

# Looked After and Learning



Centre for excellence  
for looked after children in Scotland

## Improving the learning journey of looked after children



*Improving care experiences*

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# Foreword

A child's school is central to securing their wellbeing, both in the present and the future. A positive learning experience, built on strong relationships, nurture and encouragement, protects against poor outcomes in adulthood, increasing an individual's options and opportunities. And after decades of research and practice we now have a very good idea of how to deliver that positive learning experience for every child, no matter what their background.

Unfortunately, many looked after children still do not get the school experience they need and deserve. School leaver attainment rates for this group continue to be lower than that of other disadvantaged children; in a context where the attainment gap between Scottish children at the top and the bottom remains, in itself, unacceptably large. To turn this situation around, addressing educational issues in the children's home will be critical. But schools have an enormous role too, and when it comes to looked after children, they are a critical factor in securing these young people's futures. With more than 15,500 children 'looked after' in Scotland today, along with many others who will become looked after in the future, it is essential that local authorities, schools and their partners work together to ensure they can provide every child with the kind of positive learning experience which is the foundation for future success. This booklet has been designed to help you in that effort.

We've split the information into seven separate areas, and included evidence from academic literature, benchmarks for local authorities and practitioners, some real life case studies, and quotes from our own research studies.

Over the following pages you should be able to identify areas where you are working well, and others where you could perhaps improve. To help with this, we've developed a self-evaluation tool, which you'll find near the back of this document.

If you need support, or want to feedback on how you find this booklet, please contact us on: [celcis@strath.ac.uk](mailto:celcis@strath.ac.uk). We would like this to be a living document which will evolve as new information becomes available.

Practitioners regularly ask us 'what is working elsewhere?' and in this booklet we've identified seven key areas that need to be given serious attention if there's to be sustained improvement:

- Commitment to the designated manager role.
- Support for teachers.
- Promoting resilience and positive attachments.
- Planning for education.
- Developing engagement between schools, and parents and carers.
- Inclusive approach to education.
- Planning for improvement.

# Commitment to the designated manager role

Each school in Scotland should have a designated manager for looked after children. The designated manager uses official guidelines known as 'Core Tasks for Designated Managers' (Scottish Government, 2008) to coordinate support for looked after children.

## Evidence/Why this matters

The core tasks emphasise the importance of:

### 1. Meeting the needs of looked after children:

- Education must be a priority in the Child's Plan.
- Ensure teachers maintain high expectations for looked after children.
- Maintain and refine targeted strategies to improve attendance.
- Build meaningful relationships with all school staff.
- Attendance at relevant training.

### 2. Inter-agency communication:

- Excellent relationships and communication with agencies outside of school (such as social work and third sector) are important to ensure that the team around the child works.

### 3. Advocacy

- Children and young people have views, and it is their right to have their voice heard in discussions relating to their education and welfare.

### 4. Knowing the looked after children in school

- Knowing who the looked after children are in your school, and regularly communicating that to school leaders.



## References

Scottish Government (2008). *Core tasks for designated managers in educational and residential establishments in Scotland*. Edinburgh: The Scottish Government.

## Benchmarks

The designated manager:

1. Knows who is 'looked after' in their school, on a week-by-week basis.
2. Adheres to the core tasks.
3. Understands responsibilities around 'out of authority placements' (reciprocity).
4. Ensures that education is a priority in the Child's Plan.
5. Promotes high expectations for looked after children among school staff.
6. Works effectively with social work and other agencies.
7. Promotes resilience of looked after children by building a nurturing ethos within school.
8. Ensures that looked after children are able to have their voice heard.
9. Attends and arranges staff training related to looked after children and their needs.

'Particularly for primary school kids, but also for a fair number of secondary school kids, relationships with teachers are very positive. For some kids it's the most positive thing in a pretty chaotic life.' (Local authority manager)



# Support for teachers

**T**eachers need support to work with vulnerable children (such as those affected by trauma). The school's Designated Manager for Looked After Children should provide practical support to teachers, helping them to know which children in their class are looked after children, and making appropriate links to ensure child and teacher get the support they need. The development of positive relationships with other agencies, such as social work, educational psychology and the third sector, in line with Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC), will provide another source of support. In-service training is a valuable opportunity to support teachers, and CELCIS, Education Scotland and others all offer services which can help teachers deliver the Curriculum for Excellence for every child in their care.



