VULNERABLE CHILDREN

KNOWLEDGE REVIEW 1

Improving educational outcomes for looked after children and young people

Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services

The Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services (C4EO) identifies and coordinates local, regional and national evidence of 'what works', to create a single and comprehensive picture of effective practice in delivering children's services. Using this information, C4EO offers support to local authorities and their partners, working with them to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families.

It is focusing its work on nine themes:

• Early Years
• Disability
• Vulnerable (looked after) Children
• Child Poverty
• Safeguarding
• Schools and Communities
• Youth
• Families, Parents and Carers
• Early Intervention, Prevention and Integrated Delivery.

C4EO works with a consortium of leading national organisations: National Children's Bureau, National Foundation for Educational Research, Research in Practice and the Social Care Institute for Excellence.

The Centre is also supported by a number of strategic partners, including the Local Government Improvement and Development, the Family and Parenting Institute, the National Youth Agency and the Institute of Education.

There is close and ongoing cooperation with the Association of Directors of Children's Services, the LG Association, the NHS Confederation, the Children's Services Network, the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Ofsted.

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Improving educational outcomes for looked after children and young people

Isabelle Brodie
(University of Bedfordshire)

Data annexe written by Marian Morris
(National Foundation for Educational Research)

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Foreword

I am delighted to introduce this knowledge review. It is one of three reviews that aim to help all those working with and for children and young people to improve the life chances of vulnerable 'looked after' children. The Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services (C4EO) started its work on this theme in 2009, some time before the new Coalition Government was elected in May 2010. The review process we undertake in order to distil the very best learning and evidence from national literature and data, combined with effective local practice is cumulative, resulting in our full knowledge reviews. Policy priorities are currently being determined by the Coalition Government and we have amended the review in order to ensure that it reflects the current political context.

I am confident that the evidence of 'what works' contained in this review and in the other two reviews, with their clear and unremitting focus on improving outcomes for vulnerable children will help all those working with children and young people throughout the public, voluntary and private sectors.

Christine Davies CBE

Summary

This knowledge review tells us what works in improving educational outcomes for looked after children and young people (looked after children and young people). It is based on a rapid review of the research literature involving systematic searching, analysis of key data, validated local practice examples and views from people who use services and service providers. It summarises the best available evidence that will help service providers to improve services and, ultimately, outcomes for children, young people and their families.

Reviews on improving looked after children and young people's emotional and behavioural health and increasing the number of care leavers in safe, settled accommodation are also available on the C4EO website.

The University of Bedfordshire carried out this review on behalf of the Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services (C4EO). The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) conducted the data work.

Key messages

- A high proportion of children and young people see their entry into care as beneficial in relation to their education.

- This does not mean all care placements are helpful and the evidence suggests there is considerable unevenness in practice. Young people identify a high level of variation within individual journeys through the care system.

- There is growing evidence that initiatives such as virtual school heads (VSHs), personal education plans (PEPs) and designated teachers are having a positive effect on the experiences of looked after children and young people.

- The educational achievement of looked after children and young people interacts with many other elements of the care and educational systems. Improving educational outcomes will be linked with overall improvements in the quality of care that is delivered, and especially to children's emotional health and wellbeing.

- Improving educational outcomes should include focusing attention on all stages of a child's educational career, from early years through to support for further and higher education.

- There is a serious lack of evidence about the complex learning and behavioural needs of many looked after young people and the ways in which they do or do not benefit from recent policy and other initiatives.

- Measurement of educational outcomes of the looked after group is complex and improvements on the ground may not be reflected in local authority returns.

Who are the key stakeholders?

- looked after children and young people

- families and carers

- education-based staff: including teachers in different kinds of schools, tutors and designated teachers, pastoral support staff and special educational needs coordinators

- virtual school heads

- looked after children education services or teams

- social workers

- specialist front-line professionals

- policy-makers

Their contributions are valuable in the process of improvement

- Listening to the views of looked after children and young people, and being alert to their current experiences is central to improving educational achievement. Most looked after children have had difficult experiences that will require different forms of help if they are to achieve their potential. All adults responsible for – or working directly with – looked after children and young people will contribute to this.

- Foster, residential and kinship carers provide essential day-to-day emotional and practical support, which is pivotal to children's educational achievement.

