Improving the Education of Looked After Children:

A Guide for Local Authorities and Service Providers

The Scottish Government

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CONTENTS

MINISTERIAL FOREWORD

The publication of this document signifies the completion of the Scottish Government-funded programme of local authority pilot initiatives aimed at improving the educational attainment of looked after children and young people. In order to achieve the best outcomes for our looked after children and young people and care leavers we need to ensure that the right sorts of support, guidance and educational stimulation are available at the appropriate age and stage of their lives; from early years through to further and higher education. The pilot initiatives and the national research have helped to identify professional practice that can make a real difference to our looked after children and young people.

The pilot initiatives were varied in size, design and focus. However, they have been innovative and aspirational (and in some cases inspirational) in their desire to improve the educational attainment and achievement of the children and young people that they supported. The final report emanating from the national research highlighted a number of important findings. This guide offers practical suggestions in relation to addressing and taking forward the key research findings. The guide covers four main areas:

- raising the profile of looked after children and young people
- monitoring educational outcomes
- advice on setting up and running a project and
- focusing on achievement and aspiration

If we are genuinely committed to improving outcomes of our looked after children and young people and care leavers, it is essential that we all understand them better. We need to be aspirational and ambitious in our approach; an approach based on sound research and practice evidence which is under pinned by robust monitoring and management systems.

The programme of local authority pilot initiatives represents a significant achievement by everyone involved. From colleagues in the pilot local authorities and their partner agencies, the research team from the University of Strathclyde and Scottish Government officials to the children and young people and their families who have contributed so much to the overall success of the programme. Their commitment, support, co-operation and their willingness to work in partnership is greatly appreciated. It is a great example of what we can do better to improve the life outcomes of some of Scotland's most vulnerable children and young people.

The programme of pilot initiatives may have come to an end but the work to improve the outcomes of Scotland's looked after children and young people and care leavers has not. The Scottish Government is committed to improving outcomes for our looked after children and young people and care leavers and will continue to work in partnership with local authorities and other relevant stakeholders to achieve this goal. There is no room for complacency. This guide builds on and reinforces the good work which has been taking place across Scotland in recent years and sits comfortably alongside *These Are Our Bairns,* the *We Can and Must Do Better Training Materials,* the *Core Tasks for Designated Managers* and the other resources that we have available. The challenge to us all is to embed all of these consistently into policy, practice and service development and delivery across Scotland. Our looked after children and young people and care leavers deserve no less.
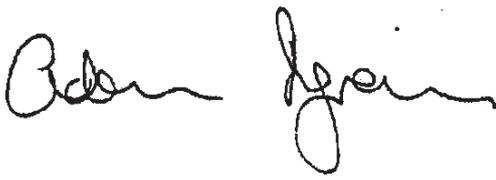
ADAM INGRAM MSP
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INTRODUCTION

Background

This guide for practice booklet is based on the key findings of the national research of Scottish Government-funded pilot projects in 18 Scottish local authorities carried out by the University of Strathclyde between 2006 and 2008 (Connelly *et al.,* 2008). The research and this practice guide were commissioned by the Education Analytical Services Division of the Scottish Government on behalf of the Care and Justice Division. Both outputs are part of a suite of research, policy and practice materials which have been produced as part of a wider commitment to tackle low attainment and poor outcomes among Scotland's looked after children and young people and care leavers.

The full research report and a separate summary of the research highlights are available on the Scottish Government Social Research website (see details at the end of this document). The research report includes summaries of each of the 18 pilot projects included in the study. Links to the full range of outputs for use in planning services and developing related professional development can be found at the Looked After Children website.

An important aim of the research process was a commitment to frame the key findings in a way that would be helpful to professionals in local authorities and other service providers who have opportunities to influence positively the educational attainment and achievement of looked after children and young people and care leavers. This practice guide has been written as part of that commitment.

Who is this booklet aimed at?