## Evidence/Why this matters

A teacher's understanding of attachment theory, how trauma impacts on child development, and the importance of nurture and relationships, is recognised as a key factor in improving the learning journey of disadvantaged children, such as those who are 'looked after'.

There is a danger that a child's poor literacy, numeracy or attainment is confused with lack of ability and low teacher aspirations for children can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Teachers should be encouraged and supported to maintain a positive attitude of high expectations for all children.

Considerable skill is needed to teach pupils whose experiences can result in complex and sometimes disruptive behaviour. Maintaining a supportive attitude, based on an understanding of why and how children communicate through certain challenging behaviours, is essential to overcome difficulties within the school. This is best achieved by having staff who can work closely with a child to build empathy and understanding, and ensuring all staff are appropriately skilled and knowledgeable to respond sensitively and constructively in difficult situations.

The role of 'virtual head teacher', which is statutory in England, is being introduced in some local authorities in Scotland. The virtual head teacher coordinates the education of looked after children in the authority, and could be another source of support for teachers.



## Benchmarks

1. Teachers and teacher education students are given opportunities to learn about child development (and the role of attachment), the effects of trauma, and the 'looked after system', including the circumstances which lead children to become looked after, the different types of placements children live in, and the impact of being looked after on a children's learning journey.
2. Teachers have access to the in-school support necessary to enable individual children to feel safe at school, to develop positive relationships and to overcome barriers which impede their attainment and participation in school activities.
3. Improving the educational experience of looked after children features explicitly in every school's teacher induction programme and in school learning and development programmes.
4. School leaders maintain a positive, whole-school ethos of high expectations for looked after children.
5. School leaders have access to advice on the effects of childhood adversity and trauma, and appropriate help to develop strategies that support learning and mitigate disruption.
6. Schools actively seek to develop relationships with carers, social workers and other relevant agencies.
7. Teachers avoid an emphasis on negative behaviours or failures; instead they should support the development of qualities associated with resilience.
8. Teachers use the GIRFEC resilience matrix to assess resilience of children.

### Case study

This looked after young person refers to a teacher as 'the pushy teacher'. The teacher had made the effort to understand the pupil's background, and showed she cared by inviting the child to 'check in' regularly for supportive chats. Occasionally, the teacher suggested the child could do better in her schoolwork; comments which were resented at the time. But looking back, the young person realises that the high expectations of her teachers and carers have helped her to do well at school.

## References

- Driscoll, J. (2013). Supporting the educational transitions of looked after children at Key Stage 4: The role of virtual schools and designated teachers. *Journal of Children's Services*, 8(2), 110–122.
- Happer, H., McCreddie, J., & Aldgate, J. (2006). *Celebrating success: What helps looked after children succeed*. Edinburgh: Social Work Inspection Agency.
- Henderson, G., & Whitehead, I. (2013). *How much is education included in the plans of children on supervision requirements?* Stirling: Scottish Children's Reporter Administration.
- Hennessy, A., & Connelly, G. (2014). *Improving educational outcomes for children looked after at home: Use of improvement methodology*. Glasgow: CELCIS.
- Thomson, A. I. (2007). Looked after children: Non-local authority placements and meeting educational needs. *Educational Psychology in Practice: Theory, Research and Practice in Educational Psychology*, 23(3), 273–282.
- Berridge, D. (2011). Reflections on child welfare and the policy process: Virtual school heads and the education of looked after children. *British Journal of Social Work*, 42(1), 26–41
- Scottish Government. (2008). *A guide to getting it right for every child*. Edinburgh: The Scottish Government.



# Promoting resilience and positive attachments

The ability to 'bounce back' from negative life experiences is known as 'resilience'. A stable, secure school environment, populated with nurturing staff, provides important protective factors for children and young people, helping them to build up their resilience.

## Benchmarks

1. Teachers receive learning and development opportunities, to help them understand the impact of trauma and how to support children who have experienced it.
2. Continuity of school should be a paramount consideration in the placement of a looked after child. Everything should be done to ensure they have a stable and consistent educational experience.
3. Looked after children have access to adults who can value education and encourage them to have high aspirations.
4. They are encouraged and enabled to maintain friendships with peers.
5. They are encouraged and enabled to develop out-of-school interests and hobbies.