- Managers, including VSHs, manage and coordinate policy and practice and act as champions for looked after children and young people's education. They will also monitor local trends and help develop understanding and knowledge among other professionals.

- Looked after children education services or teams play an increasingly important role in providing direct services such as tutoring, collecting data and providing advice and training to other front-line professionals such as designated teachers.

- Social workers coordinate care planning for looked after children and young people, including PEPs. This is a key role and carers report that the input of social workers in liaising with other professionals can be extremely valuable. On the other hand, shortages and changes of social worker is a frequent complaint and can result in social workers becoming somewhat marginal to the educational experience of looked after children and their carers.

- Specialist front-line professionals contribute in a number of ways in providing education support or access to additional educational opportunities, including music, sport and arts-based activities. These help build self-esteem and open up new interests and opportunities.

- Birth parents and families continue to play an important role in the lives of some looked after children and young people, including in relation to their education. There is a lack of research evidence, but feedback from parents emphasises their sense of exclusion from information about and discussion of their children's education.

- Policy-makers in government departments are engaged in introducing new policy and implementing and reviewing the effectiveness of existing policy. Their role has been crucial in heightening awareness of the educational needs of children and young people in care and in creating an infrastructure through which these needs can be met.

What data is available to inform the way forward?

The quality of national data on the number and stability of placements and some educational outcomes relating to looked after children and young people has improved and makes an important contribution. However, this data does not capture the more complex processes involved in working with looked after children and young, and the many different ways in which policy and practice is impacting on their educational experience and outcomes.

C4EO's interactive data site enables local authority managers to evaluate their current position in relation to a range of key national indicators and to easily access publicly available comparative data on disabled children.

The evidence base

The research base relating to the education of looked after children and young has increased considerably over the past decade. The quality of national data concerning looked after children's educational placements and outcomes has improved and there is a growing body of information regarding the impact of national and regional initiatives. However, there are weaknesses and there is a need for:

- more discussion of theoretical and conceptual frameworks
- more cross-disciplinary research
- more research involving schools and addressing learning processes of looked after children
- more research that differentiates the educational experience of different groups of looked after young people, and examines the effects of gender, ethnicity and disability
- research that examines the impact of specific interventions designed to improve educational outcomes for looked after young people
- research designs that involve a wider range of methodologies.

Other forms of feedback fromlooked after children and young , their carers and birth families, and other stakeholders are essential in building a more comprehensive picture.

Knowledge review methods

This knowledge review is the culmination of an extensive knowledge gathering process. It builds on a scoping study and research review, which are available on the C4EO website.

Research literature was identified through systematic searches of relevant databases and websites, recommendations from our Thematic Advisory Group, and considering studies cited in identified literature ('reference harvesting'). The review team used a 'best evidence' approach to systematically select literature of the greatest relevance and quality to include in the review. This approach attempts to eliminate bias in the selection of literature, to ensure that the review findings are as objective as possible.

Data contained within the data annexe was obtained by a combination of search methods but primarily by obtaining online access to known government publications and access to data published by the Office for National Statistics.

The knowledge review also contains four examples of local practice sent in from the sector, which have been assessed and validated by specialists in looked after children and young . The full versions of all of the practice examples contained within this review, and those published since the review was written, are available on the C4EO website at www.c4eo.org.uk.

Evidence has also been gathered by C4EO from service providers and people who use services. This has included: first, feedback from the C4EO parents and carers panel on the executive summary of the research review on improving looked after children and young 's educational outcomes; second, feedback from a consultation event with a group of four birth parents who have or have had children in care; third, feedback from a group of nine young people who were involved with two of Action for Children's looked after care projects; and finally, views from the seventy-nine delegates (mainly service providers) who attended discussion groups on looked after children's educational outcomes at the C4EO 'vulnerable children' knowledge workshops. People who use services and service providers are also contributors to many of the studies included within the review.

1. Introduction

This review aims to draw out the key 'what works?' messages on improving educational outcomes for looked after children and young people . It addresses three questions that were set by the C4EO Theme Advisory Group (TAG), a group of experts in vulnerable children policy, research and practice. These questions are:

- What do we know about the accessibility, acceptability and effectiveness of policies, services and interventions initiated by central, regional and local government and independent sector?

- What are looked after children and young people's views on what constitutes positive educational outcomes and how do they compare with those of policy-makers, children's services personnel and independent sector providers?

