Institute of Education

UCL

Promoting the achievement of looked after children and young people in Lincolnshire

May 2018

Case studies of education provision for children and young people in care in Lincolnshire
Promoting the Achievement of Looked After Children
PALAC

Contents

Authors

UCL Institute of Education
Dr Catherine Carroll, Senior Research Associate, UCL Centre for Inclusive Education
Professor Claire Cameron, Deputy Director, Thomas Coram Research Unit
Michael Bettencourt, PALAC Facilitator

Lincolnshire Virtual School
Kieran Barnes, Virtual School Headteacher
Sarah Lane, Virtual School Team Manager

Schools
Banovallum School, Ian Leary
Coningsby St Michael's CE Primary School, Anda Jones
Gainsborough Parish Church Primary, Sarah Nelson
The Priory Academy LSST, Kathryn Creaser
St George's Academy, Tracey Dickinson
St Mary's CE Primary Academy, Christine Flintham
Woodlands Academy, Phil Vickers
Early Years Service, Rachael Brian, Sarah Lawford, Sally Pursey and Amy Walkey

Introduction

Education of children in care

As of March 2017, there were 72, 670 children and young people in care in England. The number of looked after children has continued to increase steadily over the last eight years.[1] Sixty per cent of these children are in care because of abuse or neglect and three-quarters are placed in foster care arrangements. Children and young people who are in or have experienced care remain one of the lowest performing groups in terms of educational outcomes. The average Attainment 8 score for children in care is 19.3 compared to 44.5 for non-looked after children and 19.3 for children in need. In 2017 there was an increase in the percentage of children in care achieving a pass in English and Mathematics from 17.4% to 17.5% and also in entering EBacc. Care leavers can experience poorer employment and health outcomes after leaving school compared to their peers. They are over-represented amongst the offender population and those who experience homelessness.

However, research is emerging to show that many children and young people in care can have very positive experiences of school and are supported effectively to reach their full potential academically and socially. The purpose of this report is to share practice in selected Lincolnshire schools that is contributing to improved outcomes and school experiences for children and young people in care.

In 2017, Lincolnshire Virtual School (VS) collaborated with UCL Institute of Education to deliver the Promoting the Achievement of Looked after Children (PALAC) programme with seven schools and the Early Years service in the local authority (LA). This report presents an account of the programme, including the activities undertaken by the participants and the outcomes of the programme to date for pupils in care and staff in the participating schools.

---

1 DfE (2017) Children looked after in England (including adoption) year ending 31 March 2017. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/664995/SFR50_2017-Children_looked_after_in_England.pdf.

What is PALAC?

PALAC is a knowledge exchange programme that seeks to support practice in schools to improve outcomes for students in care. It originated as a result of the dearth of evidence available to support schools in developing practice for a group of children and young people who continue to underachieve both academically and subsequently in adult life. At its core is the collaborative relationship that exists between practitioners in school and university researchers to seek to improve our collective understanding of how students in care can thrive in school. As a knowledge exchange programme, PALAC places considerable emphasis on the generation of evidence from practice. The programme promotes evidence-informed practice in schools and the structure of the programme itself is based on the current understanding of how to best support professional learning and development in schools.

PALAC began in 2014 and is now in its third year; it engages schools and VS in a collaborative six-month programme through access to research findings, a school audit tool and regular support from facilitators with research and school practitioner backgrounds. Participants have the opportunity to share and evaluate their findings at the end of the six months. The PALAC team links with an LA to support the development of teacher practice in a more systemic way and to help ensure that learning from the programme can be sustained once the formal PALAC programme comes to an end.

The PALAC programme has identified seven evidence-informed domains around which schools can focus professional development and learning:

- **Supporting emotional development and wellbeing**
- **Raising and monitoring attainment**
- **Supporting learning**
- **School environment**
- **Effective deployment of staff**
- **Supporting equality and diversity**
- **Working with carers and other professionals.**

Schools focus their PALAC projects around one or two domains that are most relevant to their settings.

Case Studies

Banovallum School
GCSE tutoring

Background

Evidence indicates that one to one tuition can be effective for many groups of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, including children and young people in care. The Teaching and Learning Toolkit from the Educational Endowment Foundation (EEF) currently reports one to one tuition, on average, as accelerating learning by approximately five additional months' progress[2]. More effective one to one tuition is likely to be delivered over short, regular sessions, across a fixed period of time and have immediate relevance to the classroom curriculum. Studies that have specifically evaluated one to one tuition for pupils in care, including Catch Up and the Three Tutoring Models studies, have resulted in significant gains in literacy.[3]

Findings from studies on peer tutoring have similarly shown evidence of accelerating learning by approximately five additional months' progress.[4] Moreover, there is evidence that children from disadvantaged backgrounds can make the biggest gains. In cross-age peer tutoring, some studies have found that a two year age difference is effective and that blocks of intensive tutoring can be more effective than longer programmes.

Banovallum School is an 11–16 secondary school in Horncastle, Lincolnshire. As part of the PALAC project, Ian Leary, Assistant Headteacher, investigated the impact of implementing a one to one peer tutoring GCSE revision programme for year 11 pupils, including two pupils in care. This case study describes the implementation and outcomes of the revision programme, led by Ian, but with the tuition delivered by sixth form students from Queen Elizabeth's, a neighbouring Grammar school.

What did the school do?

In January before the revision classes commenced, tutor roles were advertised to sixth form students from the local Grammar school. The roles were advertised at an hourly rate and paid for from Pupil Premium (PP). Banovallum also paid for a Disclosure and Barring Service check on those students

---

2 EEF (2017). Teaching and Learning Toolkit. https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/teaching-learning-toolkit/one-to-one-tuition/.
3 Liabo, K., Gray, K., & Mulcahy, D. (2013). A systematic review of interventions to support looked after children in school. Child & family social work, 18(3), 341–353.
4 EEF (2017). https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/teaching-learning-toolkit/peer-tutoring/.

who were successful at interview. In total, twelve tutors, including one student with a care background, were appointed.

The two hour revision session ran for twelve weeks on Saturday mornings leading up to the final examination period. All year 11 students were invited to attend. It was planned that the first six sessions would take place at the Grammar school but this was changed after week eight as a result of feedback from the year 11 pupils who preferred the revision sessions in their own school. Each session followed a similar structure which began with a form of 'triage' with the member of staff coordinating the session. The year 11 pupils, in discussion with the member of staff, identified and agreed individual priorities for revision and based on this discussion the member of staff could guide the year 11 pupil to the most appropriate sixth form tutor (Figure 1).
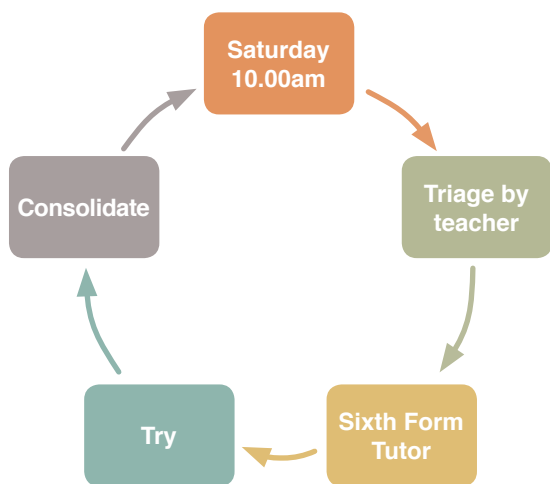

Figure 1: Structure of revision sessions

The pupils would be in either one to one sessions or in small groups such as, for example, a higher tier maths session. They would try, with support, to attempt more difficult questions with the sixth form tutor showing an alternative way or through

question prompts. Pupils would then work at that question or topic by themselves with the tutor in close proximity.

