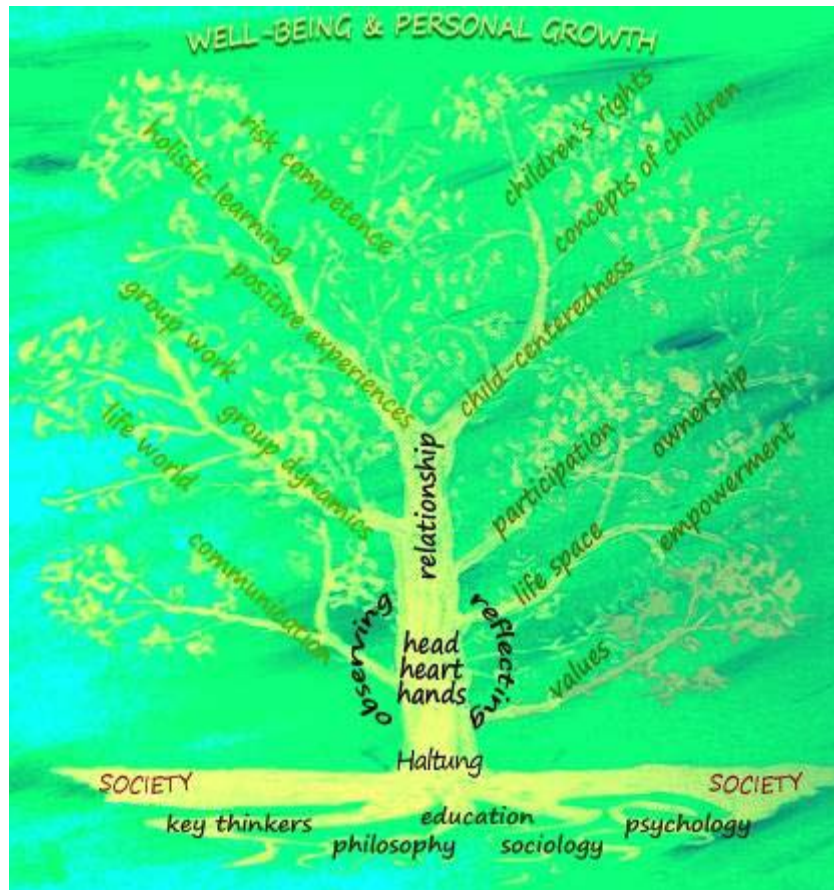




## Social pedagogy and its links to *Holding the Space*



(Social pedagogy tree illustration: Eichsteller, G. & Holthoff, S., 2009)

November 2010  
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## **Introduction and context**

The Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care (SIRCC) was asked to evaluate  *Holding the Space*  (HTS), an initiative which was developed by  *The Kite*  project in Sunderland.  *The Kite*  project is part of  *Action for Children's*  Safe and Secure services. The first part of this evaluation was a case study on how HTS was operating in one home in Sunderland. This was completed in February 2010. The second part of the evaluation is ongoing and is looking at how HTS training is being rolled out to  *Action for Children*  residential services in Scotland.

The training for HTS promotes the use of a therapeutic model to enable the young people to find an emotional language and a sense of identity and belonging. At the same time, the training aims to transform residential homes into open and caring communities.

Social pedagogy is an area of growing interest in the UK, where there are clear concerns about the poor outcomes for children and young people who are looked after and accommodated. At an intuitive level, there seems to be similarities between what is explored during the HTS training and the principles behind social pedagogy. This review will seek to explore these similarities and differences. Specifically, this review will have three purposes:

- To establish the key principles of social pedagogy;
- To establish the key principles and history of HTS;
- To establish any possible congruence and differences between social pedagogy and HTS.

Grateful acknowledgement is given to Sarah Leitch of  *Action for Children* , who provided some notes on her thinking about social pedagogy and its links to HTS. Hopefully, this review will reflect some of these thoughts.

## Section One: The key principles of social pedagogy

### 1. Social pedagogy: Definitions

Social pedagogy as a term of reference is a compound of three ancient words. Social comes from the Latin 'socius' which means *friend* or *companion*. Pedagogy comes from the Greek 'pais' meaning *child* and 'agein' meaning *to lead* (Hegstrup, 2003). Hence in this compound, we see the emergence of what practitioners in the UK have come to understand as social pedagogy. Petrie et al. (2005) defined it simply as 'Education in the broadest sense of the word (p3). In a longer description, Cannan et al. (1992) defined social pedagogy as:

*a perspective including social action, which aims to promote human welfare through child-rearing and education practices; and to prevent or ease social problems by providing people with the means to manage their own lives, and make changes in their circumstances (p73).*

Social pedagogy in practice is a holistic and personal approach to child care in all its forms, which links education and care, and support for families. Social pedagogy also offers a potential approach to training at various levels which integrates education, psychology, sociology and philosophy with child care, family support and the promotion of children's rights. Social pedagogy has its roots in Europe and social pedagogues are often seen as working closer to children and in a less office-bound way than other professionals involved in child care (Kornbeck, 2009).

