Questions from research about the education of care experienced children and young people

Designated Teachers for Children Looked After
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The session will cover:

What factors contribute to better educational outcomes (short recap on findings presented at your DT conference in 2016)?

What does previous research on attachment and trauma training for school staff tell us makes a difference?

The influence of ‘stability’ in outcomes for education and well-being

Questions that have yet to be addressed
Some outcomes of children in care in England

• Average attainment 8 for CLA is 19 compared to 30 for adopted children and 44 for all children – a gap of 25 between CLA and all children

• Achievement gap is significant at KS2 (29% gap in all 3 subjects, CLA 32%, all children 61%, adopted 39%. (CLA 29% for maths, 27% reading, 28% writing)

• Permanently exclusions of CLA decreased from 0.14% (2015) to 0.10% (2016)

• More than five times more likely to have fixed term exclusion (11% of LAC in 2016 compared to 2% of all children)

• Of 27,220 former care leavers aged 19-21, 40% were not in education, employment or training - NEET

• Only 7% access HE compared to > 50% of general population but 12% of older care leavers in Harrison (2017)

• Educational experiences and outcomes contribute to later health, employment (22% unemployment rate), involvement in crime (27% of those in prison)

Outcomes of young people who are adopted

- Of those adopted in 2016-17, 72% had experienced abuse and/or neglect so comparisons with the care population are valid.
- However, 71% of LAC who were adopted were 1-4 years whereas over 50% of those entering care are teenagers.
- Very limited national data on educational outcomes of adopted children but the 30% of children in the 2016 returns flagged as adopted (for PPP)

| % achieving 5 A*-C including English and maths (2015) |
|---------------------------------|----------------|
| Adopted                        | 23%            |
| In care                        | 14%            |
| General population             | 53%            |

- Of the 840 in this cohort, 480 were identified as having SEN, for those with no identified SEN, the outcome was 40%, rather than 23%.
- Brown et al’s (2017) review of 12 studies concludes that adopted YP have lower outcomes (though higher than those in care) and behavioural issues.
Research published in 2015 (reminder)

- Rees Centre/University of Bristol study, funded by The Nuffield Foundation
- Linked national data sets on the education (National Pupil Database) and care experiences of looked after children in English schools Year 11
- Interviewed 26 young people (high- and lower-progress) in six local authorities and with their carers, teachers, social workers and Virtual School staff

http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk/research/educational-progress-of-looked-after-children/
Of those in Year 11 in 2012-13:

A. 4847 had been in care for at least a year
B. 1387 had been in care less than a year
C. 13,599 were ‘Children in Need’
D. There were 622,970 other young people

Average points in 8 best exams (0 – 464)
Factors affecting educational outcomes

26 young people interviewed suggested important factors were:
• not moving schools (even when a placement changed)
• having someone who ’looked out’ for them - key adult (not always teacher) in the school
• having control over the situation
• respect for their choice not to be identified as in care
• interventions that supported them such as one-to-one tuition
• long-term (negative) impact of responsibility for a birth parent affected by substance/alcohol abuse, mental illness

These findings, in particular the importance of a key adult and not being identified as in care (being seen as ‘normal’) emerge from all our studies in which young people are interviewed. Similar findings from Selwyn and colleagues relating to identity in adopted YP.
Wijedasa and Selwyn (2011, note adoption sample size small)
The Attachment and Trauma Programme in Schools

• An understanding of attachment theory, the evidence base, the impact of trauma on the developing brain, and subsequent behaviours.

• Emotion coaching to help staff get ‘behind’ the behaviour and understand the causes, triggers and use of language needed to de-escalate the anger and emotions.

• On-line learning modules: e.g. attachment and brain development, whole school behavioural strategies, and emotion coaching. Each unit required a notional 10-15 hours of work that could be accessed at anytime.
Emotion Coaching involves...

- Teaching children/young people about the world of emotion ‘in the moment’
- Giving children strategies to deal with ups and downs
- Empathising with and accepting ‘negative’ emotions as normal (but not the behaviour)
- Using moments of challenging behaviour as opportunities for teaching
- Building trusting and respectful relationships with children/young people

(Gottman et al, 1996)

Emotional coaching involves..., video clip
### Attendance and Attainment (over 3 years before, during and after programme)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Attendance (nationally, attendance dropped)</th>
<th>Attainment (nationally, attainment increased in primary but decreased marginally in secondary)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bath and NE Somerset</td>
<td>In 10/16 schools, attendance reduced though only slightly (Staff reported improvements)</td>
<td>6/8 primaries (plus one middle) improved. 2 same 3 secondaries improved 1 stayed same 2 decreased attainment</td>
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<td>Leicestershire</td>
<td>Pers absence reduced in 6/18 primaries Pers absence reduced in 3/3 secondaries, but increased in special school</td>
<td>13/18 primaries improved 3 primaries had decreases in scores, 2 no return 3/4 secondaries improved</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stoke-on-Trent</td>
<td>Improved in 8/12 schools All but one primary reduced absence</td>
<td>5/7 primaries improved 2/3 secondaries decreased much more than national trend</td>
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Findings 1: language and strategies

• Most participants (73%) felt confident in dealing with looked after children.