Outcomes for pupils and staff

The outcomes for pupils, tutors and the school exceeded all expectations. Attendance at the session was higher than anticipated with 43% of all year 11 pupils attending at least five sessions and 20% of all pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds attending at least five sessions. The Progress 8 scores in the summer were +0.05 for those students from disadvantaged backgrounds that attended and +0.1 for those not from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Feedback from the year 11 pupils about the sessions was illuminating. They reported that many of the sixth form tutors were better at explaining problems than teachers. As a result of this feedback, the sixth formers were asked to present their experiences and teaching methods they used in the sessions to staff and governors at Banovallum. The sixth formers also delivered a more detailed one hour continuing professional development session to teachers. The delivery of the revision sessions and subsequent presentations to professionals had a positive impact on the self-esteem of the sixth form tutors. They enjoyed the sessions and greatly valued being treated as employees. The experience was also valued in terms of the benefits it offered for UCAS applications.

Implications for practice and research

The revision programme was a success for both the year 11 pupils and the sixth formers for a number of reasons. The first was the personalised nature of the sessions which allowed learning to be tailored to need, which is not always the case in whole group or class revision sessions. The sixth formers had credibility from the perspective of the year 11 pupils as they had recently sat the

examinations and could therefore offer first-hand experience. Formally employing the sixth formers ensured that the programme was run on a professional basis with full commitment from the tutors. Finally, this form of revision class was inclusive in nature as it was offered to all year 11 students and in this context the young people in care were not singled out from their peers. For schools thinking of running such a programme it is important that there is a school champion for the project who ideally is not a member of the senior leadership team (SLT), but the project will require full backing of the SLT. The champion will need to show flexibility, as in the case of this project, where the venue for the sessions was very quickly changed as a result of pupil feedback. Reflections by the team after the project also highlighted that social media could have been used to drum up further interest in the programme before it started and to help with maintaining attendance.

The structure and findings from this pilot programme offers much from a research perspective. Children and young people in care often find themselves in one to one tuition contexts in school and often between school placements. Evidence is emerging that tuition for children in care, whether one to one or group based can be effective.[5] Further research into the different types of tuition, including who, how and when tuition is best delivered is required. This project addressed all these questions thoughtfully and from the perspective of the young person which underpinned its success.

5 Harper, J., & Schmidt, F. (2016). Effectiveness of a group-based academic tutoring program for children in foster care: A randomized controlled trial. Children and Youth Services Review, 67, 238–246.

Coningsby St Michael's CE Primary School
Supporting attachment across the school day – the contribution of midday supervisors

Background

One of the reasons for the increased interest in attachment theory in schools is premised on an understanding that nurturing relationships between pupils and practitioners is beneficial for all pupils as well as children and young people in care. Adults can provide pupils with the protective and secure foundation from which to explore and engage with their peers and the wider school environment.[6] One group of practitioners in schools that have not received the same attention in research or practice in relation to understanding the contribution of attachment theory to practice are midday supervisors. Break times and lunchtimes can be a challenging part of the school day for many pupils due to, for example, the lack of structured activities, open spaces, increased noise levels and the demand on social skills. As a consequence, vulnerable pupils can display externalising and internalising behaviours that can lead to them experiencing isolation, difficulties with their peers and subsequently finding themselves 'in trouble' with adults.

When midday supervisors have an informed understanding of attachment theory and the possible implications for behaviours, they are more prepared to provide the 'safe space' and respond to pupils in ways that can better support them at the time. This in turn contributes to a whole school approach that fosters nurturing relationships between practitioners and pupils across the school day and not isolated to the classroom.

As a result of the wider research on the more effective deployment and practices of teaching assistants, our understanding of how to ensure stronger interactions between support staff and pupils in the classroom is improving including, for example, an emphasis on different and

6   Bath and North East Somerset Virtual Schools (2015). Impact Evaluation Report. Attachment Aware Schools Pilot Project Phase 1. https://www.bathspa.ac.uk/media/bathspaacuk/education-/research/attachment-aware/Attachment-Aware-Evaluation-Report-BNES.pdf.

more open questioning techniques.[7] In the same manner, a greater understanding of attachment aware practices by midday supervisors is one element of supporting more effective interactions between midday supervisors and pupils and therefore the possibility of improved relationships between vulnerable pupils with their peers at break times. This case study describes how Anda Jones, the SENCo at Coningsby St Michael's CE Primary School implemented a professional learning programme for midday supervisors with an emphasis on attachment aware practices.

What did the school do?

During the spring term, a new professional learning programme for midday supervisors was implemented which began with a preliminary meeting with the team to discuss the content and purposes of the learning programme. The main aims of the programme were to explore if:

- **a greater understanding and application of attachment aware practices on behalf of the midday supervisors**
- **combined with additional 'safe space' training for the learning mentor**
- **and a focus on supporting more positive behaviours at break times on behalf of the senior leadership team**

would result in a reduction in lunchtime incidents. These had increased to the extent that the learning mentor spent a disproportionate amount of time responding to incidents rather than working proactively with pupils through different lunchtime activities. At this meeting, the midday supervisors were asked to complete a baseline questionnaire on their understanding and knowledge of attachment and the potential effects of insecure attachments for children. At the same time, pupils completed questionnaires to gather their experiences of break times.

After this meeting, the midday supervisors participated in a one hour professional learning session on attachment awareness delivered by an external provider. Learning from this session and how it was influencing the work of the team was followed up and discussed at the usual monthly meetings held with the supervisors. As a consequence of these discussions, the team asked for an additional professional learning session towards the end of term, which was devised and delivered in house and personalised to the specific lunchtime context at Coningsby. In addition, the SLT introduced a review of any key lunchtime incidents from the previous week and discussed how practice might be improved, which was shared with the supervisors. Finally, during the term, the Learning Mentor attended additional external training on the contribution of safe spaces to pupils' education and wellbeing: one consequence was to ask nine pupils to identify their own 'safe space' in the school. The location of their safe spaces was shared with key adults and added to their profiles.

Outcomes for pupils and staff

After just one term of the coordinated, multi-strategy approach to implementing greater attachment aware practices by midday supervisors there was a reduction in lunchtime incidents. In addition, the learning mentor was able to resume running lunchtime groups enabling children from each year group to access these if they wished.

As evidenced from questionnaires completed at the end of the summer term, the midday

7 Bosanquet, P., Radford, J., & Webster, R. (2015). The Teaching Assistant's Guide to Effective Interaction: How to Maximise Your Practice. Routledge.

supervisors reported that they felt more confident in responding to and managing different behaviours at lunchtimes. They recognised the need to talk with the children and build a relationship with them. They were more aware of the importance of giving the child space and the use and tone of the language that they used. The significance of the need for the adults to be consistent across the year groups was recognised. The development of relationships resulted in each of the supervisors becoming the unofficial named supervisor for a child. During pupil interviews in a recent OFSTED inspection, it was reported that 'midday-supervisors were especially praised for the ways that they provide help during lunchtime, particularly in the playground'.

