



IN PRACTICE 6

Promoting positive outcomes for looked after children

January 2007



IN PRACTICE 6

IN PRACTICE 6 has been prepared by the London Regional Partnership. It is the sixth in a series of occasional papers. Earlier issues can be found on the Partnership website www.londonrp.org.uk

IN PRACTICE 6 contains summary information submitted by London local authorities about initiatives, projects and innovations that **promote educational achievement and positive outcomes for children and young people who are looked after.**

The aim of **IN PRACTICE** is to disseminate information, promote the sharing of ideas and stimulate debate about effective education and inclusive practice.

To contribute to further issues of **IN PRACTICE**, please contact London Regional Partnership londonrp@gol.gsi.gov.uk

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INTRODUCTION

Care Matters - transforming the lives of children and young people in care

“Care Matters”, the green paper on the care of looked after children highlights the government’s commitment to improving outcomes for looked after children. London authorities share the aspiration to enhance the education, health and positive participation of looked after children in their authorities and this issue of **IN PRACTICE** highlights some of the many initiatives and developments currently taking place.

Promoting educational achievement of looked after children is the key objective of the London Education Protects network that meets regularly to share information and best practice. Many London authorities are able to point to significant rises in the numbers of children gaining qualifications and going on to further and higher education as a result of strategies that have been put in place.

More and more authorities are developing initiatives to develop and enhance their role as corporate parent, actively involving elected members and council officers and providing training to school governors.

A wide range of initiatives are in place that are enhancing life outside school, ranging from organised trips at home and abroad to collaborations with football clubs and participation in the arts.

Young people’s transition to adult life is being supported financially through increased leaving care grants and university support bursaries and practically through mentoring and support schemes.

The participation of children and young people is being promoted through their involvement in projects ranging from peer mentoring to film making. Care leavers are being encouraged in a number of authorities to become involved in the development of services.

Everyone involved would recognise that there is still much to be done to ensure that the experience of looked after children is positive but this issue of **IN PRACTICE** presents some positive developments representing a step further on the journey towards that objective.

Supporting the personal development of looked after children and young people

Merton M-Drive Project for looked after children

“This is fantastic” “really worthwhile” “I really felt I was getting something out of this”. These are just a few of the comments from young people who have taken part in Merton’s M-Drive project.

The project is offered in two phases - off-road and on-road. Both programmes take place in the February half-term break. The qualifying age for the off-road programme is 16 years and 10 months and for the on-road programme 17+. For the on-road programme the young person must also hold a current provisional driving licence.

Off-road, young people receive training in preparation for driving including workshops on hazard perception, road safety and driving theory. They are given all the books necessary for the theory part of the driving test and to prepare for practical driving lessons. Two practical driving lessons with the Council’s Vehicle Safety Officer are provided in a dual control vehicle in the Council’s vehicle maintenance depot car park. The car park has been marked up with road markings specifically for this purpose.

Young people who have completed the off-road programme and meet the age requirement are offered the second, on-road, phase of the training following an informal interview with the Driving Safety Officer and the Corporate Parenting Officer. Young people taking part in the phase 2 programme receive two driving experiences in a dual control car off-road, a two hour free on-road driving session with the Advanced Driving Instructor and a further five lessons

with the Britannia Driving School (all of whose instructors are CRB checked).

Regular consultation takes place with the young people involved and their ideas are built into the development of the programme. Some of the young people who first took part felt that to feel confident on the road they needed training in basic car maintenance. So a further element was added to the on-road programme - a vehicle maintenance workshop taught by a senior mechanic where the young people involved learn how to fill up with petrol, change a tyre, change spark plugs, check the oil, and change a fuse.

There are three places available on each programme each year. The Council offers participation in the M-Drive project to all its looked after young people including those placed outside London and nominations are made by social workers, foster carers, key workers and teachers. If it is not feasible for the young person to come to London for the training arrangements are made with a suitable provider near to where they are accommodated - even as far away as Scotland!

Through this scheme young people gain valuable skills in driving, hazard awareness and road safety. They also gain confidence, add to their employability and develop a greater awareness of personal responsibility and safety issues. Feedback from the young people has been 100% positive.

For further information about this scheme please contact
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 Tel 0208 545 3910

Lewisham South East London to South Africa (SELSA)

“A huge opportunity for a group of young people leaving care who would otherwise not have a chance to travel internationally, to broaden their horizons, discover the wider world, participate in voluntary work and bring something back to their own community”. That is how Lee Mc Daid, Lewisham’s Leaving Care Mentoring Scheme Project Manager summarises the benefits of South-East London to South Africa (SELSA) project.

Lewisham Council’s Leaving Care Team is taking ten young care leavers to South Africa for two weeks in February 2007 to volunteer at a wildlife conservation centre. This is a ground-breaking initiative and the first time that a UK local authority has taken care leavers so far and on such an ambitious project.

