



The Learning Institute

# Promoting the educational achievement of Looked After Children (LAC)/children in care

## Overview

The future life chances for many looked after children (LAC)/children in care can seem very bleak. However with patience, support and guidance these children will make progress which opens up possibilities for a successful future.

## Target audience

All school staff

## Duration

Approximately 1-1½ hours

The Learning Institute provides opportunities for individuals and communities through high quality education, training and research programmes that challenge personal barriers and promote social inclusion. To find out more, please get in touch.

## Introduction

A child who has been in the care of their local authority for more than 24 hours is known as a looked after child. Looked after children are also often referred to as children in care - a term which many children and young people prefer (NSPCC, 2020).

There were 78,150 Looked After Children (LAC) in England on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019.

## Why do we need to find effective ways to support Children in Care?

This group of children and young people **significantly underachieve academically**. Here are some examples.

### Key Stage 2 (KS2) Attainment

The data collated in the Statistical First Release (STFR) refers to children who have been in care for 12 months on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019. In terms of KS2 Attainment only 37% of looked after children reached the expected standard in the headline measure of reading, writing and maths, which is much lower than the 65% for non-looked after children.

However, 58% of looked after children at the end of key stage 2 have a special educational need (SEN) identified. In comparison, only 19% of non-looked after children have a SEN. The higher prevalence of SEN amongst looked after children may in part explain the gap in attainment compared to non-looked after children.

**Key stage 2 progress measures** aim to capture the progress that pupils make from the end of key stage 1 (typically age 7) to the end of primary school (typically age 11). **It is found that** looked after children progress less well than non-looked after children, with the largest difference being in writing and maths, where looked after children have an average progress score of -0.8 and -1.0 respectively, compared to non-looked after children who make average progress (progress score of 0.0).

### Key Stage 4 (KS4) Attainment

In 2019, the average Attainment 8 score for looked after children was 19.1 compared to 44.6 for non-looked after children. The EBacc average point score for looked after children is 1.52 compared to 3.87 for non-looked after children.

In 2019, the percentage of looked after children achieving the threshold in English and maths at grade 5 or above decreased from 7.7% in 2018 to 7.2% in 2019.

**The good news is that children can catch up if they are given time and the right support.**

This CPD therefore sets out to: raise awareness of the different terminology used when discussing this group of children and young people; understand some of the barriers they experience towards learning; and to consider some strategies which may support these individuals.

## Objectives

- To be familiar with the terminology associated with looked after children (LAC)/children in care
- To understand some of the barriers to learning experienced by looked after children/children in care
- To consider some strategies that may support these children and young people

## Resources

Pen and paper for note taking

Internet access to following:

- Research carried out by The Rees Centre (Sebba *et al*), available at <http://www.education.ox.ac.uk/research/linking-care-and-educational-data-the-educational-progress-of-looked-after-children-in-england/>
- Department for Education (2018) document, available at [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/683556/Promoting\\_the\\_education\\_of\\_looked-after\\_children\\_and\\_previously\\_looked-after\\_children.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683556/Promoting_the_education_of_looked-after_children_and_previously_looked-after_children.pdf)
- Sutton Trust maths interventions, available at <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/school-themes/mathematics/>
- Attachment Aware Schools, available at <https://www.bathspa.ac.uk/schools/education/research/attachment-aware-schools/>

## Task 1: Understanding barriers to learning

In this first task we need to establish who these children and young people are, and what are the barriers to learning?

Below are some common acronyms used when talking about looked after children/children in care. Tick off the terms that you feel you confidently know about.

1. CIN
2. LAC
3. PLAC
4. Care leaver
5. FCO
6. ICO
7. Section 20
8. UASC

Note: The answers can be found in the Glossary at the rear of this document.

Now we are clear about this cohort:

- Think about why you think they tend to underachieve.
- List the differences in lifestyle between a child living in their family home and those living in foster care or in a residential home. Try to think about the reasons children may have been taken into care and the impact that may have on their development.

These could include:

- suffered disrupted learning
- missed extended periods of school
- special educational needs (SEN)
- gaps in their learning and the emotional impact of experiences are significant barriers to their progress
- complexity of this fragmented educational experience with high incidence of SEN, needs careful assessment and planning
- poor performance at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 compared to non-looked-after children

You can read more about the barriers to learning in this summary of research carried out by The Rees Centre Oxford (Sebba *et al*), which is available at <http://www.education.ox.ac.uk/research/linking-care-and-educational-data-the-educational-progress-of-looked-after-children-in-england/>.

## **Task 2: Strategies to help children in care to learn**

The Virtual School for Children in Care work closely with the child or young person's education setting to establish an individual education plan, contained within the Personal Education Plan (PEP). This is reviewed termly, and usually involves a meeting with school, virtual school, carers and social worker. The Virtual School receives £2300 per looked after child to support education and will be able to allocate part or all of this to the setting if they can demonstrate how it will be used to improve outcomes. This is broader than just academic outcomes and can be used to improve wider achievements such as sporting, musical, social and artistic achievements as we know that happier children learn better.

Make a list the things you could do in your setting to help a pupil who may have the barriers to learning identified in Task 1.

To help, you can find advice and guidance for schools as set out in the statutory guidance from the Department for Education (2018), available at [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/)

[683556/Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683556/Promoting_the_education_of_looked-after_children_and_previously_looked-after_children.pdf).