In the following autumn term, the teaching assistants and most of the midday supervisors met up with colleagues from another school for a joint professional learning session that focused on what was going well at break times and what wasn't with suggested strategies discussed and shared.

Finally, as a consequence of the safe space question to pupils, all staff, including the supervisors, were more aware of where a pupil might go if they were in distress or indeed where might be a good place to go with a pupil if a safe space was needed.

Implications for practice and research

This case study is one of the first in the PALAC programme to specifically acknowledge and address the important role that midday supervisors play in reducing barriers to pupil learning and wellbeing and in doing so provide more inclusive lunchtime settings. There are many ways in which these lunchtime barriers might be reduced, but this case study showed the importance of a coordinated and joined up approach that included the supervisors but also the learning mentor and the SLT. Moreover, the structure and the way in which the learning was delivered – for example, regular sessions, tailored to the context, with a pupil focus and opportunities to 'try out' new learning and return to the group to discuss experiences – exemplifies what we know about more effective continuing professional development (CPD).[8] Although not possible to demonstrate explicitly in this case study, such positive results may not have been so evident if just the two sessions of professional learning had been implemented. Effective CPD that addresses the education of pupils in care will always need to consider the conditions necessary for that particular element of CPD to gain traction in a setting and support long term change. This case study also highlights the importance of a broader understanding of a safe space that extends beyond one room in a setting and how it might differ for individual pupils.

The voice and wider role of midday supervisors in school research studies is a challenge to find. Therefore, we have much to learn about their contribution to school life, especially in terms of pupil and even perhaps staff wellbeing. Research is needed as to what is already being achieved, day in, day out in our schools by our midday supervisor colleagues which has not been fully investigated or documented.

---

8 Cordingley, P., Higgins, S., Greany, T., Buckler, N., Coles-Jordan, D., Crisp, B., Saunders, L., Coe, R. (2015). Developing Great Teaching: Lessons from the international reviews into effective professional development. Teacher Development Trust. http://tdtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/DGT-Full-report.pdf.

The Gainsborough Parish Church Primary
Supporting adopted children and those cared for by special guardians

Background

In 2016 4,690 children were adopted from care and 3,830 children ceased care due to a special guardianship order.[9] Special guardianship is increasingly used as an alternative to adoption. Special guardians may be foster carers, but are usually people within the child's birth family or family network, such as grandparents, aunts and uncles or family friends. Special guardians face specific challenges as they were not usually planning to become carers but have responded to a need within the wider family.

For those children who do move from care to adoption we know that this does not mean that their needs disappear overnight. They continue to remain vulnerable to poor academic and social outcomes even though they have been found a loving home. Indeed, many years into a stable and settled adoption placement, their early life experiences can have implications for the teenage years and early adult life.

In response to this need, recent legislation (The Children and Social Work Act (2017)) requires schools to appoint a designated staff member to have responsibility for all children who were formerly in care.[10] Many schools, already mindful of this potentially vulnerable group of children, are proactively considering how they will ensure that adopted children are supported to achieve their full potential, and evidence of their work is emerging. In 2017, PAC-UK published – 'Meeting the needs of adopted and permanently placed children' – a guide for school staff and a similar guide for adoptive parents.[11] Examples from practice also exist of effective ways in using the Pupil Premium for adopted children including individual and whole school approaches.[12] This case study describes how Sarah Nelson, Deputy Headteacher at The Gainsborough Parish Church Primary School in Lincolnshire, put in place whole school strategies to support adopted children and those placed with a Special Guardianship Order (SGO).

What did the school do?

Understanding the need and importance of embedding a proactive approach to supporting adopted children or children in an SGO placement and their families,

9   DfE (2016). Children looked after in England (including adoption) year ending 31 March 2016. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/556331/SFR41_2016_Text.pdf.
10 http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/16/pdfs/ukpga_20170016_en.pdf.
11 PAC-UK (2017). Meeting the needs of adopted and permanently placed children: A guide for schools. http://www.pac-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Meeting-the-needs-of-adopted-and-permanently-placed-children-A-guide-for-school-staff.pdf.
12 BAAF (2015). Pupil Premium for Adopted Children. http://www.first4adoption.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Pupil-Premium_Case-Studies.pdf.

Sarah Nelson created a bespoke Personal Education Plan (PEP). Although PEPs are not a legal requirement for schools, many of these children, previously under the care of the local authority, would have been supported with a PEP and the new bespoke PEP allows for continuity. The PEP provided the framework for a meeting with parents and carers to identify areas of need and support. The outcomes targeted in the meeting were subsequently used to inform how to best use Pupil Premium (PP) and further professional development and learning opportunities for staff. After this first meeting, the pupils were automatically included in the pupil progress meeting cycle. Finally, learning from the project was used to write a school policy that included children in care, adopted children and children in SGO placements.

Outcomes for pupils, carers and parents

For staff, the project enabled them to become aware of which pupils had formerly been in care, which in some instances they had not previously known about. They had a better understanding of the pupil's life story and their possible needs, especially in relation to emotional wellbeing. The PEP facilitated availability of additional resources through increased funding to support pupils' learning. Specific tracking of these pupils' attainment and progress was introduced and shared with Governors. Pupils began to experience stronger relationships with staff and through sharing a life story felt extra special and important to school staff. An increase in attainment and progress was evident by the end of the year.

The project was also positive for carers. They experienced better communication links and relationships with staff. They had a clearer understanding of their child's next steps, how they could support them at home and

with their attainment and progress in school. By introducing the PEP carers and parents had an opportunity to discuss their needs as carers, ask for support if needed and be signposted to where they could receive further support.

Implications for practice and research

As with children in care, supporting adopted and SGO placement pupils will require knowledgeable, sensitive and individualised approaches from practitioners in schools. A bespoke PEP helps to facilitate that personalised support especially at a time when children and their families are experiencing significant transitions and beginning new chapters in their lives. It might be that in more settled periods and if a child is exceeding progress in all areas, a PEP is not required. However, the impact and experience of being adopted, for example, can influence development and wellbeing across the life span, with adolescence being a particular cause for concern.[13]

To date, there is limited research that draws specifically on the experiences of school from the perspectives of recently adopted children and children in SGO placements. This is particularly important in light of adoptionuk's 2014 survey of 1,500 adopters which reported that 43 per cent of parents said that their child's school did not understand that their child had any problems because of their over compliance. This was as a result of early life trauma, where compliance was a response and coping mechanism to prevent further rejection. If these figures are representative of more adopted children, it is important that in school and through research that we hear their perspectives. These findings would also help to shed light on the similarities and differences between the experiences of pupils in care and adopted pupils.

13 adoptionuk (2014). Adopted Children's Experiences of School. https://www.adoptionuk.org/schoolresearchfindings.

The Priory Academy LSST
'Tell My Story' – A meaningful starting point for thinking about the profoundly different context that a pupil in care might come from.