The suggestions for practice in this booklet have been written for everyone involved in being a 'corporate parent' for looked after children, young people and care leavers. These include key service managers in local authorities and other service providers, designated managers in schools and residential establishments, educational psychologists, teachers, social workers, residential care workers and foster carers. Although the booklet is aimed at practitioners working directly with looked after children and young people, some of the advice will be useful to others in the corporate parent family involved in planning and monitoring services, providing and analysing data, and supporting employment, training and post-school education. The guide focuses on four particular aspects of practice and includes cross-references to relevant policy and practice resources, details of which are listed in the list of key resources at the end of this booklet. The four areas of practice are as follows:

- Raising the profile of looked after children and young people within local authorities and other service providers

- Monitoring the educational outcomes of looked after children and young people

- Advice on setting up and running a project with the aim of raising the educational attainment and achievement of looked after children and young people

- Focusing on achievement and aspiration

1.0 / RAISING THE PROFILE OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

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KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

- Practitioners interviewed had a general desire to increase achievement, while providing support for young people, their parents and carers, and schools. They also emphasised the importance of stability and a sense of normality for looked after children and young people, as the basis of achievement in education.

- Parents and carers derived immense support indirectly from interventions designed to improve the achievement of their children. They also indicated that involvement in pilot activities had made a positive impact on the self-esteem and confidence of their children.

- Good communication between agencies and professionals involved in the pilots was associated with success. The high quality links that were created, particularly between the schools and social work, were seen as one of the important long-term outcomes of the project.

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An important by-product of the pilot projects was the opportunity to raise awareness within the local authorities and their partners about the need to give particular attention to the education and attainment of looked after children and young people. The research confirmed the generally poor educational outcomes of looked after children although it also highlighted the positive effects which can be achieved when young people have high engagement with study-related cultural and sport activities.

> *"One young person who was bottom of her maths class is now top. Another moved from Access 3 maths to general Standard Grade in nine months. Another who was in a foundation English class received a '2' for her third year work. One young person who had nothing in the English folio now has three or four pieces, which is a miracle for him, and he's excited about that and behaving in class because he's succeeding academically."*

(Co-ordinator of Education Support Team)

Suggestions for practice

- All those who work with looked after children and young people should be familiar with the national guidance on being a good 'corporate parent' provided in *These Are Our Bairns* (Scottish Government, 2008a).

- Good corporate parents know exactly which children and young people are looked after. Schools, in particular, need to be aware that they have particular responsibilities to **all** looked after children and young people, including those looked after at home. An explanation of the legal distinction between being looked after **at home** and **away from home** (sometimes referred to as being accommodated) is provided in A Brief Summary of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995: Looked After Children (Scottish Government, 2008b) which can be downloaded from the Looked After Children website.

- Practitioners should advocate to ensure that Single Outcome Agreements and Integrated Children's Services Plans encompass improving the educational experiences and outcomes of **all** looked after children (i.e. those looked after **at home**, as well as those looked after **away from home**).

- The Looked After Children website, maintained by Learning and Teaching Scotland, is a portal for accessing all relevant policy documents, good practice advice, information about events and continuing professional development opportunities, and it provides a forum for connecting practitioners.

- Designated managers in schools and residential establishments have a crucial role in helping to provide a stable environment as the basis for achievement. Advice for designated managers about the responsibilities of their role is outlined in *Core Tasks for Designated Managers in Educational and Residential Establishments* (The Scottish Government, 2008c).

- Children's panels and professionals involved in planning care placements need to be aware of the potential advantages for the families of children and young people looked after at home of support directly targeted at encouraging achievement and raising attainment.

- Students in teacher education institutions need to have opportunities to gain an awareness of looked after children and young people and their circumstances. Teachers, classroom assistants and other relevant school staff should be able to participate in continuing professional development about the support needs of pupils who are looked after.

- The *We Can and Must Do Better Training Materials,* contained in an interactive DVD-ROM designed for self-study and group sessions, are available to support training for a range of professionals with an interest in looked after children and young people. An information leaflet explaining how teachers and related professionals can help to improve the achievements of looked after children and young people, is available to download from the 'Guidance for Teachers' area of the General Teaching Council for Scotland website.