- What do we know about the contribution made to positive educational outcomes for looked after children and young people by the attitudes, skills and abilities of foster, residential, kinship carers, teachers and birth families and interventions to support this contribution?

Reviews on improvinglooked after children and young people 's emotional and behavioural health and increasing the number of care leavers in safe, settled accommodation are also available on the C4EO website. C4EO is also undertaking work on cost-effectiveness (which is outside the remit of these reviews). This will place a cost on the interventions and services that local authorities deliver to children young people and their families. The work includes the design of an outcomes-based model that can be applied to individual services. The model is being applied to a number of validated practice examples and work on this will be published from autumn 2010 onwards.

The reviews are based on:

- the best research evidence from the UK – and where relevant from abroad – on what works in improving services and outcomes for children and young people

- the best quantitative data with which to establish baselines and assess progress in improving outcomes

- the best validated local experience and practice on the strategies and interventions that have already proved to be the most powerful in helping services improve outcomes, and why this is so

- service user and provider views on 'what works?' in terms of improving services and outcomes.

C4EO will use the reviews to underpin the support it provides to local authorities and their partners to help them improve service delivery and, ultimately, outcomes for children and young people.

Definitions of key terms

The following definitions were agreed by the Theme Advisory Group (TAG).

Looked after children and young people

For the purposes of this review we have defined the following groups as 'looked after children and young people':

- under 25-year-olds who are or have been in medium- or long-term care (more than six months) – wherever they are placed (for example, residential care, foster care, a young offenders institution)

- under 25-year-olds who are or have been looked after for several short-term (up to six months) periods in local authority care (either under a care order, or on a voluntary basis)

- under 25-year-olds who have left or are preparing to leave medium-term or long-term local authority care.

In practice, the literature rarely specifies this level of detail, largely describing children as 'in care' or 'looked after'.

In recent years outcomes for looked after children have usually been measured or defined in relation to national indicators (see Data annexe). The relevant national indicators for looked after children and directly relating to education are:

- 99 – looked after children reaching Level 4 in English at Key Stage (KS) 2

- 100 – looked after children reaching Level 4 in mathematics at KS2

- 101 – looked after children achieving five A* to C GCSEs (or equivalent) at KS4 (including English and mathematics).

Accessibility, acceptability and effectiveness of interventions

'Accessibility of interventions' refers to how easy it is to access services or interventions. The effectiveness of interventions which are rarely available, or unattractive to people who use services, will be compromised if no one can – or wants to – use them.

'Acceptability of interventions' refers to how acceptable interventions are to the people and their carers who use services, and to other people (staff, for example) involved in delivering them. Accessibility and acceptability of some interventions may be affected by practicalities, such as lack of transport in rural areas, but also by cultural and attitudinal issues such as language barriers, stigma and other barriers or facilitators to participation.

'Effectiveness of interventions' refers to how effective interventions are (in a practice setting), usually assessed by measuring outcomes in various dimensions. For example, a service designed to help looked after children and young people achieve better educational outcomes might be assessed by direct long-term outcomes (such as number of GCSE passes), or by indirect shorter-term indicators (such as attendance at school).

Types of evidence used

The research included in this review was identified through systematic searching of key databases, reference harvesting or recommendations from the TAG. All research included has been appraised to ensure that the evidence presented is the most robust available.

The review also contains examples of local practice that have been gathered from the sector and assessed as having a positive impact on outcomes by specialists in the education of looked after children and young people (See Appendix 5 for C4EO's validated local practice assessment criteria). The full versions of all of the practice examples contained within this review, and those published since the review was written, are available on the C4EO website.

Evidence has also been gathered by C4EO from service providers and people who services. This has included: first, feedback from the C4EO parents and carers panel on the executive summary of the research review on improving educational outcomes for looked after children and young people ; second, feedback from a consultation event with a group of four birth parents who have or have had children in care; third, feedback from a group of nine young people who were involved with two of Action for Children's looked after care projects; and finally, the views of service providers attending the C4EO 'vulnerable children' knowledge workshops. People who use services and service providers are also contributors to many of the studies included within the review (see Appendix 6 for more details of the process).

Data contained within the data annexe was obtained by a combination of search methods but primarily by obtaining online access to known government publications and access to data published by the Office for National Statistics.