*Social pedagogues already work across Europe in a wide range of services, including the early years, schools, residential care, family support and youth work, disability services, and in some countries support for older people. They work alongside the more established professions such as teachers, social workers, doctors and nurses. Pedagogues are seen to complement and enhance the more traditionally established professions.  
(Children in Scotland, 2008)*

Some commentators have suggested that it would be more accurate to speak about social *pedagogies*, as even within Europe the meaning and practice of social pedagogy differs from country to country. Hämäläinen (2003) argues that an activity

does not become social pedagogy because of the use of particular methods but because those methods are chosen as a consequence of 'social pedagogical thinking'. In other words it is as much an attitude and a way of conceptualising relationships with children as it is a body of knowledge. As Eriksson (2010) commented

*Social pedagogy has to be seen both as a practice and a philosophical approach, with its own theoretical orientation to the world, an orientation with a humanitarian and democratic basis (p5).*

Hence, social pedagogy can be seen as an activity and a set of ideas which, while reflecting the wider concerns for the welfare of children, is organic and adaptable to the characteristics of the society within which it develops. It reflects humanistic values and is founded on an image of children as active agents and as human beings in their own right, not simply as 'adults in waiting'. In that sense, it works in the 'here and now' and uses 'the moment' as the space and place of pedagogic practice.

## **2. Policy context**

Throughout the UK, there have been policy initiatives which have emphasised the need for improved outcomes for looked-after children. In Scotland, *Getting It Right for Every Child* (Scottish Government, 2008) has led to professionals pointing out that developing a Scottish social pedagogy would have the potential to underpin a more collaborative approach and help to develop a shared language for working with children, which could be picked up by the different professions within their own practice contexts. In England, the discussion around social pedagogy has been much more emphatic. In the policy paper *Care Matters* (Department for Education and Skills, 2006) social pedagogy was directly mentioned in Chapter Four. Specifically, it was stated that

*Social pedagogy provides a theoretical and practical framework for understanding children's upbringing. It has a particular focus on building relationships through practical engagement with children and young people using skills such as art and music or outdoor activities. It provides the foundation for training those working with children in many other European countries. In a residential care setting, it brings*

*a particular expertise in working with groups and using the group as a support (p58).*

At a later date, research was announced by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) into effectiveness of Social Pedagogy in RCC in England. In May 2007, CPEA Associates were commissioned by the DCSF, the Children's Workforce Development Council and Lifelong Learning UK to produce a report looking at the possible relationships between the children's workforce and social pedagogy. Wider scoping work for the Young People's Workforce Strategy noted the need for *'incremental sustained change'*, not towards *'social pedagogues' as separate professional group* but *'an 'UK/English social pedagogy' which starts from 'where we are now' builds upon the progress already made'* (DCSF, 2008, p27). Two major developments have followed on from this. The DCSF in England has funded the Thomas Coram Institute to undertake training programmes with staff in 30 residential child care houses in various parts of England. Essex Council has also independently decided to bring in social pedagogue trainers to work with staff in all their children's homes, for a few days at a time over a three year period. These programmes are all being evaluated.

### **3. Key Characteristics of European Social Pedagogy**

There are a number of ways in which social pedagogy has been conceptualised. For example, The Social Education Trust (2001) suggested that European social pedagogues:

- Often share the life-space of the children or young people they work with, whether in the child's environment in the family home or community, or in a substitute environment such as a residential school, children's home or foster home;
- Work generally in teams, so individual workers have to be capable of functioning effectively as team members;
- Not only help children and young people develop as individuals but also as social beings who will be capable of having positive futures and responsible roles as adults in the wider community;
- Work towards the creation of a group culture which is worthy of children and young people as they develop towards maturity;
- Often work outside both the families and the schools of the children with whom they work;

- May work with children and young people of any age and with any type of presenting problem, including physical and learning disabilities, social, emotional and mental health problems and offending;
- Are expected to be imaginative and creative in finding ways of helping children to develop and overcome problems;
- View a child's situation holistically, including all aspects of their lives in assessment, planning and intervention;
- Focus primarily on the normal development of children with whom they work and see any problems which children have within the wider context of the areas in which they function normally;
- Are seen in some countries as having their own professional identity, distinct from social work, teaching, youth work, psychology, nursing or other established professions;
- Consider the relationship as essential to work with children and young people, so their work is primarily social;
- See education as encompassing not only formal schooling but also the learning of social competences and moral development.