"I've sat in meetings with teachers and you can see that the teachers have no understanding of the child and if they don't understand the child the child picks up on that. It's the first thing the child picks up on."

(Foster Carer)

- *These Are Our Bairns* (The Scottish Government, 2008a) includes advice on the responsibilities of elected members (Section 4). Some local authorities have identified elected members and senior officers to act as 'champions' for looked after children and young people. It is important to provide information and training opportunities to support these roles.

- All service providers should evaluate their support for the education of looked after children and young people using both the high level questions in *A Guide to Evaluating Services for Children and Young People using Quality Indicators* (HMIE, 2006) and the more specific quality indicators in *Evaluating Education and Care Placements for Looked After Children and Young People* (HMIE, 2003), part of the *How good is our school?* series of self-evaluation guides.

"Promote a positive view of Looked After children and young people and care leavers, and help to raise public awareness about the care system."
(*These Are Our Bairns* (The Scottish Government (2008a), p.21)

2.0 / MONITORING THE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

- The research uncovered difficulties in collecting robust data about the outcomes of looked after children and young people. The data tracking systems of the pilot local authorities were found to be of variable quality, with missing information and errors being commonplace.

- Some projects underestimated the amount of negotiation and planning required to identify the young people and output information. Discrepancies were found between records for the same child held on different databases. Sometimes information was missing or incorrect.

- There were discrepancies in recording the attendance of looked after children and young people who were in part-time education or attending off-site projects.

The research with the pilot authorities highlighted recording errors, such as discrepancies between records for the same child held on separate social work and education databases within the same local authority, and incorrect attendance and attainment information. Sometimes the explanation appeared to lie in a failure to record information, particularly when a child had moved care and school placements. The tendency for looked after children and young people to become lost in the education system has also been noted in previous research, and solving this problem is crucial to helping them achieve in education.

"We quickly realised that a pupil can be attending on a very part-time basis – as little as two hours weekly – and their attendance is registered as 100 per cent. There is a school of thought that the pupil is attending to the best of their ability and 100 per cent is an appropriate figure, but it gives a very misleading impression of the amount of education this pupil is receiving, and the more worrying thing is that an undesirable minimum of attendance might easily go unnoticed by those who are not in direct contact with the pupil."

(Project Co-ordinator)

Suggestions for practice

- Schools can only put in place support systems if they know which pupils are looked after. There should be very clear arrangements within a local authority for informing schools when a pupil becomes looked after, or when a looked after child or young person joins the school. Similarly there should be arrangements for informing schools about changes in legal status, care placement, or discharge from care. Schools will normally receive information from the Children's Panel Reporter. (For more information about the children's hearing system, refer to the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration website.) Schools also need to have access to good advice from, for example, a social worker, educational psychologist and looked after children's nurse, so they can provide the most appropriate support.

- It is good practice for a liaison professional (often this will be a social worker) to inform the school's designated senior manager for looked after children and young people in person. In one pilot the social work database was amended to include a field to note the details of the school attended. This allowed the information to be sorted by school and for details to be provided monthly to relevant schools.

"The designated senior manager must know which pupils in their establishment are looked after and, in the same way as for all other pupils, maintain confidential files in relation to each of them [and] should act as the liaison person within the school for social work, education, local health services, and other relevant agencies."

(*Core Tasks for Designated Managers in Educational and Residential Establishments in Scotland* (The Scottish Government (2008c), p.8)

- It is important to distinguish between reporting and monitoring functions. Reporting means providing data about a cohort of looked after children and young people for the purposes of considering year-on-year progress, for instance against targets set out in Single Outcome Agreements and Integrated Children Services Plans. Monitoring means anticipating potential impacts on education of being looked after and providing effective support without undue delay.

- A robust electronic system for collecting accurate information about attendance, exclusion, school and placement moves, and attainment is essential so that local authorities and the Scottish Government can make accurate reports annually on the outcomes for looked after children and young people and care leavers. This is vital for reviewing progress nationally against the broad aim to narrow the gap in educational attainment between looked after children and young people and those not looked after.