Strengths and limitations of the review

The strengths of the review include:

- identification of the best available evidence from research and national datasets to inform specific questions
- comprehensive and documented searching for relevant information
- an analysis of the quality and strength of evidence
- guidance from an advisory group on the issues of greatest importance in early childhood research, policy and practice.

Limitations of the review include:

- The review has been unable to extend the search criteria and does not incorporate literature relating to the care of looked after children and young people generally, which may be extremely important in understanding the educational experience of the looked after group.

- The very tight deadlines that the review had to meet, which limited the ability of the team to extend and develop the evidence base through reference harvesting and hand searching.

- The review was limited to English-speaking countries only.

- The feedback from people who use services that is included in this review is based on very small numbers and must therefore be treated with caution.

2. Context

Policy context

Policy relating to the educational achievement of looked after children and young people has developed rapidly over the past decade (SEU 2003). Concern was first generated by evidence demonstrating the low educational achievement of the looked after group (Jackson 1987). The introduction of national statistical collections from 1999 has shown that looked after children perform poorly in Key Stage tests and GCSE examinations in comparison with their peers. A disproportionate number of looked after children and young people also experience exclusion from school or time out of school for other reasons. Few progress to higher education. This level of achievement has serious implications for their future life opportunities (SEU 2003).

The low achievement of looked after children can be explained by: pre-care experiences that can create barriers to learning; experience of the care system, including movement between placements; and the school system, either because schools are not aware or do not understand that children are in care or are not taking appropriate action to help children progress at school (DCSF 2009a). Even taking these barriers into account, however, policy over the past decade has emphasised the need to appreciate the individuality of looked after children and young people and the need to focus on helping them achieve their individual potential. There has been a growing awareness of the needs of looked after children in school, also reflected in the inspection framework and admissions procedures.

Attention has increasingly been drawn to the relationship between social disadvantage and educational attainment. Recent analysis by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF 2009b) now the Department for Education (DfE) states that, while this link is by no means inevitable, a range of factors – from poor support for learning in the early years, to the approach taken by schools and external influences – continue to mean that disadvantaged pupils progress less well at school. The majority of looked after children come from backgrounds of extreme social disadvantage (Bebbington and Miles 1989; Packman and Hall 1998; Waterhouse and McGhee 2002; Winter and Connolly 2005). Reasons for entry to care typically involve family breakdown and abuse and neglect (DCSF 2009a). This thinking, together with a growing recognition of the importance of the home environment for early learning (Desforges with Abouchaar 2003; Coghlan *et al* 2009), has important implications for the development of support for looked after children and young peopletheir families and their carers. Ensuring that the home learning environment is positive and that carers and children have high aspirations towards educational achievement are important, but will need to be backed up by additional resources and appropriate teaching support (Goodman and Gregg 2010). Understanding of the relationship between disadvantage, entry into care and learning is also likely to develop further following changes to data analysis which mean statistics on children in care are now being linked to the national pupil database (see Data annexe). There is also a growing interest in the needs of children and young people who are in need and possibly on the verge of entry into care, and also in children living in kinship placements (Family Rights Group 2009).

The previous government introduced a series of legislative measures and other initiatives through which to address these issues, beginning with the Quality Protects initiative in 1998. In the 2000s, a series of objectives linked to performance targets were introduced; since then policy relating to the education of looked after children and young people has evolved to become more integrated with broader policies relating to children and families. Improving educational outcomes for this group therefore corresponds to 'enjoy and achieve', one of the five outcomes for all children defined in the *Children Act 2004* (England Wales. Statutes 2004). This framework also recognises the relationship between positive educational experiences and other aspects of wellbeing, including children's safety. The former government's ministerial stocktake of care in 2009, which focused on the Every Child Matters agenda for improvement, noted that progress had been made on this objective, but too much variation still existed in children's experience.

Increasingly, policy has also taken account of the educational needs of children and young people at different stages of their educational careers. Guidance relating to school admissions has ensured that looked after children and young people are prioritised in the allocation of school places. Consequently, changes in curricula and practice relating to young children, including the Early Years Foundation Stage, acknowledge looked after children as a group that may have additional needs. At the other end of the spectrum, legislation relating to care leavers recognises the importance of consistent support for looked after young people as they take exams and make the transition to further and higher education or employment.