Background

Relationships in the classroom and in school matter. They matter for many reasons, but crucially, learning is relational and it takes place through the interactions pupils have with their peers and adults in their school.[14] Within those interactions are the personal stories that pupils and their teachers bring with them to school each day. Therefore, school practitioners need to 'know' their pupils: their academic ability and potential, but also their interests and background. However, in the case of children and young people in care, there is sometimes a tension as to how much adults in school should know about a pupil's background and how much of that knowledge is openly acknowledged between pupils in care and staff. There is no universal answer to this tension. However, failing to address this tension in an individual school context can hinder more meaningful interactions, the

development of stronger relationships and, potentially, more effective learning. This is particularly concerning as children and young people in care have often lacked reciprocal and nurturing relationships with adults in their lives. There are safeguarding matters to be respected, including the wishes of the child or young person as to what information is shared and with whom. However, proactive schools are finding creative ways to help practitioners in their settings to get to 'know' the pupils in care in their classrooms in order to more effectively support their learning and development.

This case study describes one way in which practitioners at The Priory Academy LSST, an 11–19 mixed school in Lincoln, using a range of strategies, got to know, in a meaningful way, the young people in care in their setting.

14 Rimm-Kaufman, S., & Sandilos, L. (2011). Improving students' relationships with teachers to provide essential supports for learning. Teacher's Modules. http://www.apa.org/education/k12/relationships.aspx.

What did the school do?

Recognising the importance of strong relationships at the heart of learning, the senior leadership team (SLT) at Priory implemented a range of strategies that initially sought to raise the profile of pupils in care, improve practitioners' knowledge and understanding of the backgrounds and profiles of pupils in care in the Academy and adapt classroom pedagogy as appropriate for each pupil.

The project included four key elements:

- **It began with a briefing to all staff about some of the more generic issues concerned with the education of pupils in care and the overall aims of the PALAC project in school. This was followed up with a questionnaire to all staff to rate their levels of knowledge and understanding and to suggest questions and topics for further training.**
- **The findings from this questionnaire were used to inform a CPD session for the teaching staff of pupils in care which included a 'Tell My Story' element for each pupil as well as guidance on how best to support pupils in care in the classroom.**
- **The 'stories' of each pupil were based on information elicited from an individual meeting to explore what they were happy to share with staff and how best they thought teachers might help them with their learning and development.**
- **Finally, an Induction Checklist was developed, in order that new pupils in care, who arrived during the school year, might be made known to the staff early. This was to help ensure a quicker and more effective transition during what can be a challenging time in the life of a child or young person in care.**

Outcomes for pupils and staff

The findings from the staff questionnaire after the initial briefing were very informative in highlighting the perspectives, concerns and interests of practitioners, which are not often elicited in this field. Practitioners were keen to find out:

- **Why were pupils in care?**
- **Were there any 'no-go' areas with regards to supporting pupils in care?**
- **What were the specific challenges faced by each pupil?**
- **Specific information to support individual pupils in the classroom.**
- **The level of support offered in the home environment and facilities available such as a computer and/or printer.**

As a result of these findings, a pupil profile entitled 'What you need to know about me' was devised with each pupil. Figure 2 shows the profile with anonymised extracts from different profiles which highlight the power and personalised nature of the document.

The individual profiles and feedback from the class teachers involved in the next CPD session showed very clearly how powerful and relevant the 'Tell My Story' element was for their practice. Eighty-eight per cent of the teachers described the 'Tell My Story' as the most useful CPD. Staff were overwhelmingly positive about the usefulness of this document and the young people were very happy to engage with this as they liked the fact that it gave them control over their personal information.

Figure 2: What you need to know about me

Below are some examples of feedback from the session:

Allowed me to know them as a child, not just a student – this aided my teaching more than any strategy.

Helps you understand the approach students want you to take with regards to their home life.

Makes the system feel much more than a check box exercise.

Student voice is always the best.

Interesting to know about future career aspirations.

Figure 3 presents the Induction Checklist that was devised after discussions with staff and pupils and includes sections on the information that needs to be requested about a pupil before they arrive, what teaching staff in the receiving school need to know, what happens on the first day at the new school for the pupil and then as follow up.

17

Name:	
Tutor group:	
P number:	
Start date:	

Mid-Year Transition Induction

Information to request prior to the student starting (Pastoral team to request):

Information:	Date requested:	Date received:
Student's academic targets and their most recent performance indicators (if applicable).		
The examination boards they are currently studying (if KS4-5).		
Their educational file (including a request for their electronic file via secure access) and their child protection file.		
Any SEND information (if applicable).		
Is the student disadvantaged, service, EAL, post-LAC?		
Any behaviour plans or PSPs.		
Their current attendance (and historic attendance if relevant).		
If the student is a LAC then request a copy of their ePEP (or PEP). A meeting with the student, their carer and their social worker is advised.		

Information to send to staff prior to the student starting:

Information:	✔
Their academic targets and their current performance indicators (including any SEND information).	
Their ePEP targets (if applicable).	
Any information which staff should be aware of – pastoral or academic. Highlight to staff who their Form Tutor is and any other relevant link member of staff	
Their start date.	
Data team to update electronic form for LCC for mid-year starters.	

To be organised before the student starts:

To do:	✔
Timetable	
Inform data team and send home a 'Student data form' which needs to be completed and returned asap – PGJ will set the student up on SIMS and ask IT to create their IT profile. The user account information will be sent to PGJ who will then send it to the relevant HOY.	
Organise a buddy for them to meet them at break and lunch (if there has not been time to prepare a timetable then select a student for them to shadow for the day).	
If possible ring home to make contact and provide an opportunity for any question	

Figure 3: Induction Checklist

First-day induction:

Information:	✔
Meet the student (and their parents/carers if they would like) in main reception and start with a tour of the Academy and its grounds. If their timetable is available try to show them where their classrooms are, their form room, where their HOY's office is and Student Reception. Talk them through the procedures at break and lunch and show them where their year group court and garden is.	
Provide them with maps if necessary.	
Issue them with a daybook and talk them through the key sections. Provide them with their homework timetable.	
Talk them through the 'Use of IT' agreement in the daybook and outline to them expectations in terms of using phones, social media and the academy IT systems. Ensure they sign the agreement and ask FT to check in a few days whether or not parents/carers have signed it.	
Go through how to log-on to a computer and the printing system (their printing codes will have been sent to them in an email). Talk through Citrix and Sharepoint.	
If it is possible, introduce them to their Form Tutor and any other member of staff they may be linked to, e.g. pastoral mentor, Student Welfare Coordinator.	
Provide them with a House badge and briefly introduce the House system.	
Take them to Student Reception to have their photograph taken for SIMS.	
Take them to the Library and organise their profile with the librarian so they are set up on their system.	
If they need to store any medicine at main reception or they have complex medical issues then show them where the medication is kept and introduce them to the first aid team.	
Work with them on producing 'Tell my story' if applicable.	
Talk them through the fire evacuation procedures and the safeguarding procedures.	
Provide them with information on extra-curricular activities for that module.	
Issue them with a Priory Passport	

After the student has started:

To do:	Date:
Meet with the student and conduct a student voice.	
Contact parents/carers with an update on their start and how they are settling.	

Please keep this document in the front of the student's file.

Implications for practice and research

The Priory Academy LSST case study shows how short, thoughtful and well structured CPD sessions, incorporating genuine involvement of school practitioners and pupils can have a very potent and immediate effect on educators and their practice.