Petrie et al. (2005) identified the following nine key principles of practice in social pedagogy:

1. A focus on the child as a whole person, and support for the child's overall development;
2. The practitioner sees her/himself as a person in relationship with the child or young person;
3. While they are together, the children and staff are seen as inhabiting the same life space, not as existing in separate hierarchical domains;
4. As professionals, pedagogues are encouraged to constantly reflect on their work and to bring both theoretical understandings and self-knowledge to the process;
5. Pedagogues are also practical – their training prepares them to share in many aspects of children's daily lives such as preparing meals, making music, being involved in physical activity or using creative arts and crafts to help children express themselves;
6. When working in group settings, the children's relationships with each other and staff are important resources. Hence pedagogues make use of the group;

7. Pedagogy builds on an understanding of children's rights that is not limited to procedural matters or legislative requirements;
8. There is an emphasis on team work and on valuing the contributions of other people within families, the community and other professions;
9. The centrality of relationship and, allied to this, the importance of relationship.

When examining these two sets of principles, there are large areas of similarity. Bengtsson et al. (2008) suggested that these similarities can be reduced to five key themes.

**a. The 3 Ps: the 'private,' the 'personal,' and the 'professional'**

Bengtsson et al. (2008) suggested that the social pedagogue should be aware of three different aspects of the self:

*The private pedagogue:* The person who is known to friends and family. The private pedagogue should not be in any familial/kin relationship with a child in care. The private pedagogue is the pedagogue outside of work.

*The personal pedagogue:* The person within the professional setting. The personal pedagogue offers aspects of their own self to the young person. Social pedagogues have to put aspects of their personal selves into the relationship so the young person can relate to them.

*The professional pedagogue:* The professional pedagogue is that aspect of practice which enables the social pedagogue to keep on offering contact even if this is being refused. A professional reflection on practice enables social pedagogues to evaluate on the progress they have seen with young people.

The balance of the 3 Ps is illustrated by Bengtsson et al. (2008) in the following statement:

*As many participants put it, the professional role plays a large part in their contact and relationships with the young people. The 'personal' brought a new, safe perspective about how to bring themselves back into the relationships, thus making the contact more authentic for both themselves and the young person involved (p14–15).*



### **b. Head, Heart and Hands**

Cameron (2005) described the notion of 'head, heart and hands'. She said that the 'head' refers to the use of reflective skills and a body of theoretical knowledge to help assess actions to be taken with children. For the social pedagogue, there are no universal solutions. Each situation is responded to in the moment using a combination of information, self-knowledge and theory. 'Heart' refers to the closeness of the relationships between young people and the social pedagogue. There was a sense that social pedagogues understand that the experience of rejection by birth families makes the promotion of a warm, nurturing group life and a sense of belonging especially important. This is work from the heart. 'Hands' refers to the practical involvement of the social pedagogue in aspects of daily life as well as using creative skills as a medium for developing relationships and learning opportunities.

### **c. The Common Third**

This theme supports the building of relationships, by creating opportunities for young people to explore something new with an adult, with the activity as the reason to be together, within a safe setting. This safe setting and joint exploration is the 'common third'. Fundamental to this process is that the social pedagogue and the young person negotiate and agree on the terms on which the activity is to take place. There is no coercion or hidden agenda involved.

### **d. Shared Living Space**

Social pedagogues in residential child care have an understanding that the milieu in which they are working is the living space of the young people. Social pedagogues use this phenomenon to show that life in a home can be different but positive, and that conflicts that happen in everyday life in a home can be solved in other ways than previous negative experiences of the young people. This reflects the theme of shared living space.

### **e. The reflective practitioner in a group care setting**

When working with young people who can have very challenging behaviour, practitioners need to know that they can rely on their colleagues. When working with other human beings and establishing aims and goals for young people's development, it is very important to be able to reflect with colleagues. A large part of social pedagogy training is about learning different methods of group reflection in which all team members are able to reflect with each other and during which all team

members are seen and heard. This is the theme of becoming a reflective practitioner within the group care setting.

Boddy et al. (2005) supported social pedagogy as a basis for workforce reform in England because it can provide a strong basis for an approach to children and young people that embodies ideals of active citizenship, rights and participation, and working with the whole child and his or her family. The CPEA report (2007) emphasised this when examining the positive aspects of social pedagogic practice:

- It provides a holistic approach to working with children and young people – focusing on the ‘whole child/young person’ and support for their overall development;
- It emphasises relationship building with children and young people including the development of practical skills to facilitate this;
- It focuses on children and young people’s development and, in particular, on their emotional health and well-being;
- It highlights the importance of reflection and the ability to bring both theoretical understanding and self-knowledge to the process of working with young people;
- It promotes children’s rights, participation and empowerment
- It shows the importance of team working and valuing the contributions of other people including families, communities and other professionals.