Since October 2002 Lewisham Council has had a Friendship Agreement with Ekurhuleni

Metropolitan Municipality to the east of Johannesburg and both councils have been exchanging technical expertise on a range of service delivery areas, including human resources, governance and decision making, performance management and economic development since the start of the agreement.

SELSA is an opportunity for a group of disadvantaged young people leaving care, who would otherwise not have a chance to travel internationally, to broaden their horizons, discover the wider world and participate in voluntary work. The project will provide a chance for the Lewisham volunteers to learn practical veterinary and outdoor skills,

develop teamwork and interpersonal skills and face the challenges that new environments and cultural working can bring.

At the wildlife conservation centre the young people will be caring for sick and injured animals, building new enclosures, visiting community projects, speaking to visitors to the centre about veterinary care, releasing and processing animals for release into the wild.

During the SELSA programme the young people will also meet young people from Lewisham’s sister authority, Ekurhuleni who have faced similar hardships and who may be in some form

of care themselves. The Lewisham and Ekurhuleni young people will have a chance to interact through working together on voluntary projects in the Ekurhuleni community, as well as

“This is a fantastic project and one that I am delighted to support. As corporate parents to young people in the Council’s care, we want the very best for them. That includes opportunities for them to discover the wider world and consider their responsibilities in it”.
Steve Bullock, Mayor of Lewisham

social activities.

In the future it is hoped that Ekurhuleni young people may themselves be able to venture abroad and visit the UK on a similar project.

The Lewisham young people in the SELSA project will be over 18 when they travel. Four Lewisham staff members will be travelling with the young people, as well as a volunteer from the Leaving Care Mentoring Project.

A condition of their taking part in the project is that they are in some form of full time education, work or training, as well as playing an active role in the fundraising efforts.

The young people are fundraising for this project themselves and participation in the fundraising effort is a condition of taking part in the project. Emma-Louise, one of the group members, took part in a tandem sky-dive to raise the cash for the trip. She cannot believe that the group has been given this opportunity. "Other people would automatically do trips like this but it would be really hard for us to do charity things abroad" she said.

Sir Richard Branson responded personally to the group's approach to Virgin Airlines for help with the costs of travel and is supporting the project by donating Virgin Atlantic flights for the young people.

The young people have applied for a number of grants and contributions have been received from The Prince's Trust, Big Boost Lottery Fund, Lotus Group and Big Events Trade. The group also raised money at this year's Lewisham

People's Day and Lewisham's 2006

Staff Christmas Ball was a fundraiser for the project.

The SELSA project will feature in a

documentary commissioned by Channel 4 about the process of leaving care as seen through the eyes of the young people themselves. The working title of the film is "Big Wide World" and will feature a group of young care leavers from Lewisham who are going through some kind of transition, e.g. starting university, moving into independent accommodation, starting a job etc and all of whom are taking part in the SELSA project. The documentary will be screened on Channel 4 in summer 2007

"I admire the determination of the SELSA group and am excited about how this project could change their lives. Care leavers face so many challenges and it is only right that they have a chance to take part in the kinds of volunteer projects that so many others do". Siobhan Bell, Young Mayor of Lewisham

**For further information about this work, please contact
Lee McDaid, Learning Care Mentoring Scheme Project manager
Lee.mcdaid@lewisham.gov.uk
Tel 0208 314 8083 (Wed-Fri)**

**Or
Ivor Wells
Lewisham International Projects Section
Ivor.wells@lewisham.gov.uk**

Newham

Flourish - showcasing artworks by looked after children and young people

(Flourish was initiated and organised by Newham Children and Young People's Services, London and is kindly sponsored by PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP)

Flourish took place in October 2006 and included the work of over twenty-five young artists from around the country - including three London authorities Newham, Southwark and Waltham Forest - all of whom are looked after in some way. Some are cared for by grandparents, some are residents of care homes, some have been young offenders and some have foster carers or are adopted.

It was the first national exhibition to include young people with such a diverse experience of care.

A selection of works from the original show at Castor & Pollux in Brighton, are now being shown at the offices of PricewaterhouseCoopers.

Flourish provides a space for the artists to share their practices with the public and each other. They have a chance to speak to visitors about their artwork, receiving valuable feedback and encouragement.

From Disney characters to graffiti, these artworks resound with references from popular culture, indicating what inspires and preoccupies each artist. All the pieces convey an involved and enthusiastic engagement with expressing what matters to them most.



Rt Hon Beverley Hughes, MP, Minister for Children, Young People and Families, meets artist Daniel Defoe
© PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP

The Brighton exhibition was planned to coincide with the National Children



Opening night of Flourish, at Castor & Pollux
© PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP

and Adult Services Conference 2006 (18-20 October 2006) at the Brighton Hilton Metropole - a partnership between the Local Government Association (LGA) and the ADSS.