The power of the 'Tell My Story' session is due to the fact that the pupils, through the profiles and the designated teacher, were able to bring their biographies 'to the table' which gave more insight into who the young people actually were and therefore greater confidence and motivation on the part of class teachers in supporting their learning. The 'Tell My Story' document has been developed to include the PEP targets so that the staff (and the students) are aware of what is being set. 'Tell My story' has become a live document which is updated after every PEP meeting and/or if something changes in the young person's life.

Research is emerging that conceptualises teacher-pupil classroom interactions[15] in detail, and that includes frameworks for observing interactions and guidance for strengthening those interactions. Such evidence is helpful to practitioners in order to better articulate what can sometimes be a generalised or instinctive understanding. Further research into how these interactions can be strengthened for pupils in care, based on, for example, learning from this case study would help to foster more inclusive classrooms and reduce the need for individual support that creates just another difference between a pupil in care and their peers.

15 Pianta, R. C., Hamre, B. K., & Allen, J. P. (2012). Teacher–student relationships and engagement: Conceptualizing, measuring, and improving the capacity of classroom interactions. In Handbook of research on student engagement (pp. 365–386). Springer US.

St George's Academy
Getting to know you

Background

The importance of supporting pupil wellbeing is now well established in schools in England.[16] However, wellbeing is a complex, multidimensional concept and our understanding of what is meant by wellbeing and how practice in school can contribute to pupil wellbeing is less understood but evidence is emerging.[17] Currently, the National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE) defines wellbeing as comprising three elements:

- **Emotional wellbeing – being happy and confident, not anxious or depressed.**
- **Psychological wellbeing – being autonomous, problem-solving, managing emotions, feeling empathy, being resilient and attentive.**
- **Social wellbeing – forming good relationships with others, behavioural problems are absent.[18]**

Findings from systematic reviews in relation to practice demonstrate the need for universal school approaches as well as targeted and personalised responses for those pupils who at some point in their school life may require additional support.[19] Central to wellbeing is the importance of encouraging children and young people to feel a sense of connectedness in school and ensuring that their views contribute to practice at all levels.

The Bright Spots Programme[20] was set up to listen specifically to the perspectives of children and young people in care in relation to their wellbeing and to explore the similarities and differences with their peers not in care. As part of the programme, the Bright Spots Wellbeing Indicators framework was developed with a focus on four domains: relationships; resilience building (including the need for a trusted adult); rights and recovery. The framework has helped to expand our thinking on what is meant by wellbeing and practice to support wellbeing for pupils in care with strong relationships at the heart of practice. But what is meant by 'strong relationships' and what might that look like in a school setting? A recent Australian study of pupil and teacher perspectives on wellbeing found that what pupils needed most from their relationships was *recognition.*[21] They needed to be known personally and recognition was demonstrated by being cared for, respected and valued.

This case study describes one way in which the adults at St George's Academy, an 11–18 secondary school in Sleaford, Lincolnshire started their journey to get to know, in a deeper and more meaningful way, the thirteen pupils in care in their setting. The project was led by Tracey Dickinson, the Family Support Manager.

16 Public Health England (2015). Promoting children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/414908/Final_EHWB_draft_20_03_15.pdf.
17 Thomas, N., Graham, A., Powell, M. A., & Fitzgerald, R. (2016). Conceptualisations of children's wellbeing at school: The contribution of recognition theory. Childhood, 23(4), 506–520.
18 NICE (2013). Social and emotional wellbeing for children and young people. https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/lgb12/resources/social-and-emotional-wellbeing-for-children-and-young-people-pdf-60521143067845.
19 Selwyn, J. & Briheim-Crookall, L. (2016). A whole school framework for emotional well-being and mental health. https://www.ncb.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/attachment/NCB%20School%20Well%20Being%20Framework%20Leaders%20Resources%20FINAL.pdf.
20 Professor Julie Selwyn and Linda Briheim-Crookall (2017). OUR LIVES OUR CARE Looked after children's views on their well-being http://www.coramvoice.org.uk/sites/default/files/FULL%20REPORT.pdf.
21 Thomas, N., Graham, A., Powell, M. A., & Fitzgerald, R. (2016). Conceptualisations of children's wellbeing at school: The contribution of recognition theory. Childhood, 23(4), 506–520.

What did the school do?

The project began with an e-survey to staff to accurately establish levels of knowledge and understanding of the care system including, for example, the existence and purpose of a PEP, the challenges faced by pupils in care and how schools might support better outcomes. Initial findings from the survey highlighted gaps in knowledge about children and young people in care generally and that the staff wanted to know more about the pupils in care in their setting and what they could specifically do in lessons to support them academically and with their wellbeing. As a result, Tracey met with all the pupils in care to write a Personal Profile which they agreed could be shared with staff. Sections on the profile included:

- **What people like and admire about me**
- **What's important to me**
- **How best to support me.**

To address the gaps in staff knowledge about children in care more generally a brief 'Q & A' guide was written by Tracey with contributions from the pupils. The guide included national data about the number of children and young people in care, the reasons they come into care and academic attainment. The young people contributed two sections: 'what we find hard' and 'things that help'.

i. What we find hard:
- **We find it difficult when people ask about home or parents**
- **Shouting can bring back stress and anxiety from our abuse**
- **Students saying that our family don't want us**
- **Shame for what our family has done**
- **Rejection**
- **When we feel things are not fair: we have experienced this often**
- **Trusting adults: we have been let down by most of them**
- **Not being believed**
- **Other people deciding what will happen in our life**
- **Not seeing my family**
- **If people get 'in our face' we can end up being disrespectful and possibly aggressive and we don't want that at school.**

ii. Things that help:
- **Leaving me alone for a few minutes to calm down if I am stressed**
- **Standing outside of the class for a few minutes really helps at times**
- **We will only talk if we want to so don't think we are rude**
- **Someone asking us if we need help in a lesson**
- **Having a good sense of humour with us brings out the best.**

In the medium to long term, findings from the survey would also be used to inform the whole school CPD programme.

What were the outcomes for pupils and staff?

Although the purpose of the Pupil Profiles was to help staff to develop stronger and more meaningful relationships with the pupils in care, another less anticipated outcome was how much the pupils reported enjoying writing their profiles. In many respects, the process of completing the profile meant that the young people felt valued for who they were as individuals. It was also interesting to find out what was important to the pupils as highlighted above.

Implications for practice and research

The 2014 Health Behaviour of School Children survey[22] found that children and young people in care were more positive about their school than were children in the general population. This is an encouraging finding and supports similar positive attitudes to school found in the Bright Spots OUR LIVES OUR CARE survey. However, both surveys found that positive attitudes to school declined in the secondary age group. Many young people come into care in their teenage years and therefore further research is required as to how to support wellbeing and connectedness in schools for this particularly vulnerable group of pupils in care. This case study from St Gerorge's presents one way to encourage a greater sense of connectedness in school for pupils in care.

22 Brooks, F., Magnusson, J., Klemera, E., Chester, K., Spencer, N., & Smeeton, N. (2015) HBSC England National Report 2014. University of Hertfordshire; Hatfield, UK. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282857316_HBSC_England_National_Report-2015.