Section 52 of the *Children Act 2004* (England and Wales Statutes 2004) placed a duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievements of looked after children. Under the *Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000* (GB. Statutes 2000) and the *Children and Young Persons Act 2008* (GB. Statutes 2008), local authorities also have a statutory obligation to provide support to young people formerly in care and to maintain their pathway plan up to the age of 25 if they are in full-time education.

In 2008, the previous government introduced proposals for the introduction of a new tier of professional support, the virtual school head, with responsibilities for tracking every child in care in a local authority and ensuring that appropriate provision is in place. This has since been evaluated and found to be a positive innovation (Berridge *et al* 2009). Local authorities were also given an allocation of funding to support the provision of personal education allowances to provide further support – for example, tutoring – according to a child's individual learning needs. Statutory guidance on the role of designated teachers has also been issued (DCSF 2009c).

Statutory guidance to local authorities on how they meet their duty to promote the educational achievement of looked after children was first published in 2005 and was reissued for England in 2010 (DCSF 2010a). This emphasises the responsibility of Directors of Children's Services and Lead Members to ensure that all looked after children and young people are able to access educational opportunities and reach their full potential. As with the previous guidance, this document explains the roles of the different individuals involved in supporting and monitoring children's education, including designated teachers, and the importance of an active personal education

plan. Promoting the educational welfare of looked after children and young people should include identification of and meeting individual learning needs and a 'robust' assessment of the child's learning style. Measures of success in discharging the duty to promote looked after children and young people 's educational achievement are that:

- looked after children and young people achieve educational outcomes comparable to their peers.
- Strategic planning and day-to-day processes robustly monitor educational progress and a culture of pro-active commitment.
- looked after children and young people are encouraged to have high expectations of themselves.
- Training, development and support is available for carers, schools and local authority staff.
- There are clear chains of accountability for discharging the duty to promote looked after children and young people's educational achievement.

3. The evidence base

This section provides an overview of the extent of the evidence base. The evidence base for this review consists of four main sources.

- A literature review updating the research review, including new references as suggested by the Theme Advisory Group (TAG).
- Validated local practice gathered from specialists working in the field of services for looked after children and young and assessed by an expert panel as having a positive impact on outcomes.
- Stakeholder views gathered through C4EO organised group discussions about key issues relating to improving educational outcomes for looked after children and young people and including the views of birth parents, carers and, separately, local services providers.
- Data from national datasets, including data from known government publications and data published by the Office for National Statistics.

The references suggested by the TAG and other new material identified by the reviewers was assessed for relevance and the resulting new references incorporated into the review. In total, 28 items were included in the literature review. This resulted in the following distribution of items:

- Three new items were included in answer to Review Question 1, making a total of 12 items.
- Three new items were included in answer to Review Question 2, making a total of 15 items
- No new items were included in answer to Review Question 3, leaving a total of 11 items.

Additionally, two new items were added to the discussion of policy context. The majority of research involved empirical studies using surveys, interviews and focus groups. Question 2 made considerable use of national consultations with young people. The inclusion of this type of work might be considered problematic, as the aim of such consultations is not primarily research. While recognising their methodological limitations – and in the absence of large-scale research with looked after young people – these consultations provide some valuable evidence.

This knowledge review therefore tries to synthesise material from a range of sources. This is important and valuable, but the advantages and disadvantages of the different kinds of evidence must be considered.

The experiences of children and young people, parents and carers and those providing services add much to our knowledge of what works in improving educational outcomes for looked after children and young people. In this knowledge review this kind of information is especially helpful where there are large gaps – for example in relation to the views of birth parents and families. However, it is important to remember that these views are drawn from group discussions and that these groups – especially parents and carers – often involved small numbers. Such

material must, therefore, be considered in the context of the evidence drawn from the research review. In respect of the findings incorporated in this knowledge review from people using services and service providers, it is important to stress that the feedback from focus groups and C4EO events complemented and reinforced the existing research messages.

The scoping and research reviews identified some important difficulties with the quality of the research evidence in answering the review questions. For example, the scoping study established that the majority of studies meeting the criteria for inclusion in the review were similar in research design. This absence of diversity in the research base means that the review cannot assess and compare findings generated through different kinds of methods.

