

Improving Educational Outcomes for Children Living in Foster Care

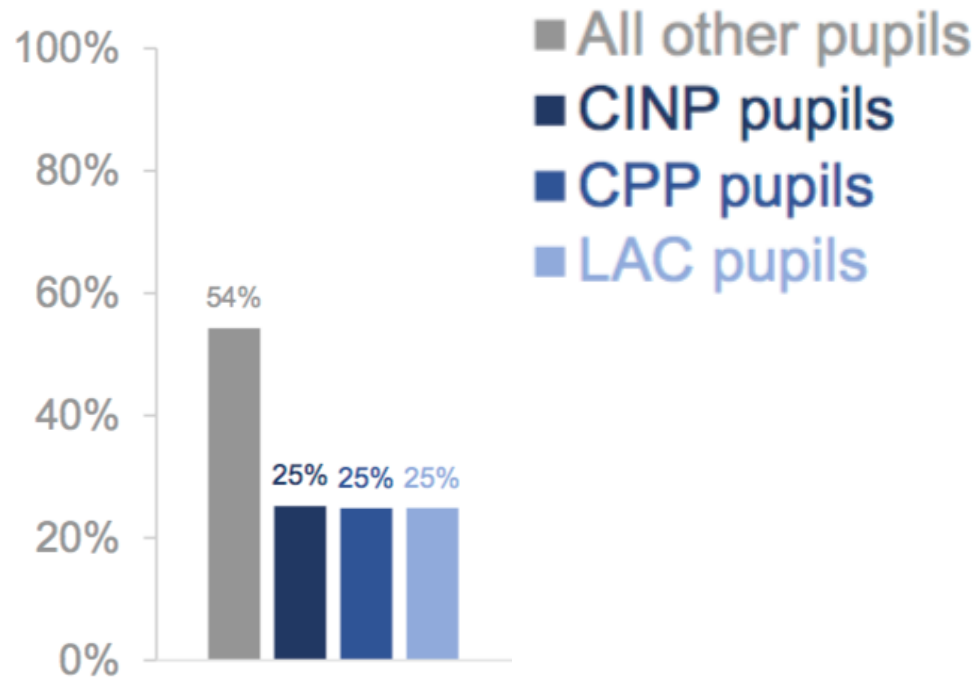


David Berridge and Nikki Luke

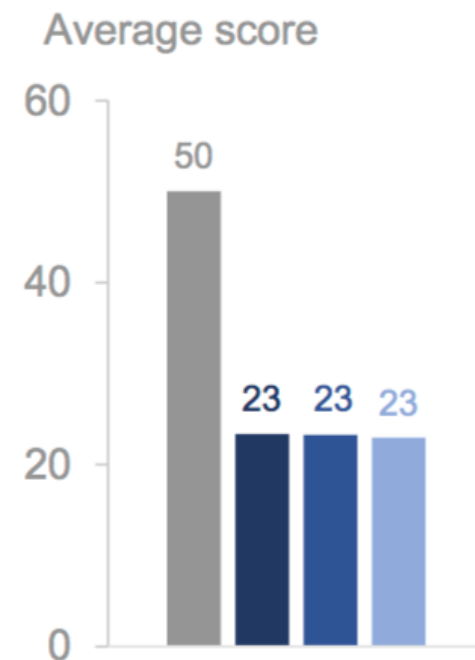
The Fostering Network conference, Bridgwater, 20th March 2019

Care and education

- Annual reports show a gap in educational attainment between children in care or in need and other children



KS2: pupils reaching expected levels in reading, writing and maths, 2015/16



KS4: average Attainment 8 score, 2015/16

[Source: DfE, 2018](#)

Care and education

To think about today:

- Children in care are over-represented in terms of disadvantage (e.g. special educational needs, early poverty)
 - What kind of support is needed to address this?
- What are the factors contributing to educational outcomes?
 - Which of these can foster carers influence?
 - How can carers and other professionals work together to improve educational outcomes?

Messages from three projects

1. Education of looked after children (finished 2015)
2. Education of children in need and children in care (current)
3. London Fostering Achievement (finished 2016)



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Research in Fostering and Education
University of Oxford Department of Education



Project 1: The Educational Progress of Looked After Children in England: Linking Care and Educational Data



Funded by
The Nuffield Foundation

Project leads: Judy Sebba and David Berridge

Education of looked after children

- Linked national data sets on the education and care experiences of looked after children in English schools Year 11 (age 16) in 2013
- Interviewed 26 young people (high- and lower- progress) in six local authorities and with their carers, teachers, social workers and Virtual School staff

<http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk/research/educational-progress-of-looked-after-children/>