Welton St Mary's Church of England Primary Academy
An innovative approach to improving reading attainment and engagement

Background

Literacy outcomes for pupils in care remain a very real cause for concern and there is a dearth of research into the impact of literacy interventions for this group of pupils. Where research findings are available there has been some limited evidence for impact of certain literacy interventions such as 'Paired Reading'[23] 'Catch Up Literacy',[24] 'Letterbox Club',[25] 'TextNow'[26] and 'ARROW';[27] but further work remains to be done. One question that is far from answered, both from a practice and research perspective, is to what extent, if any, does an effective reading intervention for pupils in care differ to that used with any other pupil? In other words, what additional factors might practitioners and researchers need to take account of when designing reading programmes? Emerging indicators from these studies and from various PALAC reading projects as to what these additional factors might be would appear to include a knowledge, understanding and sensitivity on behalf of the adult around the potential impact of care on learning for pupils, the importance of the relationship between the adult and pupil developed as part of the reading intervention and how personalising the reading experience can result in more enriching reading experiences.

Welton St Mary's Church of England Primary Academy is a larger than average primary school to the north of Lincoln. Christine Flintham, Deputy Headteacher and SENCo, wanted to investigate and implement a reading intervention for five pupils in care that would result in improved attitudes to reading and increases in reading attainment and achievement. After reviewing the evidence, Christine decided on an intervention that combined paired reading with the philosophy of the Letterbox Club approach. Paired Reading[28] is a method that typically involves a skilled reader (peer, carer, parent, or practitioner) and a child who is learning to read, reading a book together. Paired reading can be used with any book, taking turns reading by sentence, paragraph, page or chapter. Each paired reading session includes a series of activities that the reading partners can engage in. Across the United Kingdom, local authorities and schools can enrol children from nursery to year 7 for the Letterbox Club. Each child receives their own colourful parcel of books, maths games, stationery and other high quality materials once every month for six months, from May to October.[29]

23 Osborne, C., Alfano, J., & Winn, T. (2010). Paired reading as a literacy intervention for foster children. Adoption & Fostering, 34(4), 17–26.
24 Holmes, W., Lawes, J., Reid, D., Dowker, A., & Walker, S. (2011). Catch Up Literacy: an intervention for struggling readers. Thetford: Catch Up. www.catchup.org/interventions/literacy.php.
25 Winter, K., Connolly, P., Bell, I., & Ferguson, J. (2011). Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Letterbox Club in Improving Educational Outcomes among Children aged 7–11 Years in Foster Care in Northern Ireland. Belfast: Centre for Effective Education, Queen's University. https://www.booktrust.org.uk/.../our-programmes/letterbox-club.
26 Adams, M. (2014) Outcomes of TextNow at LAC sites 2008-14. Norwich: Unitas (mimeograph). www.unitas.uk.net/textnow.
27 ARROW tuition: https://www.arrowtuition.co.uk.
28 Topping, K. J., & Lindsay, G.A. (1992) 'Paired reading: a review of the literature', Research Papers in Education, 7, 3, 199-246.
29 Letterbox Club: https://www.booktrust.org.uk/supporting-you/practitioners/our-programmes/letterbox-club/how-to-sign-up/.

What the school did

Five pupils in care, ranging from year 1 to year 5, took part in the programme. The year 5 pupil was paired with a peer and the remaining pupils with a Teaching Assistant who was known to them. Once permission had been gained from carers, each pupil completed a questionnaire to identify their reading interests in order to tailor a personalised reading list that built on their interests but also extended their reading experiences in terms of genre and level of difficulty (Figure 4).

> *Current reading book:*
> *What is your favourite book and why?*
> *What other books have you enjoyed reading before?*
> *What films do you like watching?*
> *What films would you like to see?*
> *What do you like to do in holidays /on weekends?*
> *Do you really like anything in particular?*
> *Can you remember any presents you got for Christmas/ birthday that you really liked?*
> *What do you want to be when you are older?*
> *Have you ever been to a library (other than the school one)?*

Figure 4: Pupil Questionnaire

Books were bought using Pupil Premium for each pupil and each book was sent each month, gift wrapped and with a personalised letter (Table 1). The children then brought this book into school for their paired reading sessions which took place a minimum of three times a week for fifteen to twenty minutes.

Table 1: List of books chosen for pupils

	Y1	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y5
1	One cheeky monkey	Rhino's great big itch	Dotty detective	Stick dog	Bear Grylls adventures – the blizzard challenge
2	Muddy paws	Shark's big surprise	Monty sad puppy	Flying Fergus	Frankie's magic football
3	Esme the emerald fairy	Plane's royal rescue	Darcey dolphin	Bear Grylls adventures – the blizzard challenge	Mr Stink
4	Oola the owl	All aboard the dinosaur express	The magic finger	George's marvellous medicine	Build your own story – rogue city
5	Spike's best nest	I'm Special I'm me	Marge is in charge	Pirate Blunderbeard	Person controller
6	The tiniest mermaid	The Lion and the mouse and other stories	Eve's magic bracelet	Build your own story – rogue city	Star Wars – the force awakens

Christine prepared a detailed guide for staff on how to deliver a paired reading approach and what to consider in each session (Figure 5).

Paired reading - 2 weeks per book

Y1 pupils and picture books

When they bring in the book please make a fuss of it and ask questions like

When did it come?

Did you open the parcel?

What did the letter say?

Have you had a look at it?

Has anyone read it to you?

Sessions 1 and 2

Read the book to them

Ask them to predict what happens next at points

Ask them questions about the pictures

Ask them which bits they liked best

Session 3

Ask them to retell the story (NOT READ) while you are turning over the pages

Sessions 4 and 5

Ask the child to read the book along with you at the same time

Make sure you use your finger to show what you are reading

Session 6 +

Ask the child to read the book

Let the child read the words – if they pause count (in your head) to 7 before saying anything then

-if it is a word that can be sounded out encourage them to say it

-if it is a High Frequency word they should know tell them they should know it and have a go

-if it is a long word or irregular word they can't sound out - just tell them the word.

Ask them if they liked this book and what they liked about it

A new book will come. When this is getting near talk about what they would like the next book to be about.

Paired reading -2 weeks per book

Y2/3 pupils and books

When they bring in the book please make a fuss of it and ask questions like

When did it come?

Did you open the parcel?

What did the letter say?

Have you had a look at it?

Has anyone read it to you?

Sessions 1 and 2

Read the first chapters to them

Ask them to predict what happens next at points

Ask them questions about the characters

Ask them which bits they liked best

Sessions 3 4 and 5

Ask them to read alternate paragraphs or pages

So you read a page/paragraph and then they read a page/paragraph

Ask them to predict what happens next at points

Ask them questions about the characters

Ask them which bits they liked best

Session 6 +

Ask the child to read the final chapters to you

When they finish the book ask them if they liked this book and what they liked about it

A new book will come. When this is getting near talk about what they would like the next book to be about.

WHEN A CHILD IS READING

Let the child read the words- if they pause count (in your head) to 7 before saying anything then

-if it is a word that can be sounded out encourage them to say it

-if it is a High Frequency word they should know tell them they should know it and have a go

-if it is a long word or irregular word they can't sound out - just tell them the word.

Figure 5 – Paired Reading Guide

In order to measure progress, pupils' reading levels were assessed at the start of the programme and the pupils and staff were asked to feedback on the programme after completion. The programme itself lasted for 12 weeks.