A selection from the original exhibition will be shown at the National Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services conference in March 2007. Plans have also begun for a brand new exhibition in October 2007 alongside the next ADSS conference in Bournemouth. As Flourish develops, opportunities will emerge for young people to become involved in the organisation and planning of events. It is hoped that Flourish will reflect the breadth of artistic activity being undertaken by looked after young people in the UK.

Flourish was initiated and organised by Newham Children and Young People's Services, London and is kindly sponsored by PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP.

The exhibition preview was fantastic - attended by many of the young people involved in the show, making it feel very much that this was their night. Minister Beverley Hughes and Deputy Mayor of Brighton and Hove, Councillor Bob Carden attended and had lengthy discussion with young people participating. Rob Bennett, partner at PricewaterhouseCoopers, awarded all the artists involved a thank you of vouchers to be used on art supplies.

There will be two shows this year that have selections of the work from the Brighton exhibition. Then in October 2007 there will be a brand new show.

PricewaterhouseCoopers have agreed to further support Flourish, which is superb but the project is looking for

supplementary funding to be able to involve young people in the planning side of the projects and allow Flourish to develop.



Artist Tabitha Newman with her work
© PricewaterhouseCoopers LLC

An exhibition catalogue, with texts by the artists, is available for Flourish. For further information about the exhibition or to enquire about buying artworks please contact flourish_art@btinternet.com

The London exhibition at PriceWaterhouseCoopers is open by appointment Monday to Friday 10am - 4pm. Call 0207 213 5110
On arrival, please go to reception for a visitor's badge
PricewaterhouseCoopers, 1 Embankment Place, London, WC2N 6NN

**For further information about this initiative please contact
Robert Maragh, Head of Integrated Commissioning (Children and Young People's
Services)
Robert.maragh@newham.gov.uk**

or

**Beatty Hallas, Curator
flourish_art@btinternet.com**

Barking and Dagenham LACHES Mentoring scheme

The Barking and Dagenham Looked After Children Team is justifiably proud of its mentoring scheme for looked after children. The scheme has been awarded national accreditation by the National Mentoring and Befriending Foundation and one of the scheme's volunteers, was shortlisted for the *Children Now* Children and Young People's Service Awards, 2006 as Volunteer of the Year.

The project consists of a manager, co-ordinator and 60 volunteers from around and within the community. Volunteers were recruited through advertisements in Council magazines, leaflets distributed locally and at the Town Show and the response was excellent.

Volunteer mentors apply and undergo a rigorous selection and interview process. Once accepted onto the scheme they have to embark on three Saturday training sessions on what mentoring consists of and how to be a good mentor. The training programme, which was devised and written by the Looked After Team staff, has also been nominated for a national award.

Volunteers have been drawn from all sections of the community so there is a good gender and ethnic group balance.

The scheme has had the full and active support of the Chief Executive of the Council who has approved council employees approved as mentors being released during working hours to carry out their mentoring role. Also, some senior staff members and councillors have become mentors and this has had the additional benefit of raising the profile of looked after children issues more widely across the Council.

Once training and CRB checks are completed, the manager and co-ordinator of the project take referrals and requests from young people and carefully match their individual needs to an appropriate mentor. Four to six

weeks after the mentoring relationship has started, the service contacts the young person to check how things are going.

While they are involved with a client, mentors receive 1:1 supervision sessions to receive feedback, ensure the relationship remains appropriate and/or to ensure the young person gets access to appropriate services. They also take part in group supervision so that best practice is shared and disseminated.

Mentoring relationships vary in length. When Kimberley* started at university she found it a bit overwhelming trying to cope with living alone, making a new social life and settling down to new and demanding study routines. Her mentor helped her structure her time, provided help and guidance with practical and administrative tasks and most importantly was someone she could look to for support until she found her feet. Soon Kimberley's confidence grew; she made a new circle of friends and no longer needed the support of her mentor.

But some relationships are more open ended. Being responsive to the young people's needs is at the heart of how the service operates. Paul* benefited from the positive communication strategies he learnt from his mentor, which together with the individual support and attention really helped him to improve his behaviour. Jo* was matched with a mentor who was a nurse while she needed help and support to achieve her GNVQ in Health and Social Care. Mentors also support the teachers at the LACHES Saturday morning homework club. The closure of the mentoring relationship is always marked and celebrated in some special way. This might mean a small gift for the young person or for example it might be going out for a meal. The service stays in touch with the young people involved and they can ask for more mentoring if they wish. Birthdays are always remembered and marked by the service in some small way

* Not the students' real names

especially milestone birthdays of 18 and 21. This often means a great deal to young people many of whom are leaving care and about to embark on adult life.

