

Revised Policy Statement on the Education of Hertfordshire Children/young people living in Foster Care

A research project, funded by the Nuffield Foundation, was jointly undertaken by the University of Bristol, the Rees Centre, Department of Education, and the University of Oxford.

The main analysis concentrated on the progress at secondary school (Key Stages 3-4) of young people who had been in care for over a year at the end of Key Stage 4.

Detailed statistical analysis was complemented by interviews with 25 young people in six local authorities and with adults significant in their educational careers, including foster carers, teachers, social workers and Virtual School head teachers

Key Findings

What are the key factors contributing to the low educational outcomes of young people in care in secondary schools in England? The analysis reveals that controlling for all factors; the following contribute to the educational progress of young people in care:

- Time in care. Young people who have been in longer-term care do better than those 'in need' but not in care, and better than those who have only been in short term care – so it appears that care may protect them educationally
- Placement changes. Each additional change of care placement after age 11 is associated with one-third of a grade less at GCSE
- School changes. Young people in care who changed school in Years 10 or 11 scored over five grades less than those who did not
- School absence. For every 5% of possible school sessions missed due to unauthorised school absences, young people in care scored over two grades less at GCSE
- School exclusions. For every additional day of school missed due to suspensions, young people in care scored one-sixth of a grade less at GCSE
- Placement type. Young people living in residential or another form of care at age 16 scored over six grades less than those who were in kinship or foster care.
- School type. Young people who were in special schools at age 16 scored over 14 grades lower in their GCSEs compared to those with the same characteristics who were in mainstream school. Those in pupil referral units with the same characteristics scored almost 14 grades lower.
- Educational support. Young people report that teachers provide the most significant educational support for them, but teachers suggest that they need more training to do this effectively by understanding the trauma and attachment needs of the young people.

Hertfordshire is committed to ensuring all CLA achieve the best outcomes possible. We recognise that these outcomes can be enhanced by promoting their educational achievement.

Underpinning Legislation:

Education, employment and leisure activities Children Act 1989: Section 22(3A) – duty on local authority to promote educational achievement

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Fostering Services National Minimum Standards 2021

Standard 8 states

The education and achievement of children/young people is actively promoted as valuable and as part of their preparation for adulthood. Children, including pre-school children and older children, are supported to achieve and fulfil their educational potential.

8.1. Children, including pre-school children and older children, have a foster home which promotes a learning environment and supports their development.

This means:

- Each child/young person in placement has appropriate equipment to undertake homework and study – a quiet place to work, a desk or table, writing equipment, access to a computer, and books.
- Commitment to and enthusiasm for education and learning is shown and an interest is taken in the child/young person's learning and achievement.
- Carers take the opportunity to discuss the school day after school and note any relevant special events e.g., trips, outings etc.
- Carers will foster the social development of the child/young person with friends and other pupils in their school by encouraging tea visits, attending school events (e.g. the summer fete, school plays etc) as a family.

2. Children/young people have access to a range of educational resources to support their learning and have opportunities beyond the school day to engage in activities which promote learning.

- It is essential that carers are good role models to children and young people, and they are seen reading and writing.
- Children/young people have books to read and are living in a household that encourages and enjoys reading.
- In this technological age children/young people have little opportunity to write. It is important that this skill is encouraged by enabling them to write things down
- A commitment to support learning by provision of additional learning experiences that build on curriculum subjects, for example visits to museums, galleries and exhibitions.
- Children/young people are encouraged to attend school clubs and activities and pursue their interests.
- Carers regularly provide activities which support literacy and numeracy for example, reading with the children/young people, cooking and weighing ingredients

- Carers must support homework activities and take advantage of training that will help them to do that.
 - Carers should use paid allowance to support access to school trips that complement the taught curriculum.
 - Carers should ensure that all children and young people join the local library and attend regularly any events arranged there and any learning interventions delivered by the Virtual School.
3. Children/young people are supported to attend school, or alternative provision, regularly.
- Carers will aim to ensure children/young people attend school, or alternative provision, so that they have at least 95% attendance
 - Carers should transport children/young people to school
 - Issues, over attendance or punctuality, raised by the school are dealt with quickly and in co-operation with the school
 - Any absences are explained quickly and if possible prior to the event
 - Any issues of concern that may affect attendance should be raised with the school
 - At transition times the children/young people will be taken to school and supported on entry to school
 - That holidays will not be taken during school time
4. **Children/young people are helped by their foster carer to achieve their educational or training goals and foster carers are supported to work with a child's education provider to maximise each child/young person's achievement and to minimise any underachievement.**
- Attendance at and contribution to PEPs and any other education planning meetings
 - Fully implementing any tasks or targets set out for carers in the PEP
 - Understanding and acting on school reports
 - Carers should praise, encourage and inspire children/young people towards learning
 - That significant events in the school calendar (e.g. examinations or transition) are planned for in advance within the family to reduce stress and anxiety
 - Carers ensure that they have up to date information on attendance, education progress and any under-achievement
 - Attending regular training or information updates from the school or the Virtual School, so that they are able to understand achievement data, support their children/young people in their learning at various ages and keep up to date with curriculum developments.
 - Carers should access the school website regularly
5. **The fostering service has, and is fully implementing, a written education policy that promotes and values children/young people's education and is understood by foster carers.**
- The Fostering Service routinely shares the Section 8 (Education) of National Minimum Standards with foster carers and will review the implementation of them regularly during the monthly Supervising Social Worker meetings

6 Foster carers maintain regular contact with each child/young person's school and other education settings, attending all parents' meetings as appropriate and advocating for the child where appropriate.

- Attending all relevant consultation meetings, academic review days and any special events relevant to their foster child/young person, for example, assemblies
- Building up a good relationship with the school so that information can be shared both ways and contact made with the school as appropriate, for example daily if attendance is an issue
- Carers should work with the school Designated Teacher to align planning and the approach to learning
- Contacting the school if there are any concerns over achievement or welfare to ensure effective interventions are in place and their children/young people are participating fully in school.

7 Foster carers engage and work with schools, colleges and other organisations to support children/young people's education, including advocating to help overcome any problems the child/young person may be experiencing in their education setting. Foster carers have up-to-date information about each child/young person's educational progress and school attendance record.

- Foster carers liaise with the Virtual School Education Adviser for the school to fully understand their part in the educational support plan for the child/young person.
- Foster carers inform and advise the school and the Virtual School about the young person to inform and tailor the educational plan to enable the young person to achieve their potential

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