Read the Case Study on page 22 of the DFE (2018) statutory guidance: *Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children*, available at [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/683556/Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683556/Promoting_the_education_of_looked-after_children_and_previously_looked-after_children.pdf).

How does this case study match with any of your own ideas/experience?

The Sutton Trust helps us to work out which strategies are most effective. For example, to find out more about different maths interventions, you can take a look at their suggestions, available at <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/school-themes/mathematics/>.

We know that many LAC have suffered trauma and have some degree of problems with attachment. There is school training available, and articles to read, but some of the most effective strategies are based around making relationships and nurture. The child wants to be seen and heard and understood without feeling different. It seems that having an available adult available when needed is important for children where their life is full of change and they feel a lack of control.

You can read more about Attachment Aware Schools here:

<https://www.bathspa.ac.uk/schools/education/research/attachment-aware-schools/>.

### Task 3: Reflection on learning

Note down your responses to the following questions:

- What knowledge did I already have that has been refreshed by this CPD?
- How has this CPD developed my knowledge and understanding?
- How can I apply what I now know to my practice?
- Consider how you can record your goals/targets so that you will make use of them when you are able to return to the classroom.

### Sources

Bath Spa University (no date) *Attachment Aware Schools*. Available at: <https://www.bathspa.ac.uk/schools/education/research/attachment-aware-schools/> (Accessed: 1 May 2020)

Department for Education (2018) *Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children*. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/683556/Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683556/Promoting_the_education_of_looked-after_children_and_previously_looked-after_children.pdf) (Accessed: 1 May 2020)

Department for Education (2020) *Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities in England*, 31 March 2019. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/875529/CLA\\_Outcomes\\_Main\\_Text\\_2019.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/875529/CLA_Outcomes_Main_Text_2019.pdf) (Accessed: 1 May 2020)

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Martindale, D. (2018) 'Using the Pupil Premium Plus effectively', *Headteacher Update*, (17 September). Available at: <https://www.headteacher-update.com/best-practice-article/using-the-pupil-premium-plus-effectively/182918/> (Accessed: 1 May 2020)

NSPCC (2020) *Looked after children*. Available at: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/children-and-families-at-risk/looked-after-children> (Accessed: 1 May 2020)

Sebba, J. et al (2015) *The Educational Progress of Looked After Children in England: Linking Care and Educational Data*. Available at: <http://www.education.ox.ac.uk/research/linking-care-and-educational-data-the-educational-progress-of-looked-after-children-in-england/> (Accessed: 1 May 2020)

## Further reading

**Table 1 - Getting the most from Pupil Premium Plus:** \*This table is summarised from an article in *Headteacher Update* Magazine by Darren Martindale (2018), Virtual School Head for City of Wolverhampton Council.

Approaches that are:	Which emphasise:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individually tailored to the needs and strengths of each pupil</li> <li>• Consistent (based on agreed core principles and components) but also flexible and responsive</li> <li>• Based on evidence of what works</li> <li>• Focussed on clear short-term goals which give opportunities for pupils to experience success</li> <li>• Include regular, high quality feedback from teaching staff</li> <li>• Engage parents/carers in the agreement and evaluation of arrangements for education support (e.g. via the PEP for LAC)</li> <li>• Supporting pupil transition (e.g. primary-secondary/KS3-4)</li> <li>• Raising aspirations through access to high-quality educational experiences</li> <li>• Promote the young person's awareness and understanding of their own thought process (metacognition) and help to develop problem-solving strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationship-building, both with appropriate adults and with peers</li> <li>• An emotionally-intelligent approach to the setting of clear behaviour boundaries</li> <li>• Increasing pupil's understanding of their own emotions and identity</li> <li>• Positive reinforcement</li> <li>• Building self-esteem</li> <li>• Relevance to the learner: relate to pupil's interests where possible; make it matter to them</li> <li>• A joined-up approach involving social worker/carer/parent/VSH and other relevant professionals</li> <li>• Strong and visionary leadership on the part of both of the pupil's head teachers</li> <li>• A child centred approach to assessment for learning</li> </ul>

## Glossary

**CIN: Child in need.** Under [Section 17 Children Act 1989](#), a child will be considered in need if they have a disability or are unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development without provision of services from the Local Authority

**LAC: Looked after child.** A child who has been in the care of their local authority for more than 24 hours is known as a looked after child. They are looked after legally under a FCO, ICO or section 20 (see below)

**FCO: Full care order.** A Care Order is an Order of the Court under Section 31 of the Children Act 1989. It allows the Local Authority to share Parental Responsibility for a Child and determine (after consultation) important issues affecting a child. This would include where a child should live and with whom.

**ICO: Interim care order.** An *Interim Care Order* is a temporary order until the court proceedings are complete.

**Section 20:** Parents may agree to having their child removed or 'accommodated' by Children's Services under *section 20 of the Children Act 1989*, while an investigation and assessment is carried out. Children's Services will not have parental responsibility for the child if they are accommodated this way; the parents retain full and exclusive parental responsibility.

**PLAC: Previously Looked After Children.** This term applies to children who:

are no longer looked after by a local authority in England and Wales (as defined by the Children Act 1989 or Part 6 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014) because they are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship (SGO) or child arrangements order (CAO);

or

were adopted from 'state care' outside England and Wales. 'State care' is care provided by a public authority, a religious organisation, or any other organisation whose sole or main purpose is to benefit society.

**Care Leaver:** An adult who has spent time in foster or residential care.

**UASC: unaccompanied asylum-seeking child.** A child who has entered the country with no responsible adult to look after them.

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