The Barking and Dagenham mentoring scheme has been running for 18 months and so far it has been offered to 160 young people 41 of whom have requested a mentor. The service is staffed by a full-time project manager and one coordinator. The scheme has been really successful and there is now a waiting list of people wishing to

Lambeth Providing mental health input for children placed out of borough

A large proportion of Lambeth's looked after children are placed outside Lambeth. Research carried out identified that the mental health needs of a number of these children were not being met. There were several identified reasons for this, including multiple placement moves and difference in referral criteria between different Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). As a result, the Lambeth Children Looked After Mental Health Service (CLAMHS) appointed two clinicians at the beginning of 2006 to set up a service aimed at meeting the mental health needs (including placement stability) of these children. The involvement ranges from consultation with other professionals and assessment of the young person, through to treatment.

Help4U CAMHS Looked After Children's Service in Tower Hamlets, East London and City Mental Health Trust

This small multi-disciplinary CAMHS team is located in Tower Hamlets, an area of very high socio-economic deprivation which is also home to one

of the largest Bangladeshi communities in Europe. Help4U which was set up in 2002 has 3.2 (fte) posts which include mental health social work, systemic/family therapy, child and adolescent psychotherapy, psychiatry and adult psychotherapy. The service offers a range of assessment, intervention, consultation and training and strives to achieve a balance between the many complex requests to "make the young people better", whilst helping those doing the care to tolerate and understand the children's frequently unbearable experiences.

**For further information about this work please contact: Jo Feeney, Manager
LACHES Jo.Feeney@lbbd.gov.uk
Tel 0208 227 5217**

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Routine referrals of looked after children are full of histories of chronic early abuse, neglect and violence. The service aims to promote relationship-based ways of working with children and their professional networks, allowing social workers and carers to feel more able to say what is on their minds in a way that is helpful to both the children and young people and each other.

It has been an exciting and fruitful challenge to establish a CAMHS therapist in a role spanning across and co-located between Help4U and the local authority family placement teams.

Both these London CAMHS for LAC will be featured in the national NSCSS/Young Minds conference for Children that Matter on 7 March 2007 in Leicester. For further information please contact Mary Killick, CAMHS Regional Development Worker. mary.killick@dh.gsi.gov.uk

Promoting the educational achievement of looked after children and young people

Ealing

Looked After Children's Team - *Children Now* Children and Young People's awards 2006 - Social Care Team of the Year Award.

The achievements of Ealing's Looked After Children Education team were recognised in the *Children Now* Children and Young People's awards 2006 with the team winning the Social Care Team of the Year award. Award judge Jan Haywood, Chief Executive of the Children's Workforce Development Council said "the excellent thing about this team is its focus on the whole range of needs of looked after children."

The 5-strong team has, in the six years since the team was established, seen a rise in the educational achievement of looked after children in the borough from 17% gaining one GCSE to 60% this year. The number of young people gaining five GCSEs has also risen over that time and the borough has more young people than the average in London going on to university. The service employs a post-16 teacher and has a dedicated centre for looked after children/care leavers.

One aspect of the Looked After Children's Team's work that was singled out for praise by the Children Now Children and Young People's awards judges was the wide range of holiday activities such as theatre and museum trips and visits to France they organise. This emphasis on the wider achievements of looked after children is also demonstrated in the seven annual Education Awards Ceremonies that have been held. The ceremonies celebrate the positive contribution looked after children make all year,

through their commitment to education and achievement.

Consultation and celebration events for children in care and care leavers are another important aspect of the team's work. Young people are involved in a structured way which ensures that their voices are heard. "Outerlimits" Days are held for older young people, and "Rising Stars" Days for those under 11.

Links between education and employment are being strengthened through initiatives such as the Excellence in Cities programme - *Aim Higher* Project. This year a successful mentoring *Aim Higher* Project developed in partnership with Thames Valley University focused on training older care leavers as peer mentors and positive role models for children in education in Years 10 and 11. There are plans to continue the development of this scheme over the next three years and integrate it with a new council wide young apprentice scheme that is currently being planned with West London LSC.

For further information about any of these initiatives please contact

Linda Thompson
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 Tel: 0208 825 7791

RB Kensington & Chelsea with Hampshire “Like Being Rich” - a film and resource pack

“It’s like being rich” is the way one looked after young person in this film describes having an education. The film and training programme was inspired by young people from Kensington and Chelsea and Hampshire and was developed by Si Wharton (K&C) and Howard Firth (Hampshire) with Professor Sonia Jackson of the Thomas Coram Research Unit. The film was made in 2004 and it is as powerful today.

Like Being Rich explores the key education issues facing young people and their carers and highlights the need for both professionals and carers to place children at the centre of their thinking and practice in order to achieve the most positive educational outcomes. The young people who took part in the film are eloquent about the impact of being in care on their lives and they are clear about the impact of the education they received on their lives and the support they received from their social workers

It should be a close relationship. It should be professional but in the same way they should be quite aware that they have one thing in common and that’s knowing the young people and be dealing with the young people who they are taking care of. And give the young people more support is the most important thing because it’s hard time to be in care. And these people that is their job to care of you and make it easier for you.