The history of research into educational outcomes is also relatively short, first emerging in the late 1980s (Jackson 1987) and gathering pace during the 1990s (Goddard 2000). It continues to be a developing area of research and is weak in comparison with many other areas of educational and social research. There are also significant difficulties associated with undertaking research in this area. These problems include the small numbers of looked after children in most schools – making it difficult, for example, to find sufficiently large samples of teaching staff with experience of working with looked after students. The rapidly changing and often transient nature of the looked after population also makes the tracking of samples an extremely complex tasks.

The research review identified four areas of particular concern in the research base:

1.   Conceptual and theoretical issues

- The lack of cross-disciplinary research, for example studies drawing on research regarding processes of teaching and learning.
- The absence of explicit theoretical and conceptual frameworks through which to interpret findings.

2.   Research questions

- Research questions have tended to focus on the looked after element of children's experience, and have not tended to include consideration of issues of gender, ethnicity and special educational need.
- There is an absence of research examining children's schooling experience or that includes the views of teachers and other educational professionals.
- Birth families have been almost entirely excluded from research into the education oflooked after children and young people , despite other evidence highlighting the high proportion of looked after children and young people who return home.

3.   Research design and methodology

- An absence of research using comparative or experimental design.
- Few studies using longitudinal designs.

- A lack of methodological discussion, including the difficulties associated with this type of research.
- Samples drawn from a 'mixed' looked after population, with the result that numbers from any placement type are very small.

4.   Evaluative issues

- The emergence of many new initiatives and services during the past decade means that insufficient time has elapsed for the effects of these to be tracked through research and evaluation.
- Evaluation of large-scale policy initiatives, even in relation to their operation at local level, is complex and effects are difficult to attribute (Berridge *et al* 2008).
- The overall gap in evaluative evidence makes for an absence of reliable information about what constitutes 'good practice' in this area.

The inclusion of additional evidence from children and young people, service providers and other stakeholders including birth parents and families is therefore especially valuable in answering the knowledge review questions.

4. The accessibility, acceptability and effectiveness of policies, services and interventions

This section looks at what we know about the accessibility, acceptability and effectiveness of policies, services and interventions initiated by central, regional and local government and the independent sector. It is based on twelve studies, all of which are UK-based, validated practice examples and feedback from service providers. The scope of these studies is broad and evidence from them is also included in Sections 5 and 6 of the review.

Key messages

- Overall, evidence suggests that policy change and initiatives relating to the education of looked after children and young people have been effective in developing local policy and practice.

- The introduction of strategic roles, including the pilot virtual school heads (VSHs) and the building of cross-professional expertise, appear to have been effective in terms of improving the educational experience of children.

- Though managers and professionals report improved practice, making an impact on local authority statistics relating to looked after children and young people's achievement is more difficult.

- The quality of data collection has improved but requires ongoing monitoring.

- Research indicates that the use of personal education plans (PEPs) has been variable, but there is improvement in implementation of these and in children's participation.

- Service provider feedback highlights the importance of cross-authority collaboration.

- Existing evidence indicates that there is a useful role for additional, compensatory interventions that address prior disadvantage in learning.

- Projects involving direct work with young people, either through extra-curricular activities or school-related support, appear generally popular and sustainable.

As the section on policy has described, a wide-ranging set of initiatives, services and interventions has been introduced. This review has focused on research relating to policies, services and interventions targeted specifically at looked after children and young people. Research relating to vulnerable children more generally, including those on the verge of care, has therefore been excluded. It should be noted, however, that any and all policies or interventions aimed at improving standards of education generally and the achievements of disadvantaged children specifically, may have an impact on those in the care system.

It is important – given the scale of policy innovation in recent years – that some caution is exercised in relation to the gap between data collection, research publication and current practice (it is also important to note that studies were

excluded where data collection had taken place prior to 2000). That said, where studies have taken place consecutively it has been possible to consider the extent to which improvements have taken place across time. Information gathered through C4EO's validated practice assessment process and feedback from service providers helps supplement the research evidence in drawing attention to innovative practice that often reflects the good practice principles embedded in policy.

Validated local practice example

Holding the Space (The Kite, Sunderland)

This is an intensive therapeutic intervention aimed at young people living in residential care. Existing therapeutic services were finding it difficult to meet the serious emotional needs of this group and it was felt that a change in the culture of residential care was required.