'She is beginning to trust you, and is pushing you to see if you care as much as you say you do. Show that you do by continuing to help her.' (Teacher)

'I just don't understand why she kicks off like this. Doesn't she understand I am on her side and trying to help?' (Teacher)





## Evidence/Why this matters

Many looked after children experience abuse or neglect in their infancy or childhood. This can lead to 'developmental trauma', where areas of the brain associated with social and emotional skills fail to develop as they should. Experts agree that looked after children are often functioning at an earlier 'developmental' age than their chronological age — physically, emotionally, socially and cognitively.

Children who have experienced trauma may be in a non-relaxed, hyper-vigilant state in the classroom. Ordinary interactions may trigger a fight-or-flight response. They may struggle to sit quietly, or may attempt to regulate their stress by moving around, swinging on chairs or disengaging from learning. These self-regulatory acts are most often due to anxiety, not defiance.

Adults who engage with traumatised children may, even unwittingly, add to their difficulties. By having an awareness of the effects of trauma and deploying skill in working with children affected by trauma, professionals can support their path to recovery.

'Knowing about trauma ...does provide a robust theoretical model from which to develop more effective and appropriate ways of living and working with children who have suffered such harm' (Cairns 2013).

Placement instability is linked with poor educational attainment — the more placements children have, the more likely it is that educational outcomes will be negatively affected. Schools can help by providing stability and support.

Protective factors include:

- Good attachment with a significant adult.
- Good self-esteem through gaining new skills.
- Learning to read early and fluently, with regular access to books.
- Understanding by school staff of the impact of trauma on a child's development.
- High levels of encouragement.
- Good attendance levels.
- Stability in care and school settings.
- Positive peer relationships.
- Out-of-school interests and hobbies, which can help to increase social skills and bring children into contact with a wider range of people from a variety of backgrounds.
- Carefully planned transitions between care and school settings, including primary to secondary.

## References

- Furnivall, J. (2014). *Trauma sensitive practice with children in care* (IRISS Insights 27). Glasgow: IRISS Insights 27.
- Jackson, S., & Martin, P. Y. (1998). Surviving the care system: Education and resilience. *Journal of Adolescence*, 21(5), 569–583.
- Stein, M. (2005). *Resilience and young people leaving care: Overcoming the odds*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Simkiss, D. E., Stallard, N., & Thorogood, M. (2013). A systematic literature review of the risk factors associated with children entering public care. *Child: Care, Health and Development*, 39(5), 628–642.
- Simkiss, D. (2012). Looked-after children and young people. In S. C. Davis, *Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer 2012, Our Children Deserve Better: Prevention Pays*. London: UK Department of Health

# Planning for education



**B**eing a corporate parent means local authorities have responsibilities for a looked after child or young person's wellbeing until they are 26. Planning for education means that the learning needs, progress and aspirations of the child should feature prominently in all decision making about their care.

## Benchmarks

1. Local authorities identify an individual or group with overarching responsibility for the education of looked after children (along the lines of a virtual head teacher).
2. Designated managers from different schools meet regularly to discuss issues and successes.
3. Teaching staff maintain high expectations for looked after children.
4. Procedures for informing and supporting schools when a pupil becomes looked after or when a looked after child joins the school are developed and implemented consistently.
5. A detailed plan for improving the learning experience and attainment of all looked after children is in place, with responsibility and accountability for delivery clearly indicated.
6. The GIRFEC National Practice model is used consistently across the local authority's schools.
7. Statutory responsibilities are fulfilled regarding assessing and addressing additional support for learning needs.
8. Schools communicate and plan carefully around transitions, particularly between primary and secondary school.

## References

- Driscoll, J. (2013). Supporting the educational transitions of looked after children at Key Stage 4: The role of virtual schools and designated teachers. *Journal of Children's Services*, 8(2), 110–122.
- Happer, H., McCreddie, J., & Aldgate, J. (2006). *Celebrating success: What helps looked after children succeed*. Edinburgh: Social Work Inspection Agency.
- Henderson, G., & Whitehead, I. (2013). *How much is education included in the plans of children on supervision requirements?* Stirling: Scottish Children's Reporter Administration
- Hennessy, A., & Connelly, G. (2014). *Improving educational outcomes for children looked after at home: Use of improvement methodology*. Glasgow: CELCIS.
- Scottish Government. (2008). *A guide to getting it right for every child*. Edinburgh: The Scottish Government.
- Thomson, A. I. (2007). Looked after children: Non-local authority placements and meeting educational needs. *Educational Psychology in Practice: Theory, Research and Practice in Educational Psychology*, 23(3), 273–282.