Theodora, an “A” level college student

They also emphasise the important of remaining involved with their friendship groups when taken into care and the importance of not being made to feel

different at school. Several of the young people highlight the need for professionals to see the real person “not just the case file” and to have high expectations of them.

In their home settings, value placed on education and an appropriate learning environment and routine in which to do homework was important in keeping them motivated and on track, they said.

The film which features children and young people of different ages, carers and professionals introduces the care system and deals with the effects of being in care on children and young people, care placements, school, strategies to maximise educational outcomes and inter-professional working. It is an honest look at the system - acknowledging the difficulties as well as highlighting successes in a careful, thought-provoking and at times moving, way.

“If you feel something wouldn’t be good enough for your own children and you wouldn’t be happy to put your own children somewhere, don’t expect Looked After Children to be put in that position” Mark, 3rd year Mathematics student at Reading University

This film is an excellent resource. It could be used to introduce the issues or equally to develop professional dialogue about service improvement and promoting the educational achievement of looked after children.

For further information about the film or to obtain a copy please contact Si Wharton
Si.wharton@rbkc.gov.uk
Tel 0207 361 3702

Merton “Flying tutors” scheme

looked after children and young people who need that little bit extra help are benefiting from the personal tutoring scheme set up by the authority as part of its efforts to drive up educational achievement of looked after children.

The children and young people themselves decide whether or not to take part. If they would like extra help they get a personal tutor for one hour per week in two subjects per term.

Teaching is focused on core subjects but is tailored to the needs of individual children and young people.

Initially the scheme centred on children of high ability at risk of not reaching their full potential. However it has now been broadened to cater for children of all abilities with tutoring carefully linked to the child’s PEP targets.

The scheme is publicised at regular foster carers network meetings and in borough newsletters. Apart from the benefits of the scheme to individual children and young people, it also helps to deliver to foster carers and the young people themselves, the clear message that the council is serious about education and places value on the educational achievement of its looked after children.

**For further information about this scheme please contact
Matthew Lilley
Corporate Parenting Officer, Merton
matthew.lilley@merton.gov.uk
Tel 0208 545 3910**

Brent

Down to Work - after school drop in

“Don’t drop out! Drop in” is the advice given to looked after children in Brent by the Education Team for Looked After Children and it seems the young people are listening. The Brent Down to Work club is held once a week and provides extra support with English, Maths and Science. The scheme has only been going a term and interest is growing all the time.

The young people are using the scheme to gain extra support in subjects where they need it most. Maggie Taylor, Education Coordinator says that one young person, Sam*, “is brilliant at maths but because English is not his first language he is getting lots of help with literacy”.

The club also encourages young people to provide peer support to another young person so Laura† who was struggling in maths but had good language skills was able to benefit from Sam’s help.

Following a successful trial, the Down to Work club is now entering its second term. The service has consulted the children and young people about the further development of the programme and they have provided constructive comment and feedback. For example the young people said that they would like to see a regular programme on offer rather than being helped on an individual basis. The Education Team for Looked After Children is now taking this on board.

Year 8/9 and Year 10/11 Booster Classes

The Brent Education Team for Looked After Children also supports these young people through booster classes which are commissioned by the team and are run in partnership with two local secondary schools.

The classes are subject specific, and students receive one hour of maths and one hour of English as well as focusing on exam technique - how to read the question for what is being tested, how to manage time in an exam, being aware of the marking structure to maximise scores, how to revise and how to practice for the exam.

The booster classes have been running for five years and the results have been very positive with students gaining the confidence and skills to go into exams more confidently, thus reflecting more accurately their true abilities.

For further information about either of these initiatives, please contact Maggie Taylor, Education Coordinator
Maggie.taylor@brent.gov.uk
Tel: 020 8937 4907

* Not the students’ real names

CEA@Islington

I...ME! Mentoring Project

The new *I...me!* mentoring project is a programme of support, advice and guidance for young people looked after by Islington aged 13-17, funded by the European Social Fund and Learning Skills Council. Key partners - Connexions, Community Service Volunteers (CSV), Shaftesbury Homes & Arethusa and the REACH Team - are working together on the scheme which is funded until June 2007.

The project aims to *Impact, Motivate* and *Empower* young people by offering them resources and support to raise their attainment. The service is offered through dedicated Personal Advisors based in the REACH Team, who will initially engage clients, and offer advice and guidance geared to their individual needs, whilst providing the option of using the mentoring service.

The mentoring is provided by Community Service Volunteers (CSV), who have a dedicated coordinator who works closely with the Personal Adviser in the REACH Team. This specialist mentoring service offers the choice of:

- peer mentors - of a similar age and background
- higher education (student mentors)
- employee mentors - for those interested in a certain field of work or career

The mentor will be there to listen, to encourage, and to guide young people in their aspirations.