Although this agenda was set in motion by the previous Government, there is no suggestion at this time that the move toward accepting social pedagogy is being undermined or reversed at Government level.

#### **4. Training for social pedagogy**

In Europe, training in social pedagogy is a professional-level qualification (usually 3/4 years training at university level) similar to teachers, social workers, or nurses.

Sometimes (for example in Germany and the Netherlands) a lower-level of qualification (roughly BTec in England or HNC/D in Scotland) is found as well as the higher level qualifications.

These qualifications combine training in the use of practical skills such as play and expressive arts along with learning about child development, family dynamics, social problems and personal values. Such theory is drawn from sociology, psychology and philosophy. Social pedagogues are usually confident professionals who are both practical and reflective (seeing themselves on a par with social workers and teachers, although not necessarily enjoying the same levels of pay). They engage children and young people in fun and play, providing daily care, but also identifying problems and working with other professionals to address them.

There are emerging examples of shorter training programmes in social pedagogy in the UK, as well as developments in undergraduate and post-graduate courses. Some of these are outlined in Appendix One. An examination of these approaches and their recent development demonstrates the interest in this area.

## **Section Two: The key principles and history of *Holding the Space***

The *Safe and Secure* project, part of the wider *Action for Children* services, was funded by a grant from the DCSF to improve and increase the accessibility of *Action for Children* services for those children, young people and their families who have been affected by sexual abuse. Part of the remit of the *Safe and Secure* project was *The Kite* in Sunderland. This project has offered individual therapy to young people and their families or carers, as part of *Action for Children's* sexual abuse initiative. *The Kite* provides a range of therapeutic services, individual counselling, play and art therapy, creative arts therapy, family work and group work.

A large part of *The Kite's* work has been with children in care. *The Kite* has used many different methods to provide therapeutic services to young people, many of whom have been affected by trauma. As a small team with limited resources they could not assign a therapist to every children's home in Sunderland. The team at *The Kite* decided that the best way to enhance their therapeutic services for this group of young people was to support the residential team in enabling the young people in their care to make more positive choices for their wellbeing. 'Holding the Space' (HTS), grew out of this work.

*The Kite* developed a method of training residential staff, which evolved over a five year period during their work with the staff in Sunderland. The training promotes the use of a therapeutic model to enable the young people to find an emotional language and a sense of identity and belonging. It also provides an effective way for staff to reflect with each other. At the same time, the training aims to transform the residential house into an open and caring community. This training became known as HTS.

The training has evolved into a structured course, which was formally accredited by the Northern Council for Further Education (NCFE) in the summer of 2007. The training has five assessable units of learning. These are

1. The Way of Council: A group-work model, with its roots in indigenous cultures and within the Quaker tradition. It uses the talking circle as the method to encourage deep listening, respect for difference and a sense of community. In Council, staff and young people have equal power. It provides a way for all to listen, think about the needs of others, work

- cooperatively, develop emotional literacy and respect each other even if they do not agree with each other;
2. The core conditions of Carl Rogers;
  3. The theoretical framework underpinning Rogerian Person-Centred Therapy;
  4. Creative arts as a therapeutic language;
  5. Transpersonal and archetypal psychology (configurations of the self)

The training takes place over two years. In Sunderland, there are three semesters a year, with seven days of training in each of the semesters. These days are held at *The Kite* at fortnightly intervals throughout the semester. A different model of delivery was developed in order to roll out the HTS training to *Action for Children* residential houses in Scotland.

The first part of the evaluation of HTS (the case study on Sunderland) demonstrated five important findings:

1. Restrictive physical interventions (RPIs), incidents of verbal and physical aggression and bullying, missing episodes, alcohol misuse, education refusals/exclusions and property destruction reduced over the period of HTS training and implementation;
2. The culture of the home was characterised by a positive quality of relationships, openness in communication, a warm and caring atmosphere, an ability to reflect positively on practice and a sense of community;
3. Emotionality scores for staff and young people indicated that both groups felt supported and able to be open with each other. For young people, they indicated a low aggression quotient. When young people had a lower score for openness, they had a higher score for aggression;
4. Staff and young people at the home used a variety of means for communication including artworks;
5. Staff and young people had warm and caring relationships, staff laid down consistent boundaries, and young people supported each other. While the house still experienced potential flashpoints, these were dealt with in a caring and consistent manner (SIRCC, 2010).

The outcomes of HTS are positive, and early indications are that the roll-out of the programme across *Action for Children* residential houses in Scotland has been well received.