CELCIS helped one local authority to replicate SCRA research locally, conducting an audit of 23 children's plans. It was found that attendance and behaviour were the only aspects of education referred to in 12 of the reports. Achievements, talents and ambitions were mentioned in one child's plan, while the remaining plans tended to focus on problems requiring resolution.

### Evidence/Why this matters

The GIRFEC National Practice Model, including the My World Triangle, the eight wellbeing indicators and the resilience matrix, should always be used when assessing a child's needs, and developing a plan to meet them.

A study by the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) found that only 68% of looked after children's (Care) Plans mentioned education and less than half contained specific actions. Plans were more likely to discuss behaviour and attendance than academic concerns or talents.

Engaging children in planning their learning helps them to feel valued and shows that the school cares about their wellbeing. Children may fail to engage with planning for education unless they believe it will lead to change and improvement.

Outcomes improve if looked after children have clear plans which explicitly identify goals, tasks, targets, and allocate areas of responsibility for implementing them.

Children placed outside their home local authority are at high risk of disrupted education, so careful consideration should be given to this in the planning process.

All looked after children are assumed by law to have additional support needs unless their local authority can show that this is not the case. Local authorities must also determine whether a Coordinated Support Plan is necessary.

Changes in school placement and the transition from primary to secondary school are critical times for looked after children. Careful planning should take place around these events.

# Encourage and develop schools' engagement with parents and carers

**E**ngagement between school and a child's primary care giver is an important factor in a successful educational experience. There are a number of barriers to successful engagement, including poor parental experience of education, but where these barriers can be overcome, the potential benefits are great.



## Evidence/Why this matters

Parental engagement with school and their child's education, and discussion about educational matters in the home, are very important for success in education.

Where parents or carers have low levels of education themselves, or where they lack confidence to engage with schools, or to provide learning opportunities at home, the child will be at a disadvantage. Parents whose own experience of school was not positive may find their negative feelings make it difficult to engage with teachers or accept offers of help. But when schools 'reach out' to their most disadvantaged families, the effect on pupil learning and behaviour can be powerful.

The most effective approaches are likely to be those which help parents and carers to support children's learning directly, such as reading together, using everyday living activities (cooking, shopping) as learning opportunities, and talking about school.

Harnessing information technology (eg text messaging, email, school website, Parentzone) can be an effective way to engage parents and carers and help them to become involved in their child's education, but, particularly as parents and carers vary in their access to and familiarity with technology, these approaches need to be tailored to parents' preferences and their use negotiated.



'It was just lovely for them [parents] to hear... the positive contact makes such a fundamental difference, and we're all like that if someone says something nice to us.' (Learning/pupil support teacher)

## Benchmarks

1. Schools develop bespoke strategies to engage families of looked after children (eg regular phone calls home, particularly highlighting things that are going well).
2. Schools work to develop a culture of high parental aspirations for their children.
3. Teachers make effective and appropriate use of available technology, which is appropriate to the parents' needs and preferences.
4. Schools encourage parental engagement which is related to their child's learning.
5. Schools ensure that they appear welcoming from the outside and in the school reception area.
6. Schools have a mechanism in place to obtain the views of parents regarding their children's learning and the school system.

## Case study

CELCIS worked with a local authority to support efforts to improve engagement between school and parents of children looked after at home. Regular positive communication home was found to be vital to improving relationships and helping teachers to think of looked after children in terms of their strengths.