This project is just starting so watch this space for more info as things develop!!

Tracking Programme

In Islington, looked after children in national curriculum Years 6,9,10 and

Year 11 are offered additional personalised educational support packages to raise their academic achievement and success in Key Stage 2 and 3 SATs and GCSEs courses.

The educational support package is agreed by the REACH Team in discussion with the school (taking into account any recommendations from social workers and foster carers) and is a time limited support package that can be used flexibly to provide the best individual and appropriate type of educational support for each child or young person.

Education Support Service

The REACH Team has been looking at the way tuition is provided and how the attendance of looked after children is supported and monitored. Currently, the REACH Team provides individual tutors for children and young people where they do not have a school place or where they are identified through the current tracking system as needing additional support. This assists with the 20-day rule and the quality and effectiveness of the education received.

Education Support Officer/ Mentor

CEA@Islington has also created the post of Education Support Officer for Looked After Children within their REACH Team.

The Education Support Officer supports individual children in working towards targets on Individual Education Plans (IEPs), Pastoral Support Programmes (PSPs) and Personal Education Plans (PEPs). She also develops ways of promoting and reinforcing pupil's self-esteem and ways to help them develop social, listening and behavioural skills through modelling, group activities and working cooperatively.

The Education Support Officer coordinates input and outcomes from

the range of other agencies/
services/programmes eg Out of School
Hours Learning, Youth Offending and
CAIS, Year 7 and 8 tracking.

Disaffected children and young people
are a particular focus, with the
Education Support Officer providing

positive challenge to help them
recognise their strengths and work on
their areas of need. The ESO also
contributes to motivating children and
young people to reengage in the
process of learning, education and
training.

**For further information about these
developments please contact
Stef White
Stefanie.white.cea@islington.gov.uk**

Haringey

Raising educational attainment of looked after children

Careful review by Haringey of professional practice and the experience of the Looked After Children Education Team in the borough over the past few years has fed into the development of the borough's strategic planning for raising the educational attainment of its looked after children.

Two main work streams have been developed as a result of the review - monitoring and educational planning for looked after children and direct work and contact with the young people themselves.

To improve educational outcomes key intervention points have been identified

- Reception - prompt entry of looked after children
- Year 2 - to ensure that looked after children are well supported early in their education
- Years 6 and 7 - as they prepare for and settle into secondary school
- Year 9 - as they start their GCSE courses and maintain their motivation and engagement through to the end of their exams in Year 10
- Year 11 - to maintain the engagement with education and where possible entry into further education or study.

Through careful monitoring of progress of young people in Year 10 and 11, the Looked After Children Education Team has been able to make sure that they are entered for exams and complete all their coursework. Potential barriers have been identified early and overcome. The service provides transport to get young people to school when necessary and even goes as far as contact to encourage young people to get out of bed in the morning!

An attendance monitoring system, allows the service to identify any young people who are starting to become irregular attenders at school.

This means difficulties are picked up early and support can be provided to make sure that the young people stay on track. Through tracking and referrals, the team ensures that looked after children are prioritised for admission into school, and Connexions support is in place for identified young people.

Targeted support is also offered through additional home tuition and a weekly homework club that provides additional assistance in relation to coursework and exam preparation.

Close liaison with the schools and teachers involved has been really valuable, with school staff and the Looked After Children Team working together to keep the focus on positive educational outcomes for the young people. The fortnightly meetings of the Education Attainment Group which includes managers of social workers, health and other relevant teams for LAC, facilitates information exchanges on monitoring and reviewing progress and relevant discussions.

The team has also worked hard to meet and get to know the young people and their carers and to develop their aspirations for the future through a range of leisure, cultural and sporting activities. In partnership with Tottenham Hotspur Foundation, football coaching after school has been offered to children in Key Stages 1 & 2. The service has taken young people into London to a theatre trip, a visit to the London Eye and afternoon tea in a five star hotel.

Helping carers to support the education of young people is also part of the strategy. Most recently training on supporting children's transition to secondary school has been introduced.

The borough has just held its third annual awards event for looked after children. Children and young people

were nominated for awards in four categories by teachers, social workers and carers. The young people themselves have also been encouraged to take on support and mentoring roles at events, which has presented younger children with positive role models.

The team believes that the success of the strategy has in part been due to roles being clearly identified and individual team members having

responsibility for the development of their element of the strategy. The team as a whole understands each person's role and contribution to raising the educational achievements of looked after children. But everyone agrees that the real difference has come from getting to know the young people as individuals; meeting them, talking to them and supporting them.

For more information about this work please contact
Attracta Craig, Looked After Children Education Team Manager
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Developing council wide responsibility for looked after children and young people

Barking and Dagenham

Using ICT to support looked after children and young people

Care Web website

There has been lots of interest from other authorities both in London and from other regions in Care Web (www.careweb.tv) the Barking and Dagenham website for looked after children.