- Accurate reporting is also vital for developing local policies, for deployment of resources, and for supporting the development of services to meet clearly identified needs and gaps.

- Specialist planning and statistics staff within local authorities and service providers should be involved in developing, managing and operating data systems.

- The educational progress of individual looked after children and young people should be monitored to ensure that there can be early intervention if difficulties arise, and to help in making a case for appropriate supports and resources.

- Effective monitoring can only happen if schools, carers and social workers develop good working relationships. The responsibility for monitoring the progress of a pupil who is looked after lies with the school's designated senior manager. This responsibility includes liaison with social work services in relation to educational aspects of the care plan and making arrangements for support within the school. Educational psychologists have particular expertise in conducting assessments and providing advice, and should be involved where appropriate in the monitoring process.

- Effective data management is important for generic reporting and monitoring purposes and also for evaluating specific projects aimed at improving the educational attainment and achievement of looked after children and young people (see Section 3).

"Although data is be used for the purposes of reporting outcomes at a local and national level, the primary reason for collecting and sharing data is to identify and meet the needs of individual looked after children and young people."

(Improving the educational outcomes of Scotland's looked after children: A new reporting framework (Scottish Government, 2009))

- The school's usual pupil support arrangements can be used, but experience indicates the value of having in place an effective system for regularly monitoring educational progress. For instance, one pilot local authority included the development of a monthly monitoring system in relation to their looked after children and young people. Each month school liaison groups discuss all looked after children and updated information is sent to a local joint action team. Where difficulties cannot be resolved a service manager can intervene.

- Schools may require additional support or guidance, e.g. from a link educational psychologist or social worker, to fulfil their obligations to co-operate in monitoring and reporting where the 'corporate parent' is another local authority (i.e. where a child or young person is placed with a foster carer who lives within the school's catchment area).

- Various studies have highlighted delays in the transfer of school reports when looked after children and young people move schools. Teachers have also complained about time wasted in unnecessary form-filling or repeating assessments. The responsibility for the transfer of records lies with designated senior managers. Good practice guidance indicates that this should happen within five working days (*Core Tasks for Designated Managers* (Scottish Government, 2008c), p.19).

- Schools should take particular care when recording the attendance of a pupil who is looked after. When a pupil is temporarily attending a specialist off-site project, the school where the pupil is enrolled retains the responsibility for recording attendance. Suitable arrangements should be in place to ensure that regular attendance information is provided to the school by the off-site project.

   "Local authorities and their partners can improve the effectiveness of the ways in which they assess and meet the needs of looked after children by… using strategic joint approaches to ensure that support methods are built on the best of practice and that the necessary resources are brought to bear on children's problems at the earliest possible stage."

   (*Count Us In: Improving the Education of Our Looked After Children* (HMIE, 2008), Appendix 1)

3.0 / SETTING UP A PROJECT TO RAISE THE ATTAINMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

- The very existence of a specific project about the achievement and educational attainment of looked after children and young people made a significant impact in terms of raising awareness among many professionals in the pilot authorities.

- Several projects experienced benefits related to inter-agency work and also working outside traditional professional boundaries. The motivation and passion of individual practitioners was frequently referred to by project leaders as having been crucial to the success of interventions.

- Organisational factors which improved the success of the projects included strong leadership, clear and achievable aims, detailed planning, interdisciplinary training, positive communication and good management. Factors which negatively affected projects included problems with data management systems, lack of clarity, difficulties in the recruitment and retention of staff, poor communication and problems emerging from the short term nature of the funding.

- The attitudes and values of project staff were found to be crucial in successful direct work with children and young people and their families. Staff who believed in the children they were working with, treated them with respect and had high expectations for them, were more able to engage children successfully in their education.

The pilot projects were very varied in aims and approach but could be characterised by five different types of intervention:

- educational support, typically in literacy and maths
- personal education planning
- support at key transition points, such as from nursery to primary and primary to secondary
- developing staff and parent/carer capacity and
- utilising computer-based approaches

All of the project leaders interviewed reported positive outcomes resulting from the various interventions, including increases in attendance, reduction in exclusions, re-engagement with education, as well as improvements in softer measures, such as increased confidence.