## References

- Desforges, C. & Abouchar, A. (2003). *The impact of parent involvement, parent support and family education on pupil achievements and adjustment: A literature Review* (RR 433). London: UK Department for Education and Science.
- Goodall, J. & Vorhaus, J. (2011). *Review of best practice in parental engagement* (Research Report DFE-RR156). London: UK Department for Education.
- Harris, A. & Goodall, J. (2007). *Engaging parents in raising achievement: Do parents know they matter?* London: UK Department for Children, Schools and Families
- Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. London: Routledge.
- Engaging with Families Website:  
[www.engagingwithfamilies.co.uk](http://www.engagingwithfamilies.co.uk)

# An inclusive approach to education



National guidance states that exclusion of looked after children should be avoided where possible. Looked after children are much more likely to be excluded than other pupils — about 12 times more likely. This can lead to missed schooling, which can in turn lead to disengagement, truancy and further exclusion.

## Evidence/Why this matters

Schools can provide the opportunity for children and young people to develop their social skills and skills for life. If looked after children do not attend school, or experience multiple school placements, then they do not have the same opportunities to develop these core skills.

Education systems must recognise looked after children as a group with additional educational needs due to their family circumstances and traumatic life experiences. Appropriate support should be given.

Looked after children typically have lower attendance at school than the general population, and attendance is lower among older children and those living in residential care and looked after at home. Part-time timetables are also more common. This not only reduces the amount of time they can engage in education, but it may also undermine their confidence and contribute to a perception that education is not for them.

Poor educational achievement is associated with exclusion in adulthood, including higher rates of unemployment, involvement in the justice system and poverty.

The pathways of looked after young people through education are often delayed compared with other young people due to dysfunctional attachments and the experience of trauma.

As they travel through nursery, primary and secondary school, many looked after children who were initially viewed as 'victims' of their home circumstances, become 'problems'.





'There are a number of exclusions that are happening still for children who are looked after, to do with "predictable behaviour". So they're being excluded for things that they do because of what's happened to them at home, what's happened to them in early years.' (Deputy head teacher)



## Benchmarks

1. The local authority ensures that all looked after children are assessed for additional support needs in accordance with guidance.
2. Exclusion of looked after children is only ever used as a last resort. Alternative strategies are explored.
3. All school staff involved in the education of looked after children receive training in the impact of attachment and trauma on a child's emotional age, behaviour and ability to learn.
4. Schools and local authorities collaborate early to promote attendance at school beyond 16 where possible. Young people are encouraged to aim high.
5. Within schools, expectations of young people's educational potential are based on their ability, motivation and interests. Assumptions that looked after young people are more suited to vocational routes or short-term occupational training rather than academic courses are challenged.
6. Leisure and social activities are actively promoted, and efforts made to ensure continuity after leaving school and across placement moves.
7. Where possible, school moves are kept to a minimum. If unavoidable, the new school makes special efforts to help the student adapt to their new surroundings.

## References

- Ainscow, M., & Miles, S. (2008). Making education for all inclusive: Where next? *Prospects*, 38(1), 15–34.
- Francis, J. (2008). Developing inclusive education policy and practice for looked after children. *Scottish Journal of Residential Child Care*, 7(1), 60–70.
- Jackson, S., & Cameron, C. (2011). *Young People from a Public Care Background: Pathways to further and higher education in five European countries* (Final report of the YIPPEE project — WP 12). London: Thomas Coram Research Institute, Institute of Education.
- Leslie, C., & Mohammed, C. (2015). Inclusion of looked after children in education. *Scottish Journal of Residential Child Care*, 14(1), 1–20.
- Scottish Government (2011). *Included engaged and involved part 2: A positive approach to managing school exclusions*. Edinburgh: The Scottish Government.
- Thomas, G. (2013). A review of thinking and research about inclusive education policy, with suggestions for a new kind of inclusive thinking. *British Educational Research Journal*, 39(3), 473–490.

# Planning for improvement and evaluating your progress

**T**HE PLAN: Should be designed with the people who will be implementing it: usually school staff. A driver diagram can be used to:

- Organise ideas
- Communicate with others
- Prioritise
- Show a clear pathway for improvement

AIM	DRIVERS	TESTS OF CHANGE
<p><b>Improve the educational outcomes of a looked after child</b></p>	<p>Things which must happen to <b>achieve the aim</b>, eg</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Improve parental engagement</li> </ul>	<p>Specific actions which we think will lead to improvement, eg</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Fortnightly contact with parents of looked after children</li> </ul>