Outcomes for pupils and staff

The programme resulted in positive outcomes for pupils and staff including increased reading levels, improved attitudes to reading, strengthened relationships between staff and pupils and professional and personally rewarding experiences for TAs. The structure and relationships developed during the programme encouraged the pupils to become more confident in their reading and gradually all of the pupils read more complex books and extended their reading habits to include fiction and nonfiction. The pupils were very excited about owning the books, with bringing them into school for the paired reading sessions and general conversation with staff. They reported really enjoying the sessions and wanting the programme to extend into the next year. The TAs were equally enthused by the programme as the paired reading guide provided the right amount of support to feel confident to lead the sessions effectively in order to make the most of time spent with the pupils. The progress made by the pupils, the eagerness demonstrated by them for the sessions and with speaking about the books to the TAs outside of the sessions meant that all of the TAs, as well as the pupils, wanted to continue with the programme the next year. Carer feedback included:

'Very beneficial. It has made him feel so special to receive the books in the post addressed to him. He always said he loved the projects and it has led to him being exposed to appropriate reading which has improved his reading, writing and language'.

'Vocab improved dramatically! Able to take time to read together and lots of fun'.

'Has loved the surprise of getting a new book so has waited in eager anticipation of what will come through the letter box next. She has loved to share her books and has requested to read to me more regularly, wanted to show others what she is reading and has requested to go to bed early for extra reading'.

As the approach was so well received the school has extended the project to post looked after children and other children in receipt of PP.

Implications for practice and research

The literacy PALAC project at Welton St Mary's was successful for a number of reasons which include:

- **The selection of thoughtful, personalised but gradually more challenging reading books for each pupils**
- **The personalised element continued with letters to all pupils sent home with each book**
- **Careful matching of TAs with pupils**
- **Detailed guidance on how to deliver effective paired reading approaches**
- **Pupils having ownership of the books and bridging the literacy learning across home and school.**

It is just one example of how to more effectively spend Pupil Premium and, in addition, it was clear that pupils and staff who took part all enjoyed the activity and felt some level of personal reward. A project of this nature does require a 'champion' and sufficient time allocated to the choice, purchasing and the regular sending of books home along with the paired reading time but the rewards are self-evident.

To date, the emerging evidence for the impact of paired reading and the Letterbox Club as distinct activities is mixed. The reading activity developed at Welton St Mary's was an example of an innovative, evidence-informed approach based on our current knowledge and understanding of the potential benefits for pupils in care of the principles and theory that underpin the paired reading method and the Letterbox Club. The case study highlights the rich possibilities that either, or a combined approach, offer for further research.

Woodlands Academy
Making PEPs personal

Background
No one enjoys paperwork and in a worst case scenario, the personal education plan (PEP) can feel like a paper exercise for professionals, devoid of real meaning and impact. OFSTED in 2016 reported that the quality of PEPs, from inspections across England, were found to be inconsistent in nearly half of local authorities, with PEPs not up to date, lacking in SMART targets and in ambition on behalf of the children and young people in care.[30] However, the same report also documented the important contribution of the VS to improved outcomes for children in care since their introduction in 2008. Nevertheless, there still remains research to be conducted in schools as to how to better support the PEP process, particularly perhaps for those colleagues who are not the DT and therefore have less understanding of the role and importance of PEPs for pupil progress and outcomes. One possible approach, as taken in this case study, is to make explicit the link between how a PEP and review meeting can contribute to pupil wellbeing, including a sense of self.

Many of us as adults will have kept in our attics (or our parents' attics) our school reports. As time passes, they become a record of and testament to a major part of our childhood and youth. For children and young people in care and especially those who experience many placements and/or school moves, having ready access to this 'memory box' is less likely. However, the PEP, held centrally by the VS, has the very real potential to become more than a plan with targets but a meaningful opportunity to 'listen to children, record their hopes and worries and clearly show their stated aspirations' and in doing so act as a form of 'collective memory' of each child's education.[31] Many care leavers report experiencing difficulties with a sense of identity as adults, partly as a result of their experiences growing up but also complicated by the fact that they often have little that is tangible, such as, for example, objects, reports and photos from their past.

Not only can PEPs contribute to future wellbeing, but the PEP and the meeting with a pupil can contribute to wellbeing on every occasion that they are completed. As described in the St George's Academy case study, children and young people seek 'recognition' from their relationships and the PEP provides a unique opportunity to demonstrate that recognition and to show the child or teenager that they are cared for, respected and valued. If viewed in this context, it is not too difficult to imagine the immediate and long term impact for a pupil's wellbeing of a rushed and bureaucratic PEP experience. This case study presents an account of how Phil Vickers, the Assistant Headteacher at Woodlands Academy, a specialist school in Spilsby, Lincolnshire led a project to bring meaning back to the PEP process.

What did the school do?
Before the PALAC project began, the teaching staff at Woodlands had received training in attachment, but the SLT were unclear as to how far learning from the

---

30 OFSTED (2016) The report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2016. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/574464/Ofsted_social_care_annual_report_2016.pdf.

31 Department for Education (2011). The introduction of personal education plans for looked after children. https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/looked-after-children-0.

training was being applied in the classroom and around the school. In order to build on this learning, the PALAC project began with a staff questionnaire to gauge current levels of knowledge and understanding and the extent of implementation to assist with next steps for professional learning. However, the main element of the PALAC project, in recognition of the importance and contribution of strong relationships to wellbeing, was to review the PEP process, with building relationships and pupil wellbeing placed at the heart of the activity. The SLT scheduled a termly meeting timetable for tutors, not the DT, to lead and meet with pupils to review the PEP. The main focus of the meeting was to listen to the pupil about their experiences and aspirations, before writing together targets that were meaningful and relevant.

Outcomes for pupils and staff

The changes to the PEP process resulted in two principal benefits for staff. Firstly, more teaching staff became involved in the activity and developed a more informed and meaningful understanding of the lives of the pupils in their class but also the care system more generally. Secondly, by allocating tutors additional time, they were afforded the opportunity to look back at the histories of the young people in order to gain a fresh perspective about their lives, along with the increased time in the meeting spent listening to the pupils. For pupils, the additional time to talk meant that they had the chance to think more carefully and widely about their aspirations and the sort of targets that would enable them to make progress towards outcomes that mattered to them. This in turn helped the pupils to feel more valued as individuals. The PEP process at Woodlands Academy was moving away from a predominantly paper based exercise to one that had more meaning and reward for pupils and staff.

Implications for practice and research

The PEP project at Woodlands is just one example of how schools can support the education of pupils in care with little additional expertise, expense or time. If relationships and recognition are integral to wellbeing and development, we need to consider opportunities strategically across the school year, as well as from day to day, to demonstrate (openly and obliquely) how important and valued the young person is within the school community. The PEP process is perhaps the most obvious opportunity but there are many others. Some schools, for example, in the PALAC project have introduced a 'Pledge' to pupils in care to include opportunities for work experience, residential trips and tutoring. Many children and young people in care can articulate clearly their aspirations and the corresponding support needed. For others, this is a skill that needs time and space to develop and stands a much better chance of happening if the pupil believes that the PEP process is valued by the school.

PEPs are one of the least researched areas within the field. Longitudinal studies that investigated and tracked the relationship between PEPs and pupil outcomes would be a complex study but one that would provide empirical data on a process that is predominantly based on theoretical and practical foundations. In the short term, greater understanding and guidance on writing SMART targets would help to strengthen the process.