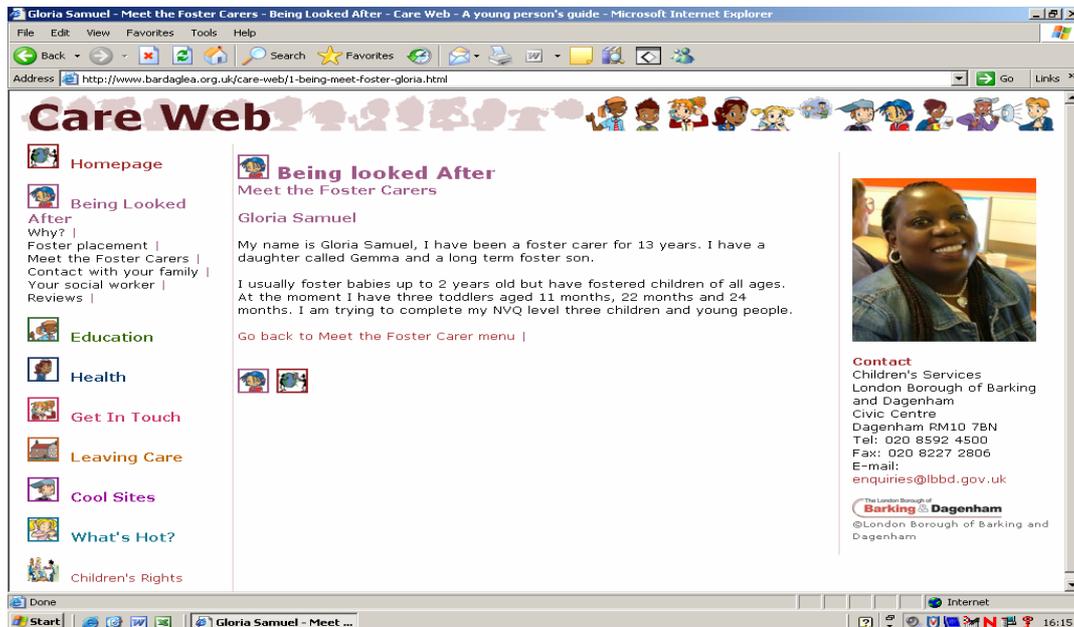
The site gives young people the opportunity to gather information about being in care and about their rights and has a secure area that the young people can access.



Children and young people looked after by Barking and Dagenham can use the site to contact their social worker direct via email. In the secure area they can browse the latest events and children's rights meetings and access photos of residentials they have been on. Young people living out of borough can use the e-postbag to

share their thoughts and feelings with their peers.

A section of the site provides profiles and photographs of foster carers so if a young person is moving to a new placement they can read a little about their new foster carer prior to arriving.



The website is administered by the Looked After Children Participation Team who monitor activity on the site. Postings on the site are also vetted by the team.

Developments include plans for a professional resource section for foster carers.

Short text service

Barking and Dagenham also operates a short text service that young people can use to text in to the service for guidance, support and resources. They text LACHES + their request to 60066 and it appears instantly on the service manager's PC.

The SMS has proved an ideal way to build communication and keep the young people informed of what's happening in the services.

For further information about this work please contact

Jo Feeney, Manager LACHES
Jo.Feeney@lbbd.gov.uk
Tel 0208 227 5217

Greenwich Post of Commissioning and Planning Officer for Looked After Children

Greenwich has demonstrated its commitment to improving outcomes for looked after children by creating the post of Commissioning and Planning Officer for Looked after Children. The post will enable a better understanding of the current placement provision and market, by forecasting future needs and patterns to date; analyse demand trends and helpful interventions. It will also address individual needs and respond to the needs of children including black ethnic children, disabled children and young people.

An immediate priority of this post was consultation with all looked after children and young people to ensure that their views were reflected in service development. Almost without exception, young people said that what they wanted was to stay close to their families, to have more and easier contact with their social worker, not to be asked the same questions over and over again by different people, to have access to information, to be able to get help with school work when they need it and to have access to leisure and sports activities.

At the same time, a profile of all looked after children highlighted the need to develop “volatility”¹ ratings that would enable early intervention by commissioning services to prevent placements from breaking down or stabilise placements. This would involve ensuring all looked after children have access to mainstream services, such as leisure, sports and arts activities, breakfast, homework and after school clubs, nurseries, toy libraries, drop in centres etc.

“Sometimes - say with a teenager - just having access to other services, for example use of a gym can calm things down a bit” says Commissioning and Planning Officer, Yetunde Ode Martins. So, the authority is making sure that a directory of local services is

available to all social workers and foster carers to have information about the range of services, and carers will be encouraged to use these services as well as draw on help they offer to support children and young people and increase placement stability.