The data gathered for the case study showed that HTS contributed substantially to the development of a house culture where young people were valued and where staff felt able to meet the challenges of their work. The findings showed that behaviour which would indicate inner turmoil in the children and young people gradually reduced over time. In addition, the experience of being emotionally held in a warm and caring environment contributed to the sense of wellbeing of the young people. The use of arts activities helped to create a language through which young people and staff could communicate abstract and, at times, painful feelings to others without resorting to violent, abusive behaviour or disengagement.

The Way of Council is one of the structures through which an equalisation of relationships and a safe space for the communication of care and nurture is achieved. This represents a holistic approach which deals with the whole child and the whole environment. Way of Council is an outward expression of an overall philosophy expounded by HTS which promotes care, democracy and participation for all who live within the shared space of the house. It has been a successful method in bringing the unspoken and intangible aspects of the care situation into the conscious domain. Way of Council has become one of the rituals which helps to contribute to a positive culture and allows staff the opportunity to show that they are highly attuned to the needs of their young people. Staff and young people have worked to co-construct Way of Council as a space where all are heard as equals and treated with respect.

The literature asserts the importance of relationship as the main tool through which growing, learning and healing activity takes place. Often, the challenge is to provide boundaries in the context of caring, warm relationships. Behavioural controls without warmth of relationship can cause as many problems as an absence of boundaries. Getting the balance right between firm, fair and warm, in the face of difficult behaviour, is a key feature of working effectively with challenging behaviour. The HTS training appears to provide an effective way to do this. Time and again, the warmth and genuineness of the relationships between staff and young people, and between peers was evident.

The staff group at Sunderland are self-aware, as well as being tuned into the nuances within the atmosphere of the house. Both they and the young people who share the living space know that the Way of Council provides an excellent method of communicating and being involved with each other. Children and young people in

residential care often come with poor experiences of being held and nurtured due to abuse, neglect or some other trauma. As a result, these young people usually have an underdeveloped ability to manage their feelings. When negative feelings do arise, they can often be more extreme due to the pain of 'unsoothed', unresolved feelings and this, in turn, can trigger episodes of aggression and self-harm. As such, their need for an overall philosophy of care which provides real and practical interventions can be more intense. Providing this type of intense relationship presents challenges to staff who can become burnt out in trying to deal with behaviour.

The methods learned by staff during their HTS training have produced a staff group who can provide consistent and healthy experiences of relationship and sharing. Providing this requires not only the single events of Way of Council but must be carried on through the creation of an atmosphere where young people feel accepted, respected and understood. This happened in the context of the many relationships amongst and between staff and young people which were observed during the case study. Young people felt listened to and respected in their relationships with staff and were in a position to work through and make sense of their feelings. A sense of belonging is central to healthy development and good care, yet for some young people who feel angry or ambivalent at being placed away from their home and community, this sense does not come easily. HTS seems to have provided staff with the tools to implement practical interventions which demonstrate clearly that the young person belongs with them in their house.

From the evaluation of HTS thus far, several principles have emerged as central to HTS. These are as follows:

- It is a person centred approach, founded on humanistic principles and practices reflected in the work of Carl Rogers;
- The Way of Council encourages deep listening, mutual respect and an equalisation of power within the house;
- Creative arts are an important way of providing a shared language between staff and young people;
- Transpersonal psychology informs practice and creates a sense of shared space and lives;

- A deep understanding of the developmental issues and effects of neglect and trauma helps to create a situation where young people are included, understood and appreciated, not marginalised;
- Young people are provided with the tools to reflect on their situations and create healthy and appropriate attachments which meet their own particular needs;
- No two young people have the same needs and the needs of individual young people fluctuate with the problems they face. Staff have to adapt to these situations and HTS seems to have provided a way in which staff can be flexible while making sure that the young person is always encouraged to grow and learn;
- Staff are provided with a way to support each other and draw strength from their shared experiences and reflections;
- Way of Council helps the young people to see they are part of something which is bigger than themselves, thereby helping them to have a sense of purpose and direction;
- Relationships are key to the development and healing process of the young people and HTS helps staff to develop their ability to listen, hear and communicate, thereby allowing them to develop their relationships with young people to a deeper level than might be experienced in some settings;
- When HTS is implemented, the promotion of children's rights is a natural by-product, particularly in the area of participation;
- HTS is not a technological method, but a way of drawing out and developing true care, and helping staff to tap into this attitude within themselves.



### **Section Three: Examining the congruence and differences between the principles of social pedagogy and the practice encouraged by *Holding the Space***

The data from the Sunderland case study suggest that there are strong areas of congruence between social pedagogic principles and the practice encouraged by HTS. Some of these areas will now be examined.