Following a pilot, a two-year training course in advanced therapeutic skills for residential workers was developed. This ran over seven days in each term with additional training for whole staff teams. 'Holding the Space' has four components: a therapeutic group work method called 'the use of council'; Carl Rogers Core Conditions; the Creative Arts as Therapy; and Transpersonal Therapy. The training has resulted in visible change within the homes with improved relationships between staff and young people. Young people say they feel listened to and that they have better personal resources to deal with feelings of anger and sadness. External evaluation and inspection reports indicate that this approach to helping young people emotionally has had positive consequences for young people's education. Attendance levels are high and residential staff are good at encouraging and rewarding young people.

Policy and strategic intervention

Seven studies were identified that investigated policy initiatives or interventions at a local authority level. Harker *et al* (2004) and Dobel-Ober *et al* (2006) evaluated a regional initiative, Taking Care of Education, which took place in three English local authorities. Berridge *et al* (2008) examined the impact of the Quality Protects initiative. Berridge *et al* (2009) evaluated the VSH pilot in 11 pilot authorities. Fletcher-Campbell *et al* (2003) and Fletcher-Campbell and Archer (2003) examined school-based and other professional support for looked after children at school, and Hayden (2005) looked at the use of PEPs. Walker *et al* (2010) evaluated a pilot of budget-holding lead professionals (BHLPs) with looked after children in four local authorities, which included education.

Overall, the existing evidence concludes that the increased emphasis on the education of looked after children and young people has been effective in the following ways:

- Awareness of the importance of education has been increased across agencies and at all levels, resulting in the development of more and better procedures for practice.

- Greater political awareness – at elected members' level – is perceived as significant.

- National, regional and local government policy has been influential in developing expertise, including the introduction of specialised posts.

- Legislation such as the *Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000* (GB. Statutes 2000)has resulted in many more written procedures and protocols that have improved accountability and consistency in some areas of practice.

- There is indicative evidence that the impact of initiatives at all levels has been less for some groups of looked after children and young people, specifically those placed with relatives or those placed outside local authorities.

- It appears that, at local authority level, approaches to improving the educational achievement of looked after children and young people involves a combination of input from specialised teams and professionals, and the integration of looked after children within 'mainstream' educational provision.

- While national policy and new funding streams have helped energise local policy and practice, studies emphasise the ongoing challenges presented by structural issues such as shortages in social care staff.

- Alternative funding arrangements, such as BHLPs provide opportunities for new styles of working, but require shifts in organisational culture.

- The quality of pupil-level information available has improved, but is variable across local authorities.

- There is evidence that the overall level of practical support available to looked after children and young people in the form of books, computers, access to extra-curricular and leisure activities, has increased.

School-based interventions and educational support

Looked after children represent only a very small proportion of the population of most schools. Research involving schools emphasised that, for the most part, looked after children were either indistinguishable from the majority of the population, or that their needs were met through the usual learning and pastoral support routes (Fletcher-Campbell *et al* 2003; Dobel-Ober *et al* 2006). Although it is known that a high proportion of looked after children and young people have special educational needs (Berridge 2007) there is an unfortunate lack of evidence about this aspect of their schooling experience. There is an acknowledgement in all research studies that there is a small group of looked after children who will require more intensive and specialist educational support, such as that described in the validated practice example below.

Additionally, specific policy interventions relating to looked after children and young people in schools were considered. All schools should have a designated teacher,

who is expected to monitor the education of the looked after children, coordinate support for looked after children and ensure that each looked after student has a PEP. They should also act as advocate for looked after children in school and identify any problems or issues that may need addressing in respect to individual learning. The school's governing body should support the role by providing specific resources and ensuring that there is access to relevant training. Fletcher-Campbell and Archer (2003) report positively regarding the role of designated teachers, finding that this role was helpful in overseeing the progress of looked after children, undertaking liaison with carers and other agencies, advocacy, maintaining an overview of individual progress and monitoring the use of PEPs.

In further interviews with 30 designated teachers during the second phase of the same study (Dobel-Ober *et al* 2006), the research team expressed more concerns about the variability evident in the way the role was practised. Berridge *et al* (2009) suggest that practice is becoming more consistent over time and that understanding and awareness of the role of designated teachers has improved among schools, carers and children and young people. This was supported by C4EO's feedback from service providers, who supplied many examples of increased and improved designated teacher training, sometimes involving young people.