An outcome based approach is being promoted as part of the commissioning strategy. Social workers are being encouraged to think about what is wanted from each placement in terms of outcomes for the child/young person and to evaluate placements in relation to benefits secured. Linking evaluation data with costs of placements and applying Best Value principles to commissioning is acting as a further lever to improvement.

A third element of the commissioning strategy is to look carefully at all high cost placements which are mostly at a distance to the borough, and explore what would need to be put in place to support the child/young person locally. The analysis showed that a relatively small proportion of placements generated a high proportion of spending on placements. These placements were volatile in terms of the ability to forecast the need for them and in terms of the gearing effect between the number of cases and costs. These placements are also being reviewed to determine whether there are any patterns of need or perceived need amongst particular population groups that might be better met through alternative methods, or indeed patterns in out of authority provision that could be adjusted to ensure that children and young people are maintained in their home communities.

The work is on-going and Greenwich is keen to work with other authorities facing similar challenges.

For further information about the work in Greenwich contact
Yetunde Ode-Martins
Yetunde.ode-martins@greenwich.gov.uk
Tel 0208 921 3153

¹ Greenwich uses a 1-9 volatility rating system

Westminster Developing the role of Corporate Parent

Westminster Council is keen to publicise its commitment to developing its role as corporate parent.

The Council issued the following press release on 3 October 2006 and posted it on its website.

18 Councillors have signed up to act as guardians for looked after children in Westminster (03/10/2006)

18 Councillors have signed up to act as guardians for looked after children in Westminster. An exciting new parenting initiative being launched in Westminster now has 18 Councillors signed up.

The scheme involves councillors acting as guardians or 'pushy parents' to children in care, to help improve educational outcomes for this vulnerable group. Councillors will strengthen the parenting role of the local authority by monitoring the progress of a child in the authority's care, making sure they are satisfied everything is being done that can be to give them the best possible start.

Nationally, educational achievement and career prospects for this group is poor compared with others. The Councillors will work 'behind the scenes' without direct contact with the young person and in most cases the child will not be aware of their involvement.

Councillors will have close contact with social care staff on the progress of their child. They will bring their strong influence to help overcome any obstacles that the child might encounter in his/her educational path, intrinsically linked to a child's overall quality of life.

Traditionally children in care have under-performed in the educational system, however with the progress made in this year's exam results, the scheme is set to further add to this success. Councillor Sarah Richardson, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, said: "Eighteen councillors have signed up to this scheme, showing our commitment to improving outcomes for looked after children in Westminster.

"It is vital that looked after children have strong advocates in the council so we can ensure they get the very best support we offer. Looked after children tend to need more assistance than other children and with councillors on their side we can ensure that they get the very best support we can offer."

2006 Westminster City Council.
www.westminster.gov.uk

Some other authorities that have taken specific actions to support looked after children are:

Barnet

In Barnet Looked After Children Education Champions are high level Council officers who “shadow” an individual child or young person’s experience within the education system and undertake to monitor what’s happening; asking the questions that a responsible parent would, ensuring that any necessary additional provision is in place and “progress chasing” where appropriate to ensure that there are no blockages in the system.

Each looked after child is championed by a different high-ranking person at the council - e.g. the chief executive, chief officers, assistant directors. Although the champion doesn't meet with the child, s/he, exploiting both their status in the organisation and their institutional knowledge, calls / meets with the social workers or head teachers to act as a parent would. Each champion is asked to have the same expectations for their looked after child as they would for their own children. The scheme was born out of the belief from many looked after children that people tend to have low expectations of them. Initially the scheme focused on Year 11 students but has now been rolled out to include Years 5 and 9.

This enhanced focus on educational outcomes has contributed to an increase in the percentage of Barnet’s looked after children achieving at least one GCSE pass (77%) and those achieving five A-C grades (25%), which is more than double the national average for looked after children.

Contact: Gina Filose
Corporate Parenting Team Manager
gina.filose@barnet.gov.uk

Barking and Dagenham

A similar scheme is operated in Barking and Dagenham where there is also support at the highest level for staff involvement in the borough’s looked after children mentoring scheme.

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LACHES
Jo.feeney@lbbd.gov.uk

Camden

Camden’s Children and Young People Champion scheme was shortlisted for an award in the Children Now, Children and Young People’s awards 2006.

Brent

Brent Council offers Year 12 looked after children work experience in their *Teenagers to Work* programme. The programme takes place in the autumn half-term break and the students work in a range of council placements. The young people receive vouchers from a store of their choice in recompense and are presented with a certificate at the Brent Annual Celebration of Achievement in December each year.

Contact: Maggie Taylor, Education
Coordinator, Education Team for
Looked After Children
Maggie.taylor@brent.gov.uk

Ealing

Ealing council has responded to young people’s worries about the cost of going to university by introducing a university allowance of £5000.

Lewisham

Lewisham has increased the leaving care grant from £750 to £1250.

IP6/2007

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