#### ***Child development or 'upbringing' combining care and (informal) education***

One of the cornerstones of social pedagogic practice is that the social pedagogue uses their relationship with the child, and groups of children, to promote their overall development, or 'upbringing'. Social pedagogues are concerned with positive aspects of development, and not just with identified problems or deficiencies. They are expected to take a lead in helping the child/young person overcome their problems, integrate into society, and advocate for them. The notion of 'upbringing' is important in social pedagogy and the staff in Sunderland brought this notion to life in every aspect of their work (e.g. involving children in the preparation and eating of good wholesome food, making sure there were fresh flowers in the living areas, laying down calm and consistent boundaries around unacceptable behaviour such as swearing). The use of art works by young people within the context of Way of Council and the fact that all staff are involved in producing works as well demonstrates a way in which creativity can be enhanced and shared. In all of this, there are clear parallels with the social pedagogic concept of 'hands'. This is the practical aspect of care, the everyday things that practitioners will do to ensure a sound upbringing. There have been repeated exhortations to residential child care practitioners not to focus on *the problems* of children, but to focus on their strengths. However care plans and interventions inevitably tend to be focussed on the problems and issues that need to be addressed. HTS provides a positive, child-developmental approach as a backcloth against which care planning can be tackled.

#### ***Reflective practice***

Reflective practice is seen as a major element in social pedagogy, as it is in the UK in social work and other professions. This involves practitioners being trained to reflect on what they are doing, and why, and linking theory to practice. In the UK, social care practitioners such as those working in residential care may have completed NVQs which involve the production of reflective accounts of practice.

However, some of the literature would suggest that the production of reflective accounts in the completion of NVQs is not the same as reflective practice, which is an ongoing and dynamic aspect of the work (for example, see Heron and Chakrabarti, 2003). In teamwork situations, social pedagogues are expected to reflect with each other; giving feedback and suggestions to one another. HTS provides a way for staff to do this and actively encourages reflection and sharing in practice. In this way, HTS provides a vehicle for true reflective practice. Staff regularly take part in staff Way of Council as well as using the moment in practice to reflect and discuss with colleagues.

### ***Personal care and professional relationships***

Social pedagogues are trained to be in relationship with the children and young people with whom they work. One of the differences of emphasis that seems to make this attractive to residential workers is that it affirms the positive care role of the practitioner, as opposed to the risk-averse UK approach, which seems to view personal relationships as potentially suspect and to be carefully watched. By contrast social pedagogues are expected to manage their relationships and use them positively and professionally. In particular, the social pedagogic idea of the 3 Ps (private, personal and professional) provides a helpful way of conceptualising this. In this aspect, there were clear parallels between social pedagogic practice and the relationships which were encouraged by HTS training. Way of Council provided a vehicle whereby staff could use aspects of their own personal selves appropriately, in the moment. It also provided a framework through which the professional self could operate in a non-technological sense (i.e. free of some of the barriers of 'procedure' yet within the safety of a recognised therapeutic intervention). The concept of 'heart' is also evident in HTS. This was particularly clear in Sunderland, where relationships come from the heart and those sitting in council are exhorted to 'speak from the heart'.

### ***Knowledge frameworks***

As a concept, social pedagogy is founded on humanistic philosophy and draws on sociology, psychology and philosophy. It also teaches practical and creative aspects of care. All pedagogues are given a substantial amount of training in the use of a range of creative and recreational activities. They are not expected to be experts or therapists, but they are expected to be competent and understanding about the ways in which children can benefit from engagement in various activities, and the role of the worker to build purposeful relationships with the child or young person through

these activities. HTS is also founded on humanistic philosophy. It also draws on psychology. The core of HTS practice is Rogerian psychotherapy, and its emphasis on deep listening and respect. HTS also uses aspects of transpersonal and archetypal psychology and teaches creative methods using drama, movement and art. These methods help practitioners to think psychologically and also encourage communication at various levels, reflecting the Rogerian emphasis on openness and honesty. Hence there is a degree of commonality here. With HTS, this degree of knowledge input is some of what is required through the social pedagogic notion of 'head'. The notion of 'head' represents the importance of theoretical knowledge as well as knowledge of self and knowledge of the child. Perhaps the only areas not covered by HTS training are sociological perspectives, and this may be something which could be explored if the training were to be rolled out to services other than residential child care.

### ***Groupwork and teamwork***

Social pedagogy has a positive emphasis on group work, (with service users) and teamwork (amongst pedagogues, and with parents and other professionals). Understanding the group and using the group positively are features of social pedagogic training and practice. Yet in terms of traditional practice for social care, this is poorly understood and can be badly implemented. HTS provides a way for the power of the group to be harnessed positively, through the use of Way of Council. Firstly, the circle provides a way for staff and young people to communicate with each other and to draw on the power of community. From a staff teamwork perspective, it also provides a way for practitioners to communicate with each other using a safe and containing group process. In both of these ways, HTS is reminiscent of what might be seen in social pedagogic practice. In addition, participation in creative activities used in HTS is reminiscent of the social pedagogic concept of *the common third*. The common third is about the creation of a new common space as a place where the young person and the practitioner meet as equals. In HTS, the use of creative activities allows both the staff member and the young person to expose themselves to new feelings and the possibility of adding a new and more positive dimension to their relationship.