"I've spent a lot of time with his reading and homework and helping him and he's come a long way. His anxiety's gone... so it's been uphill with his learning, to really encourage and push him forward and showing him fun things."

(Parent)

Suggestions for practice

- There are clear advantages in setting up a project with the aim of encouraging achievement and higher attainment among looked after children and young people but to be successful a project needs to have a clear purpose, have achievable goals and identify success indicators. The project managers must also be clear how success will feed into mainstream practice.

- Senior management support is vital, particularly where the project involves staff from different departments. Consider having a project advisory group to oversee the work and receive progress reports. Don't underestimate the need for robust project management to ensure that the aims are met. There also need to be clear arrangements for data gathering.

- Give careful thought to the staff roles required and the importance of having project staff with appropriate values and attitudes. Staff should have high aspirations for and expectations of looked after children and young people. Consider the potential difficulties associated with recruitment and retention, particularly in relation to seconded staff and those on temporary contracts.

- Plan the evaluation strategy before beginning the project, and be clear about the kind of data to be analysed and the arrangements for its collection. Some of the pilot projects underestimated the amount of negotiation and planning required for the collection of data (see Section 2).

- Good evidence is vital in making a case for future resources and sustaining gains achieved in a project. In order to have robust evidence of progress, it is important to make arrangements to collect data at two points (baseline and outcome data) and to consider also how you will collect evidence of 'softer' indicators, for example, strengths and difficulties (using the SDQ[1] or similar instruments) and positive stories of life achievements.

- The accounts of previous or current projects are valuable resources at the planning stage. Useful sources include the summaries of the 18 pilot projects in Appendix 2 of the final research report (Connelly *et al.,* 2008), the report of a study commissioned by Durham County Council (White, 2007) and the Sharing Practice section of the Looked After Children website.

- Consider using the opportunities provided by the members' area of the website to engage in peer discussion about initial ideas for a project.

"Be aspirational for Looked After children any young people and care leavers, holding the same expectations good parents would have for their own children."

(*These Are Our Bairns* (The Scottish Government, 2008a), p.29)

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1 Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire. For information, see the Youth in Mind website: http://www.sdqinfo.com/

4.0 / FOCUSING ON ACHIEVEMENT AND ASPIRATION

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

- Looked after children and young people can improve in both school attendance and attainment in a relatively short period of time when provided with additional support and engaged in flexible and individually tailored activities.

- Children and young people who had high levels of engagement in the pilot activities made appreciably more progress in one year on reading and writing than others. This is very encouraging because it suggests that being involved in educational, cultural and sporting activity can make an impact on achievement and attainment.

- About 40% of the young people advanced by one 5-14 National Assessment level, much better than the average progress reported for all looked after children and similar to advances made by non-looked after children. Younger looked after children who had high levels of involvement in pilot activities in general made appreciably more progress in one year than the others in reading and writing.

- Tailoring support to suit an individual child or young person, being flexible, involving the young person in choosing the focus of learning, and providing a breadth of learning opportunities, appear to be effective strategies for improving the achievements of looked after children and young people.

- Giving children high but realistic expectations was seen as being very important, though this had to be done in a way that was not perceived as 'nagging'. Also very important was for professionals not to give up on children, even if they were initially reluctant to be engaged or who experienced problems during the project.

An illustration of the typically low educational attainment of looked after children and young people can be seen in the table below, taken from national data published in 2003. At Primary 3 stage it is expected that most children will have reached the first stage of assessment, i.e. Level A. While 95% of non-looked after children had reached this level, a smaller proportion of looked after children (89%) was found to have reached this stage. However, by Secondary 1 this gap has increased significantly from 70% of non-looked after children to only 31% of looked after children reaching Level D. This example reinforces the importance of continuing monitoring of educational attainment and of early intervention.