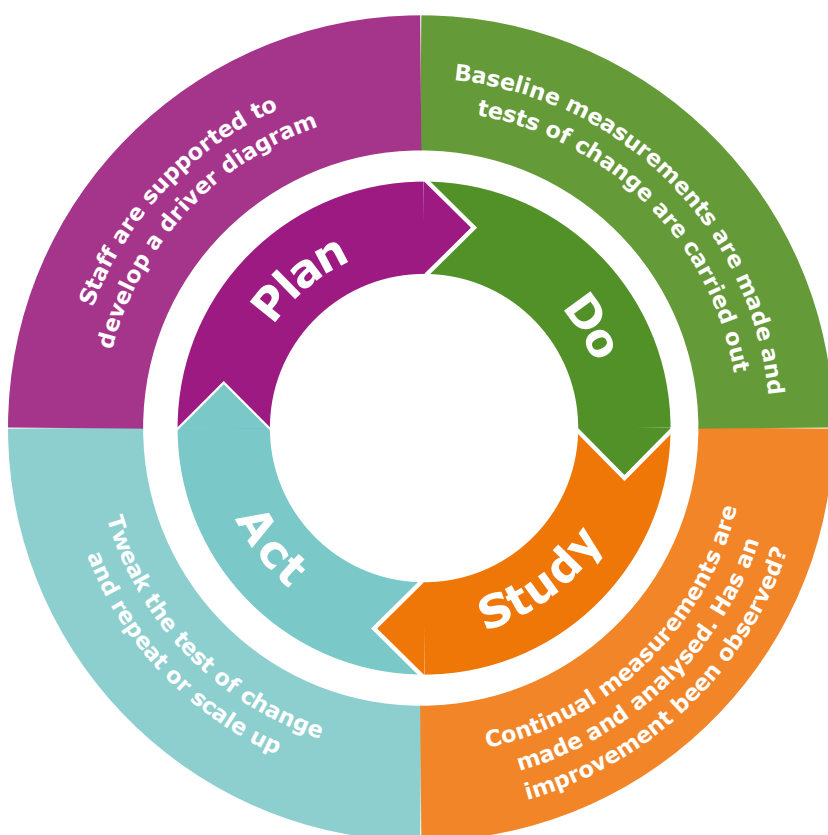


'It breaks down this huge piece of work into achievable chunks...I think you get buy-in back from people much more.' (Teacher involved in piloting improvement methodology)



## Start small and start now! Big ideas, small groups.

Tests of change are completed using 'Plan Do Study Act' (PDSA) cycles. Scottish local authorities and schools can work with CELCIS to develop and implement a plan for improvement for looked after children with support. Get in touch for more details – [celcis@strath.ac.uk](mailto:celcis@strath.ac.uk)



### Self-evaluation

The self-evaluation tables that follow are based on the benchmarks given on the previous pages. Please fill each section in using the scale given, and reflect on what your local authority and school do well, and where there could be improvement.

Level 6	Excellent	Outstanding
Level 5	Very good	Major strengths
Level 4	Good	Important strengths with areas for improvement
Level 3	Adequate	Strengths just outweigh weaknesses
Level 2	Weak	Important weaknesses
Level 1	Unsatisfactory	Major weaknesses

### References

- Hennessy, A., & Connelly, G. (2014). *Improving educational outcomes for children looked after at home: Use of improvement methodology*. Glasgow: CELCIS.
- Langley, G.J., Moen, K.M., Nolan, T.W., Norman, C.L. & Provost, P.P. (2009). *The improvement guide: A practical approach to enhancing organisational performance* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

# How good is your provision?

Commitment to the designated manager role	Score
1. The designated manager knows who is 'looked after' in their school, on a week-by-week basis.	
2. The designated manager adheres to the core tasks.	
3. The designated manager understands responsibilities around 'out of authority placements' (reciprocity).	
4. The designated manager ensures that education is a priority in the Child's Plan.	
5. The designated manager promotes high expectations for looked after children among school staff.	
6. The designated manager works effectively with social work and other agencies.	
7. The designated manager promotes resilience of looked after children by building a nurturing ethos within school.	
8. The designated manager ensures that looked after children are able to have their voice heard.	
9. Attends and arranges staff training related to looked after children and their needs.	
Evidence	
Suggestions for improvement	