### ***Democratic/anti-discriminatory focus***

Social pedagogy has a strong democratic and inclusive element, promoting children's rights and seeing children as complex human beings in the present. Social pedagogues are expected to challenge the marginalisation and oppression that the

children and young people may experience and are expected to help them overcome discrimination, to find a place in mainstream society, and to become active responsible citizens. HTS creates an environment where young people who have been devalued are able to value themselves, feel valued and value the group within which they live. Young people are able to initiate Way of Council, which is a non-expert model, and can use it to resolve conflicts and move on. This way of working helps young people to feel safe and equal, which has resonance with the democratic focus of social pedagogy. HTS also creates a culture of inclusion rather than one of exclusion. The talking circle used in Way of Council is open during the ritual and young people can come and go as they need to. This way of working does not pay lip service to inclusion, but is a living practice that actively changes the dynamics of the group. This way of working holds the complex and often difficult behaviours and feelings of young traumatised people. It does not deny these experiences or exclude them, but instead allows young people a place to come where they can realise that they are more than the sum of the poor experiences in their life. HTS generates an environment which gives young people a sense of belonging and can go a long way toward helping them to heal and establish their own unique identity.

### ***Family focus***

Social pedagogy has a strong emphasis on working with families and working in partnership with parents. Where children are in care in Europe, the social pedagogue is expected to work with families in helping children maintain links and often helping children return home. Because they are trained to have a range of practical skills and are trained in specific methods of working, pedagogues would usually be expected to work with families, in the sense of encouraging parents with parenting skills, and supporting parents to resolve difficulties in managing their children. While HTS provides the skills through which family work can be promoted, this can be difficult to put into practice in residential child care. Certainly, within the Sunderland house, this was a long-term unit which was, effectively, the 'family' of the young people who stayed there. However for projects which are not exclusively about residential care, the Way of Council does provide an excellent way of engaging with families. It can enable parents to hear the feelings of young people and also for young people to listen to and respect what is being said by parents. This can contribute to a culture of deep respect and an ability to take responsibility. It is not a culture of 'name and blame' but one of ownership for one's own part in any given family history or event.

### ***Generalisation***

It should be remembered that social pedagogues are generalists. They work across many different areas of need and in many different settings. Their broad training with its theoretical, practical and personal content ideally prepares them for outcomes-focussed work with children, including those with significant developmental needs. Similarly, HTS could be adapted to be used in many different settings with a variety of levels of need. This might include foster care, youth work, formal education settings, disability services, family-focussed project as well as traditional residential child care settings.

### ***Conclusion***

As can be seen from the previous pages, there are many clear parallels between HTS and social pedagogic approaches. Both of the approaches focus on the child as a whole and support the child's overall development and upbringing. The changes which have occurred within staff as a result of HTS training have led to greater awareness of the whole child and working in the moment. Both social pedagogy and HTS hold the relationship as central to practice. HTS provides tools with which the worker can develop and deepen their relationship with the child or young person, and also with their colleagues. These healthier relationships will ultimately help children within families and other social groups.

In social pedagogy, the aim is for practitioners and children to be seen as inhabiting the same life space, and not as existing in separate hierarchical domains. HTS training has worked to transform the culture of a residential child care community into an open, caring and equal therapeutic space, with the Way of Council redressing power imbalances. In both social pedagogy and HTS, practitioners are encouraged to reflect on their practice and to apply theoretical understandings and self-knowledge to their work. This almost becomes the social pedagogic 'attitude' as opposed to the application of a tool. This is very much the case with HTS, where those who are trained in this approach are encouraged to take on another, much more self-aware, sense of being and working.

Participation and democratic ways of being are central to social pedagogy as they are to HTS. The Way of Council, in particular, enables young people to find their voices and feel confident to have their needs expressed and listened to. HTS is applicable beyond the residential child care arena, as is social pedagogy, although the use of HTS in other arenas has not yet been evaluated. In particular, the use of

HTS in family work was not apparent in the evaluation carried out by SIRCC. Also, sociological perspectives are not explored in HTS training, while social pedagogy training in Europe has some focus on this area. However, in terms of its use in residential child care, the lack of input in this area of theory and knowledge does not appear to have had any adverse impact on the implementation of the approach.