• Highlighted school coherence on these issues:
  – Better awareness of attachment theory across our school so that all staff have a better working understanding of how they can support these pupils to reach their full potential. (Designated teacher, survey)

• But also limitations of attachment theory:
  – So, it’s also helping the staff ...develop understanding that firstly they are theoretical constructs to help us explain what we see, and that theory might not be the final piece, that it’s an ongoing process, to helping staff understand that. (Designated teacher, interview)
Findings 2: identification and problem solving

• Deploying new-found expertise to address behaviour and needs:
  – *I wasn't aware of the different types of attachment issues and it helped me to realise that children may have more barriers to learning.* (Primary teacher, survey)

• Pinpointing particular pupils and moments in lessons:
  – *I was able to identify children where emotional competency may be an issue and use different strategies to help them access and engage with their learning.* (Primary teacher, survey)

  – *I have realised that the start of each lesson is new and that the key language I use with these students is very important to provide reassurance and build resilience, so they can succeed. Their emotional wellbeing is important and without being supported, the student will find it very stressful in the classroom situation.* (Primary teacher, survey)
Findings 3: Organisational structures and responses

• Routinisation
  – Researcher: Joe, anything in particular that stops you working?
  – Joe: I always think of my Mum when she’s not there...I start scribbling on my book...
  – Researcher: Right. Is that when you go and see...Miss?
  – Joe: Smith [the teaching assistant] .... She takes me out of class for a bit... She is a nice woman. I stay outside for a bit.

• The use of a specific ‘safe’ place
  – Given time and space in which to explain their feelings in a calm safe place (Secondary teacher, survey)
  – The refurbishment of the withdrawal space in school (Designated teacher, survey)

• Classroom management
  – How do I know they are not just being naughty?
Other findings

• Participants reported increased confidence and greater understanding of why pupils behave in particular ways – the reasons behind the behaviour.

• Participants described changes in their own and others’ practices, recognising emotions before ‘managing’ behaviours, changing communication styles and language used with pupils and other staff, and for many, use of emotion coaching.

• Staff surveyed and staff and pupils interviewed noted the impact on pupils’ well-being. Providing ‘safe’ spaces in which children calmed down and self-regulated contributed to this.

• School environment has become calmer/more nurturing

• Having a significant adult in school that the pupil trusted
Children’s Commissioner for England: Stability Index

• Children say that stability is the most important aspect of their experience of care.
• Consistent, high-quality relationships are important – they enhance feelings of security, support their ability to form relationships and enable a sense of belonging and identity.
• Instability in 3 areas: placements, schools, social workers
• 71% of all children in care in England over 12 months, experienced a change in their placement, school, or their social worker. 5% experienced all three.
• 35% experienced high instability i.e. multiple placement moves in a year, or a mid-year school move, or multiple social worker changes. 6% more than one of these.
• 10% moved schools mid year compared to 3% of others.
• 31% one change of SW, 25% two and 10% three or more
Why is stability so important?

• Absences or exclusions mean missing time at school
  – places children at a disadvantage since curriculum is BUILDING
  – increases sense of ‘difference’
  – reduces opportunities for peer interaction and friendship

• Entry to care in itself represents instability
  – removal from family, community, and (sometimes) friends and school

• School and placement changes can be problematic (individually and in combination)
  – can increase sense of rejection and abandonment
  – meeting new people, telling the same story
  – though some changes are necessary or desirable
Recommendations on facilitating good outcomes for young people

• Support foster carers and adoptive parents to navigate the education system – carer /adoptive parent aspirations emerges as important factor

• Check out young people’s preference not to be identified as in care/adopted, to be seen as ‘normal’ yet have additional support – an organizational challenge?

• Acknowledge role of significant adults for young people – Teaching Assistants, office staff, midday supervisors, etc.

• Avoid school moves if possible when a fostering placement or adoption disrupts – when moves occur, DT should make contact with VSH to ensure support rapidly put in place.
Some questions to be addressed

• Why do YP who go in and out of care do so much worse?
• Why do YP ‘in need’ (edge of care) do so much worse?
• Does training whole school staff in addressing attachment and trauma benefit adopted, ‘in need’ and those going in and out of care as much or more than it benefits looked after YP?
• What is it that school staff do differently that is having the most impact – language? de-escalation? emotion coaching?
• What needs to be addressed in school cultures to enable vulnerable children to achieve better education and well-being outcomes?
References