Stage	Level	Maths level achieved	
		Looked After Children (%)	Children not Looked After (%)
P 3	A or above	89	95
S 1	D or above	31	70

Source: www.scotland.gov.uk/stats/bulletins/00369-00.asp

The evidence from various studies is that looked after children and young people face significant cultural and institutional barriers which impede their success in education. Encouragement to achieve in a broader sense is more important than a narrow focus on educational attainment, however, there is research evidence showing that looked after children and young people with higher attainment have generally better life outcomes. The experience of the pilot projects shows that

providing targeted additional support can help to improve educational attainment and achievement substantially. Having high but realistic expectations, and providing support for the child or young person and the other significant people in the wider system around the child, were crucial factors for success.

"I'm quite thankful because if I wasn't at school I'd be a low-life, uneducated, delinquent and wouldn't be able to get a proper job... If I want something I take it seriously and I won't stop until I get it. I'm thinking about university or law school."

(Young Person involved in pilot project)

Suggestions for practice

- Concern for the development of looked after children and young people as individuals, is an important prerequisite for raising educational attainment and gaining national qualifications. In line with the *Looked After Children: We Can And Must Do Better* (Scottish Executive, 2007) report, all looked after children and young people need to have opportunities to become effective lifelong learners, develop into successful and responsible adults, be emotionally, mentally healthy, and feel safe and nurtured in a home setting.

- Support systems need to encompass both those children and young people looked after **at home** and those looked after **away from home**. Schools have not always been clear about their responsibilities to those looked after at home. This group is known to have the poorest outcomes and variable access to additional support systems.

- Schools and carers should collaborate to ensure that looked after children and young people are actively encouraged to participate in study-related, cultural and sport activities. A looked after child or young person's broader engagement in activities should feature in care planning and personal education planning, and non-involvement should be regarded as a matter of concern.

- The pilot projects that achieved some of the most dramatic successes had worked very hard to help young people identify their goals. The HMI report, *Count Us In: Improving the Education of Our Looked After Children* (HMIE, 2008), says that, wherever feasible, children should be given a voice in helping to identify and meet their needs. This is consistent with the standards of personal support in school which include the requirement that: "Children and young people should be involved in regularly reviewing their personal goals with a member of staff that knows the child well, and can discuss the child's or young person's progress with parents on a regular basis" (*Happy, safe and achieving their potential: A standard of support for children and young people in Scottish schools* (Scottish Executive, 2004), p.6).

- Several pilots devised or improved arrangements for personal education planning. Personal education plans help to present a more rounded view of the looked after child or young person's achievements by detailing broader achievements as well as academic attainments. They are useful in recording the young person's own aspirations and also in setting shorter-term targets, and specifying support arrangements. Plans should take into account supports available in the home environment (the '24 hour curriculum' approach). Looked after children and young people have the same rights to a good education as other children, and these include having a safe, secure, stable and educationally rich home environment.

- There are concerns about the poor mental health of many looked after children and young people. Educational psychologists and specialist looked after children nurses have an important role in providing advice and carrying out assessments (See *Core Tasks for Designated Managers in Educational and Residential Establishments* (The Scottish Government, 2008c)).

- Early intervention is vital where there is danger of a looked after child or young person falling behind in their education. It is particularly important to ensure that younger children make appropriate progress in reading, writing and maths competence, as well as in other aspects of their education. Studies of the records of looked after young people who have fallen behind in their education indicate that in most cases the signs should have been evident to professionals much sooner.

"Local authorities should carry out a full, multi-disciplinary assessment involving education and social work personnel, and others as appropriate around the time a child becomes looked after. This assessment should provide a baseline for future educational progress. Points for action should be identified in the care plan and placement agreement."

(*Learning with Care,* main recommendation 1, HMI/SWSG (2001))

- Carers can be encouraged, and supported, to provide additional help with reading. For example, one pilot included a storytelling and literacy element which achieved impressive results. Each children's house had a volunteer literacy co-ordinator and professional storytellers worked with staff to develop storytelling activities.