Finally, it should be remembered that for social pedagogues there is no universal solution to issues. As they work in the moment, each situation requires a response based on a combination of theoretical knowledge, emotions, self-awareness and understanding of the dynamics of the situation at the time the pedagogue is dealing with it. This reflects what has been found about HTS. In particular, young people who have been traumatised by neglect or abuse will have serious attachment issues and this in turn will throw up a variety of issues, but no two issues or sets of challenging behaviour will be the same. Through HTS, children and young people are enabled to create healthy attachment to the residential community and so gain their own personal sense of identity and belonging. They are given a way to develop emotional literacy through learning how to listen to others and to experience what it feels like to be deeply listened to in return. They are given opportunities to reflect on their own process and so to develop the foundations to understand and appropriately express their feelings and they can take from this what they need. Neither social pedagogy nor HTS should be mistaken for a 'tool' or a 'method of intervention'. They are both flexible and holistic ways of practice involving the whole practitioner and the whole child or young person.

In conclusion, HTS training provides an approach to practice which is largely congruent with social pedagogic approaches. It may contribute to the growing body of work which seeks to identify forms of social pedagogy responsive to culture and practice in the United Kingdom.

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## **Appendix: Social pedagogy training in the UK**

### 1. Thempra courses

Thempra have been one of the leading organisations to offer social pedagogy training in the UK. Their website is full of interesting links and resources, and they promote the Social Pedagogy Development Network, together with key partners from the Thomas Coram Research Unit, the National Centre for Excellence in Residential Child Care, and Jacaranda Recruitment as a way to connect different developments around social pedagogy ([www.social-pedagogy.co.uk/network.htm](http://www.social-pedagogy.co.uk/network.htm)). Their involvement in courses and social pedagogy developments, up until November 2010, are as follows:

*Essex County Council:* Since September 2008 Thempra have worked with Essex County Council to implement social pedagogy within its residential child care services. This project is being independently researched by the University of Lincoln.

*Sycamore Service, Kirkcaldy:* Thempra ran a 9-day course in social pedagogy in the autumn and winter 2008/2009 and this was repeated in 2010. The first course was evaluated by SIRCC and found to be beneficial.

*Staffordshire County Council:* Thempra are working on a social pedagogy implementation strategy for their residential service. The project aims to create a hybrid between the approach Essex project and the DCSF-funded research pilot projects managed by Thomas Coram Research Unit (TCRU).

*Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care:* Thempra ran a course for SIRCC, to introduce organisations in Scotland to social pedagogy. The programme consisted of awareness raising seminars and two 9-day courses. So far the interest in Scotland has been very healthy, and SIRCC is exploring ways to encourage this interest.

*Walsall Council:* In partnership with the TCRU, Thempra are currently involved in a pilot programme for two of Walsall's residential homes.

*Belfast Health & Social Care Trust:* In 2009, Thempra offered a 7-day course with 2 residential teams in Belfast, which was very well received and brought social pedagogy to Northern Ireland. In Winter 2010, they will be running another course for Belfast with 2 new homes.

*NCERCC Social Pedagogy pilot:* The NCERCC social pedagogy pilots in 2007 used a 6 day course developed by Thempra, in which practitioners from 6 children's homes from the *Together Trust* and Lancashire County Council participated.

## 2. Examples of Degree courses

### **i) *BA in Childhood Practice in Scotland***

A new professional degree course, the BA in Childhood Practice, is now being offered in several Scottish universities. These courses grew out of 'early years' degrees which had offered the 'early years worker' such as nursery nurses the chance to build on their more basic qualifications. The *Childhood Practice Standard*, upon which the degrees are based, states that the focus of the course must be children 0-16, not just 0-8 as was the case with earlier versions of these courses. So far, however, these degrees continue to have their main focus on younger children, with little focus on looked-after children and young people.

### **ii) *The BA in Social Pedagogy in Scotland***

This course is offered in a partnership between the University of Aberdeen, the Camphill School in Aberdeen (CSA) and participating communities and organisations. The programme incorporates and critically reflects on a range of theoretical approaches including those based on the work of Rudolf Steiner. Most students are volunteer co-workers in Camphill Communities, while others are employed by the communities or other organisations. The design of the programme enables students to be active in the work in their community/workplace whilst undertaking their studies.

### **iii) *MA in Social Pedagogy in England***

This is a post-graduate programme offered by the University of London's Institute of Education and aims to introduce students to the concepts and principles of social pedagogy. It has been developed in parallel with DSCF-funded social pedagogy pilots in England.

### **iv) *BA in Social Pedagogy and Social Care in England***

This course is offered by Liverpool Hope University. Students learn the skills and knowledge for supporting vulnerable people with various rehabilitation needs. Themes include care in the context of poverty and exclusion, supporting children, young people and families, contemporary social policy, legal context of care, social care methods, crime and justice, housing and homelessness. This is aimed at students who will work with a variety of vulnerable adults, not just children.