Support for teachers	Score
1. Teachers and student teachers are given opportunities to learn about child development (and the role of attachment), the effects of trauma, and the 'looked after system', including the circumstances which lead children to become looked after, the different types of placement children live in, and the impact of being looked after on a children's learning journey.	
2. Teachers have access to the in-school support necessary to enable individual children to feel safe at school, to develop positive relationships and to overcome barriers which impede their attainment and participation in school activities.	
3. Improving the educational experience of looked after children features explicitly in every school's teacher induction programme and in school learning and development programme.	
4. School leaders maintain a positive, whole-school ethos of high expectations for looked after children.	
5. School leaders have access to advice on the effects of childhood adversity and trauma, and appropriate help to develop strategies that support learning and mitigate disruption.	
6. Schools actively seek to develop relationships with carers, social workers and other relevant agencies.	
7. Teachers avoid focusing on negative behaviours or failures; instead they should reinforce qualities associated with resilience.	
8. Teachers use the GIRFEC resilience matrix to assess resilience of children.	
Evidence	
Suggestions for improvement	

Promotion of resilience and positive attachments	Score
1. Teachers receive learning and development opportunities, to help understand the impact of trauma and how to support children who have experienced it.	
2. Continuity of school should be a paramount consideration in the placement of a looked after child, everything should be done to ensure they have a stable and consistent educational experience.	
3. Looked after children have access to adults who can value education and encourage them to have high aspirations.	
4. They are encouraged and enabled to maintain friendships with peers.	
5. And encouraged and enabled to develop out-of-school interests and hobbies.	
Evidence	
Suggestions for improvement	

Planning for education	Score
1. Local authorities identify an individual or group with overarching responsibility for the education of looked after children (along the lines of a virtual head teacher).	
2. Designated Managers from different schools meet regularly to discuss issues and successes.	
3. Teaching staff maintain high expectations for looked after children.	
4. Procedures for informing and supporting schools when a pupil becomes looked after or when a looked after child joins the school are developed and implemented consistently.	
5. A detailed plan for improving the learning experience and attainment of all looked after children is in place, with responsibility and accountability for delivery clearly indicated.	
6. The GIRFEC National Practice model is used consistently across the local authority's schools.	
7. Statutory responsibilities are fulfilled regarding assessing and addressing additional support for learning needs.	
8. Schools communicate and plan carefully around transitions, particularly between primary and secondary school.	
Evidence	
Suggestions for improvement	

Encourage and develop schools' engagement with parents/carers	Score
1. Schools develop bespoke strategies to engage families of looked after children (eg regular positive phone calls, particularly highlighting things that are going well).	
2. Schools work to develop a culture of high parental aspirations for their children.	
3. Teachers make effective and appropriate use of available technology, which is appropriate to the parents' needs and preferences.	
4. Schools encourage parental engagement which is related to their child's learning.	
5. Schools ensure that they appear welcoming from the outside and in the school reception area.	
6. Schools have a mechanism in place to obtain the views of parents regarding their children's learning and the school system.	
Evidence	
Suggestions for improvement	

An inclusive approach to education	Score
1. The local authority ensures that all looked after children are assessed for additional support needs in accordance with guidance.	
2. Exclusion of looked after children is only ever used as a last resort. Alternative strategies are explored.	
3. All school staff involved in the education of looked after children receive training in the impact of attachment and trauma on a child's emotional age, behaviour and ability to learn.	
4. Schools and local authorities collaborate early to promote attendance at school beyond 16 where possible. Young people are encouraged to aim high.	
5. Within schools, expectations of young people's educational potential are based on their ability, motivation and interests. Assumptions that looked after young people are more suited to vocational routes or short-term occupational training rather than academic courses are challenged.	
6. Leisure and social activities are actively promoted, and efforts made to ensure continuity after leaving school and across placement moves.	
7. Where possible, school moves are kept to a minimum. If unavoidable, the new school makes special efforts to help the student adapt to their new surroundings.	
Evidence	
Suggestions for improvement	

CELCIS is the Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland. Together with partners, we are working to improve the lives of all looked after children in Scotland. We do so by providing a focal point for the sharing of knowledge and the development of best practice, by providing a wide range of services to improve the skills and knowledge of those working with and on behalf of looked after children, and by placing the interests of children at the heart of our work.



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