- Encouraging children's and young people's self belief can yield powerful results. For example, psychologist Tommy MacKay (2007) conducted a study of literacy with 365 children in eight primary schools and four nurseries. This involved the children making bold declarations about their future reading achievement. In a short period of time the children made gains in literacy skills and also changes in their beliefs about becoming good readers.

"Recognise and show pride in children and young people's achievements, build their confidence and defend them against unfair criticism."

(*These Are Our Bairns* (The Scottish Government (2008a), p.21)

- A number of the pilots involved using information technology/computer-based approaches. In two pilots this involved making provision, such as safe internet access and access to software used in schools, within residential child care establishments. One pilot felt this aspect was successful because it helped to sustain an educationally rich environment within residential establishments. Improving access to internet resources is an important indicator of equity for looked after children and young people.

- Corporate parent responsibilities include encouraging aspirations to attend college and university courses, and the provision of information about open days, summer schools and making applications. One pilot project provided work placements as part of a range of interventions designed to raise attainment. Placement supervisors were included as part of the wider support team around the young person.

- *These Are Our Bairns* (Section 14) highlights the important contribution to the corporate parenting role that can be made by local authority central services, such as finance and human resources, particularly in providing tangible support for looked after young people and care leavers who are continuing in education or entering employment. Examples of good practice from around Scotland can be found in the report, *Examples of Good Practice under Section 30 Children (Scotland) Act 1995,* Scottish Government (2008d).

"I will know I've made a difference when the educational outcomes for looked after children and young people and care leavers, in terms of attainment and achievement, are the same as those for their peers who are not looked after."

(*These Are Our Bairns* (The Scottish Government (2008a), p.40)

CONCLUSION

Children and young people who are looked after (both at home and away from home) need individually tailored support to get the best from their education. Providing appropriate support is an important function of the corporate parent responsibilities of local authorities and their service provider partners. The report, *Looked After Children & Young People: We Can and Must Do Better* (Scottish Executive, 2007) emphasises the need for agencies and professionals to work together. Failure to do so can result in poorer outcomes for looked after children and young people and care leavers.

There are two implications of this aspect of corporate parenting. The first is the importance of good communication between agencies and professionals, particularly between schools and social workers. The second implication is the need for all relevant professionals to be aware of the needs of all looked after children and to have access to appropriate continuing professional development. The role of the designated senior manager is crucial in implementing these aspects of the corporate parent responsibilities. We hope that this guide is a useful addition to the support materials available to service providers.

"We need extra support and help if we're struggling. Using activities that a person likes is the best way to educate them. I like drama and you could do all sorts of things connected to drama, like connecting to English. People find school really boring but people learn more when they are having fun... Talk to people, get to know what they're like. Get to know their strengths. You'll need to concentrate on their weaknesses, but don't push their weaknesses too much. School teachers could learn a lot from us kids, like we can learn a lot from them. If we work together, I believe we can both come to a conclusion."

(Young Person involved in pilot project)

KEY RESOURCES

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To order, see the Publications and Resources area of the Fostering Network website:
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Web sites

General Teaching Council for Scotland (see Publications, Guidance for Teachers, Looked After Children): http://www.gtcs.org.uk/

Looked after Children: http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/lookedafterchildren

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University of Strathclyde (books and articles about the education and wellbeing of looked after children and young people: http://www.strath.ac.uk/jhlibrary/sr/eyp/

Youth in Mind: http://www.sdqinfo.com/

Further information about social and policy research commissioned and published on behalf of the Scottish Government, can be viewed on the Internet at: http://www.scotland.gov.uk/socialresearch.

If you have any further queries about social research, please contact us at socialresearch@scotland.gsi.gov.uk or on 0131-244 7560.

The *Looked After Children & Young People: We Can and Must Do Better Training Materials,* an interactive DVD-ROM containing comprehensive materials and courses for both self-study and training are aimed at practitioners who work with looked after children and young people. For more information about the *We Can and Must Do Better Training Materials,* please send an email to lookedafterchildren2@scotland.gsi.gov.uk.