Education of looked after children

- Rees Centre/University of Bristol study, funded by The Nuffield Foundation
- Linked national data sets on the education and care experiences of looked after children in English schools Year 11 (age 16) in 2013
- Interviewed 26 young people (high- and lower-progress) in six local authorities and with their carers, teachers, social workers and Virtual School staff



The Educational Progress of
Looked After Children in England:
Linking Care and Educational Data

Judy Sebba, David Berridge, Nikki Luke, John Fletcher, Karen Bell,
Steve Strand, Sally Thomas, Ian Sinclair, Aislin O'Higgins

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Factors related to poorer progress KS2-KS4

- Characteristics:
 - gender, certain special educational needs (ASD, MLD, SMLD), disability as reason for entry to care, higher scores on the SDQ
- Care experiences:
 - placement changes during secondary school, shorter placement, living in residential care during exams
- School experiences:
 - school changes in Year 10 or 11, exclusions, unauthorised absences, non-mainstream schooling during exams
- Factors can interact:
 - emotional and behavioural issues as reflected by the SDQ scores may underlie difficulties BUT adult responses to this are at least as important (e.g. school exclusions)

Key messages from Project 1

- Each young person in care has a different set of characteristics and experiences that might affect their education
 - So support should take account of these individual differences
- When placement moves are essential, school moves should be avoided especially in the final years of schooling
- Interviews with young people showed overwhelming view that becoming looked after had positive effects educationally and overall
- Teachers wanted development in social, emotional and mental health issues; social workers wanted more knowledge of education system

Project 2: The Educational Attainment and Progress of Children in Need and Children in Care



Funded by
The Nuffield Foundation

David Berridge, Nikki Luke, Louise McGrath-Lone and Eleanor Staples

Education of children in need and children in care

- Builds on our previous project
- New project aims:
 - To show how journeys through education differ for children and young people with different experiences at home
 - To find out what factors are common amongst children who succeed in their educational attainments despite severe early adversity
 - To gather perspectives on the overall factors affecting educational progress, e.g. family resources, educational and social work support



Education of children in need and children in care

- Linking national data sets on the education and care/in need experiences of children in English schools from Year 1 in 2006/7 to Year 11 in 2016/17
- Interviews with young people, parents and carers, teachers, social workers and Virtual School staff

<http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk/research/education/educational-attainment-and-progress-of-children-in-need-and-children-in-care/>



Database work

- Prospective view:
 - education data from Year 1 to Year 11
 - social care data matched from birth
 - allows us to map journeys for different groups
- Key groups of interest:
 - children who enter and leave the care system
 - those who stay in care or in need
 - those who achieve ‘permanence’ e.g. through adoption
 - those who never receive social care input
- What the databases can’t tell us:
 - Whether these factors are ‘important’ to young people
 - How the statistics are reflected in young people’s experiences
 - Day-to-day experiences with social care and education

Key messages (so far!) from Project 2

- Interviews with 30 children in care and 30 children in need and their social workers, carers and teachers
- Work in 6 agencies, one of which is Somerset. Some early issues from foster carer interviews:
 - Foster carers' high level of commitment
 - School/teachers' response variable
 - Social worker response equally variable
 - Trying to avoid CAMHS and other appointments during the school day?
 - Children's friendships/peers?

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Project 3: Evaluation of the London Fostering Achievement programme



**Funded by the
Greater London Authority**

**Judy Sebba, Nikki Luke, Alun Rees, Gillian Plumridge, Luke Rodgers, Khatija
Hafesji and Clare Rowsome-Smith (Oxford)**

Samantha McDermid and Helen Trivedi (Loughborough)

London Fostering Achievement

Four components:

- **Generic Foster Carer Training:** one-day session – 1265 foster carers, social workers, teachers, etc. from across London
- **Masterclasses:** Over 400 people attended one of four half-day training classes exploring one area, e.g. attachment
- **Direct work with schools:** Children in care in 25 schools were targeted for raising achievement
- **Education Champions:** Ten experienced foster carers were employed part-time to work with foster carers on supporting educational needs

Key messages from Project 3

- Generic training was well received – having a mix of people (e.g. foster carers, teachers, social workers) enabled them to better understand each other's roles
- Some carers challenged the schools' allocation of 'Pupil Premium Plus' as a direct result of the Programme
- The Education Champions had most impact, providing foster carers with information, direct support and increased confidence in talking to other professionals, and led to improved support or specific provision in some cases

Key questions for today (and after...)

- What can you do to help improve children's educational outcomes?
- Whose point of view do you need to understand?
And who needs to understand yours?
- How can messages from the research help you to use PEPs and Pupil Premium Plus?

