

# **Relationship stability, why relationships matter for young people in care**

*Jennifer Gay and Shani Comben*

# Relationships

“The more healthy relationships a child has, the more likely he will be to recover from trauma and thrive. Relationships are the agents of change and the most powerful therapy is human love.”

*Dr Bruce Perry – The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog*

# Approach of Therapeutic Support



Providing stability through a resourced network of relationships of care and support around young people

To be loved, cared for and cared about

Relational space as the focus of intervention



# Home Stretch Conference, 2025



- Importance of social connections
- Improving outcomes for care leavers needs to be a focus across the lifespan, not just at almost 18
- Network for life; preserving and building connections that endure
- Quality of care pre 18 AND relevant support after 18

*Professor Emeritus Robbie Gilligan*

# Protective community factors



- having a supportive or caring relationship with an adult outside of the family (e.g. camp counsellor, cultural or religious leader)
- being involved in extracurricular activities (e.g. sports club, mentored group, academic club)
- school factors such as feeling safe at school, receiving encouragement at school, liking school and feeling part of the school community
- neighbourhood quality (e.g. quality of life in the neighbourhood)
- accessing and using community services
- for children in contact with child protective services, such as out-of-home care, factors such as having a stable caregiver, having minimal movements while in care or between care and returning to their parents, and parents receiving specialist support when the child was returned to them from care.

Jean-Thorn, A., Tremblay-Perreault, A., Dubé, V., & Hébert, M. (2023). A systematic review of community-level protective factors in children exposed to maltreatment. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 24(4), 2827–2842.  
[journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/15248380221117234](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/15248380221117234)



# The 'village'





