accommodation, to semi-independent or independent accommodation. One had gone directly to Local Authority-supported semi-independent accommodation in his home area, against Kites' recommendation. Given successive research findings about the vital elements of accommodation, employment/education and some level of family contact in successful resettlement, these issues provide the focus of the succeeding three paragraphs.

7.4 Accommodation. At the time of first interview, two 18-year-olds were on the point of leaving the Kites independence After-Care flats, one had recently left this facility and moved to semi-independent Local Authority-supported accommodation in his home area, and one (referred to above) had moved directly to such accommodation on reaching 18 years. Of the two 19-year-olds, one had moved from the Kites-supported local after-care accommodation to Local Authority-supported accommodation, and the other had moved directly to an independent adult foster placement. All three young men in their 20s were now living in stable independent

accommodation, though they had all had several moves, and two had experienced homelessness before achieving this. At the time of second interview, 6 were living independently, one semi-independently, and 2 sadly, were in custody. All of these young men had spent time in the residential home, and most in interview praised its stabilising influence on them, despite some concerns about restrictions for public protection. They, including the three who had moved on to Kites own After-Care flats generally felt well-prepared for independent living, but one at least found the flats somewhat isolating after the access to activities, closeness to staff and other residents in the residential home. These issues perhaps constitute a question of balance which may be worth reviewing.

7.5 Employment and Education. At first interview, two 18-year-olds were attending college and two were working. Of the two 19-year-olds, one was on Jobseeker's Allowance and the other was at college part-time and in a part-time voluntary job. Of the three in their 20s, two had stable employment (both on zero-hours contracts but with regular full-time work) and the third was just completing a course which he expected to lead to a job. By the second interview, the two 18-year-olds (now 19) who had been working were still working, though in different jobs in different localities. Of the two who had been at college, one had been sentenced to custody for a breach of SOPO, and the other for further sexual offences. Of the two 19-year-olds (now 20), one was not working, partly for health reasons, and the other continued in his voluntary work. The three young men in their 20s (now 22, 23 and 25), were all in relatively stable employment, in two cases with the same firms as at first interview. With one exception, relating to Estuary High, checklist ratings and respondent comments indicated that Kites, with its presumption of achievement, had provided them with good access to schooling, college courses, and employment opportunities as appropriate.

7.6 Family contact. These young men had typically experienced fractured family backgrounds, and so those they counted as 'family' ranged from one or both birth or adoptive parents, siblings, half-siblings and step-siblings, aunts and uncles, grandparents, current partners and partners' families. Each member of the cohort had some level of ongoing contact with one or more of these family members, though these levels fluctuated somewhat over the time between the two interviews. Although not always straightforward, the existence of these links were clearly of great importance to all. Comments from cohort members suggested that some had learned to understand and better cope with their family dynamics with the help of the therapy they had received at Kites.

7.7 Therapeutic treatment. Kites seeks to provide an integrated service of support to both its fostering and residential placements, and access to therapy which offers holistic individual, group/activity-based and familial interventions, is a key feature

of this support. Interview comments, supported by high checklist ratings, praised this element of their residential experience very highly at both interview stages, often citing the impact it still had on them. One person, now in custody, would in retrospect have liked more time spent addressing his offending. However, several said that, as time had gone on, they had come to understand more about the work that had been done with them and how it made sense in their lives now, particularly in testing situations.

7.8 The overall residential service constitutes an experience rather than merely a placement in a children's home or an after-care facility. Positive relationships with staff are of the essence in building good communication, mutual respect, understanding challenging behaviour while setting boundaries, and providing stability and continuity while also preparing them for ultimate independence. Inevitably there were one or two specific 'moans' about staff but, overall the staff were the part of the placement that the young men valued most of all and, looking back, missed most of all. Some were still in touch with individual staff members. In terms of external professional support, 3 ex-residents said that their Social Workers and others associated with Care-leavers, were not in regular contact either towards the end of placements or afterwards, and these young men did not feel they received the continuity of help from this source that they needed to keep their progress on track. While this is not Kites' responsibility, there may be some implications for partner agreement work here.

7.9 Preparation for independence. As suggested above, this is an aim which can sometimes seem to conflict with the provision of continuity and good attachments, but it is vital if Kites leavers are to learn to be able to manage day-to-day life on their own, as many may effectively have to do. As the account of their living circumstances by at least second interview has shown, the majority are doing this, perhaps not without accompanying challenges, but without, as far as is known, resorting to offending. Of the two who were in custody by second interview, one had moved to a placement which Kites had counselled against, and the other had for public protection reasons, not been allowed to live near his family. Independence had not worked for them. While respondents felt generally positive about the preparation they had been given both in the residential and After-Care facilities, several considered that the budgeting advice was insufficient to prepare them for the reality. Additionally, one of the older members of the cohort who now had children (but was on no statutory order), felt in retrospect that more guidance should have been given as to how to behave in situations such as visits to parks, where other children were present. These are messages worth considering for future practice.

7.10 The ongoing risk assessment process is a significant element of the therapeutic treatment plan and the way in which the placement types are selected. The ERASOR

system, the ‘traffic lights’ system and the therapeutic assessment guide the type and amount of freedom young men are allowed within their placements. As mentioned at 7.4 above, some young men spoke of struggling with the living restrictions these systems imposed, though some also came to see the reasons for this as they looked back. Risk of re-offending outcomes by the time of second interview were very much as assessed through the ERASOR and therapist’s reports before the young men left the residential home, and so Kites may have some confidence in their accuracy.

7.11 The main outcome evidence, gained through documentary examination interviews and checklist completion one year apart, suggests that this small group of 9 young men who had been in Kites residential placements had, on the whole benefited from these experiences. Though it was unfortunate that two had ended up in custody, there was learning for them in this also, and both were able to reflect on what they might have done differently to avoid this situation. For the rest, all were managing to cope satisfactorily in their respective settings. This would suggest that the holistic package provided by the Kites residential experience had enabled them to overcome some of the difficulties with which they had arrived, and to move on to function appropriately within the wider community.

8. Conclusion

Research has shown that most children and young people who commit sexually harmful acts are themselves victims of adverse childhood experiences, and the backgrounds of those referred to Kites, including this cohort, bear out these findings. They need protection from themselves and the public needs protection from them. This is a paradox which does not lend itself to meaningful intervention by most existing services, with incarceration featuring as the resort-of-no-alternative.

Through eliciting the reflections of nine young men on their years with Kites, the present evaluation has shown that the integrated set of services which Kites can offer within its two forms of residential placement, enables damaged and damaging young men to come to an understanding of what has happened to them, what they have done to others, and how they can avoid damaging behaviour in the future. The combination of a stable residential experience, therapy, education, ongoing family and practical support, and resettlement focus, has helped most of them reach and manage an independent way of life. These findings are significant for Local Authorities who seek effective long-term solutions for young men with sexually challenging behaviours, who themselves need the stability and treatment that a Kites residential placement can provide.

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Table 1: Checklist ratings of aspects of Kites' residential services by cohort members at 1st interview

Table 2: The changing situations of the cohort in terms of resettlement

Table 3: Checklist ratings of aspects of current lifestyle and well-being, by cohort members at 2nd interview

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NB: Further information about the work of Kites Children's Services can be found on the following website: www.kitescs.com