Lincolnshire Early Years Service
Identifying and supporting children in care in the early years with communication and language development

Background

Children who suffer trauma at a very early age are at significant risk of delays in their development including their language skills, cognitive skills and social and emotional skills. A study of 55 preschool children who had suffered maltreatment identified 91% as having a significant developmental delay in one area and/or a significant behavioural difficulty, while two-thirds had both a developmental delay and a behavioral difficulty.[32] Acquiring strong early language levels is essential as it is well established that language skills are one of the strongest predictors of educational success.[33] Moreover, without support, research has shown that children who enter school with poorly developed speech and language are at risk of literacy difficulties and educational underachievement in primary and secondary school.[34]

Almost three-quarters of children in England who enter the care system do so because of abuse and/or neglect and are therefore at risk of language delay. However, there is currently little empirical data on the prevalence of language difficulties for children who enter foster care in the early years and how best to address their language needs. One recent Australian study of 82 primary aged school pupils showed that the cohort performed significantly below the normative mean on tests assessing language and social skills. However, the limited research available on language support for children in care, indicates that being placed in care does promote the likelihood of a language-rich environment that was reduced or absent before care[35].

Concerns about the extent of communication and language delays for children in care and the implications for development if not addressed, led to the Early Years team in Lincolnshire piloting a programme that screened children for communication and language difficulties and implement an early intervention programme for children identified as requiring further language support. This case study describes how members of the Early Years team including Rachael Brian, Sarah Lawford, Sally Pursey and Amy Walkey worked to ensure that more children in care in the early years were prevented from falling behind with their language development.

32 McDonald, J. L., Milne, S., Knight, J., & Webster, V. (2013). Developmental and behavioural characteristics of children enrolled in a child protection pre-school. Journal of paediatrics and child health, 49(2).

33 Roulstone, S., Law, James, Rush, Robert, Clegg, J., & Peters, Tim (2011). Investigating the role of language in children's early educational outcomes. Project Report. UK Department of Education, Bristol. http://eresearch.qmu.ac.uk/2484/1/DFE-RR134.pdf.

34 Dockrell, J. E., Lindsay, G., & Palikara, O. (2011). Explaining the academic achievement at school leaving for pupils with a history of language impairment: Previous academic achievement and literacy skills. Child language teaching and therapy, 27(2), 223–237.

35 Byrne, Nicole, Lyddiard, Tania & Furniss, Rachel (2017). Considering the impact of maltreatment on children in Out of Home Care when providing speech language pathology intervention: case examples. Speech, Language and Hearing, DOI: 10.1080/2050571X.2017.1338847.

What did the Early Years team do?

Based on a review of the evidence, the team adopted the WellComm Speech and Language Toolkit for Screening and Intervention in the Early Years.[36] WellComm is specifically designed for children from six months up to six years old. WellComm bands children into one of three categories; red means extra support is needed along with a referral to a specialist, amber means extra support and intervention is recommended, and green means no intervention is currently required. After screening, if a child needs further support, suggestions for fun, play-based activities from the Big Book of Ideas linked to the toolkit are recommended to move a child forward.

The pilot programme took place between May and December 2016 and during that time the team screened 33 children in care (Female = 15, Male = 18), aged two to four who attended private, voluntary or independent nurseries. (Children in school nurseries were supported by the speech therapy Specialist Teaching team.) Once the results of the screening assessment were analysed, 22 children were identified for

further support by the team and visited once a term over the course of the project. During these visits, progress was reassessed, the next steps were identified, including support activities from the Big Book of Ideas and shared with the setting, carers and the Virtual School.

What were the outcomes for children and staff?

The results of the initial screening showed that 30 of the 33 children (91%) experienced some degree of difficulty either with language expression, understanding or both (Table 2). Almost half the children experienced difficulties with both the expression and understanding of language.

Although a large percentage of the children remained in care for the length of the project they were still below the expected level of attainment on completion of the project. However, 50% of children made at least the expected rate of progress and 40% made accelerated progress, thereby narrowing their attainment gap (Table 3).

As a result of the pilot programme, the relationship between the team and

Table 2: Language difficulties experienced by the children

	Area of Concern %			
	Expression	**Understanding**	**Both**	**Neither**
2–3 years	10.5	42	37	10.5
3+ years	22	25	44	8
Total	18	31	42	9

36 WellComm Speech and Language Toolkit for Screening and Intervention in the Early Years. https://www.gl-assessment.co.uk/case-studies/wellcomm-helping-under-5s-talk-to-learn-at-south-staffordshire-children-s-centres/.

Table 3: Progress made with language

No. of children who remained in care for the duration of the project		Baseline Attainment			Post Project Attainment			Expected Rate of Progress		
		Below	At	Above	Below	At	Above	Below	At	Above
Male	6	5	1	0	5	1		0	2	4
Female	4	3	1	0	3	1		1	3	0
Total	**10**	**8**	**2**	**0**	**8**	**2**		**1**	**5**	**4**
		80%	20%		80%	20%		10%	50%	40%

practitioners in the various early years settings was strengthened and the practitioners generally saw the pilot as a supportive process. The advice was seen as relevant and suitable for the children and many appreciated the suggestions from the Big Book of Ideas. From the perspective of the Early Years team, there was a general consensus that the programme was making a difference by raising the communication and language needs of children in care and by improving practice to support stronger language development.

Implications for practice and research

Findings from this case study and the wider evidence of the developmental effects of neglect and abuse, show that the gap in communication and language development between children in care and their peers can develop very early and quickly in a child's life. Therefore, the importance of early screening and additional support if necessary is very clear. One of the strengths of the approach used by the Early Years team was the formative nature of the screening tool used which helped to advise the practitioners about the level of support required and examples of some possible

approaches. Using a specific screening tool for communication and language was also observed to be more sensitive than the Early Years assessment framework, with specific gaps in skills and concepts identified, which meant that more pupils at risk of poorer communication and language development were identified.

Although research is emerging to show the extent of communication and language difficulties for children in the early years and in primary school, even less is known about the levels for secondary aged pupils. Bearing in mind the impact of abuse and neglect for development, it is not unreasonable to assume that teenagers entering care, who may have experienced years of maltreatment, will be at risk of impaired levels of communication and language. This will and does have implications for the academic school curriculum, as well as social and emotional development and wellbeing. Therefore, further research that identifies accurate levels of language and communication skills for all phases of education would help to illuminate the extent of any difficulties and help to ensure more accurate and targeted support.

Conclusion

To conclude, the participants in the PALAC programme implemented a variety of changes in their schools at pupil, practitioner and school levels. At the pupil level, changes included, for example, improvements in literacy, language and GCSE results. At practitioner and school levels, some of the participants used the PALAC programme as a springboard in their school to raise the profile of the needs of children in care through, for example, whole school professional learning. One of the aims of the PALAC programme is to continue to support developments in practice after the programme has ended through ongoing review of the audit and action plan. The schools in this PALAC programme have continued with their focus on the education of children and young people in care and in doing so are ensuring that they are helped to reach their potential and simultaneously contribute to an emerging evidence base for current practice.

Promoting the Achievement of Looked After Children (PALAC) is a knowledge exchange programme that aims to support the development of practice in schools and to expand the evidence base to ultimately improve outcomes for children in care.

For further information on the programme please contact:

Centre for Inclusive Education
UCL Institute of Education
Bedford Way
London
WC1H 0AL