The use of private tutoring as an alternative means of educational support has also been encouraged over recent years. The evidence on this is limited to one study (Berridge *et al* 2009) and suggests that the ways in which this is implemented – for example, in terms of eligibility for taking part – varies. That said, local authorities thought it had been helpful and had resulted in some improved outcomes.

Validated local practice example

Mulberry Bush School

The Mulberry Bush is an independent, non-maintained therapeutic residential school providing education and care for up to 36 children aged five to 12 who have severe emotional and behavioural difficulties. Many, though not all, are looked after and have often had disrupted journeys through the care system.

 The school combines a therapeutic community model with aspects of psychodynamic, systemic and attachment theories. Pupils live in one of four residential group living care and treatment units. Education is delivered through the national curriculum in five small classes with high pupil-teacher ratios. Children typically present impulsive, unpredictable behaviour, difficulties in making and sustaining relationships and a history of serious schooling difficulties.

 External evaluation involving interviews with pupils, parent/carers and staff found a high level of consensus about the benefits of this residential intervention. All groups interviewed identified significant benefits including positive behaviour changes, the ability to deal with difficult feelings and to manage relationships. Educational improvements included a better ability to concentrate, stay in the classroom and cooperate with others.

Inter-professional working

The evidence supports the view that, overall, inter-professional awareness of the educational needs of looked after children has improved. C4EO's feedback from service providers supported this, and also indicated the growth of broader partnerships with other organisations, such as Aimhigher and local universities. Within local authorities, there is more communication and liaison, and professionals are more likely to know where to go for advice and information (Berridge *et al* 2008). There is also a growing interest in new models of professional expertise, such as the social pedagogy in children's residential care pilot programme, Young People from a Public Care Background: Pathways to Education in Europe (YiPPEE). The initial piloting of this approach in the UK appears to offer some promise and, in the context of this review, would exemplify a model of professional practice that recognises the role of education in both care and learning contexts.

The development of strategic roles at senior levels within local authorities has been identified as key to embedding good practice (Harker *et al* 2004; Berridge *et al* 2008; Berridge *et al* 2009). Evaluation of the new role of VSHs was positive; although the role is new it had contributed to consolidating policy and practice. While outcome statistics are not definitive as a measure of impact, the 11 authorities involved in the pilot compared well to the national average.

In addition to consolidating practice within local authorities, the role of VSHs is also valuable in coordinating practice across local authorities. Feedback from service providers who attended C4EO workshops indicates that the issue of educational support for looked after children and young people who are living outside their home authority continues to be challenging. Unfortunately, there is a lack of research evidence in this area. However, there is practice evidence of pan-authority agreements and the development of good practice – for example the use of pan-authority PEPs (London, East Midlands and Cleveland provided examples of this). Virtual schools are also seen as offering many opportunities to extend such practice.

There has been no systematic evaluation of looked after children's education support teams. Evidence suggests these vary in their service location, and in the range of professionals involved and services offered. Qualitative evidence suggests that the input from these teams is valued by professional colleagues – especially social workers – and by carers (Fletcher-Campbell *et al* 2003; Berridge *et al* 2009). There is some evidence that intervention by social work and other professionals may also be protective for children and young people who have especially difficult educational experiences, specifically permanent exclusion from school (Pritchard and Williams 2009).

Personal education plans

Evidence suggests that there is a gradual improvement in the accessibility and effectiveness of personal education plans (PEPs). More recent evidence (Berridge *et al* 2008, 2009) found that most young people had PEPs and were involved in developing them. Some caution should be exercised in relation to this finding, as it seems likely that use of the plans continues to be somewhat uneven in terms of

effective use, quality of content and the extent to which PEPs are perceived as useful by designated teachers (Harker *et al* 2004; Hayden 2005). O'Sullivan and Westerman (2007) drew attention to the problems associated with collecting sufficiently comprehensive information for the PEP. More recent feedback from service providers suggested that considerable efforts were being made across the country to improve practice. These included more rigorous auditing and 'traffic light' systems to help track progress and flag up difficulties. The latest guidance on the designated teacher role, aimed at governing bodies, emphasises that designated teachers should 'rigorously' monitor children's learning and be able to judge if teaching and learning strategies are effective, and if young people are likely to achieve their targets (DCSF 2009b).

Direct interventions with children and young people

In addition to policy-related interventions, a range of individual projects has been carried out with the aim of improving educational outcomes for looked after children and young people. Unfortunately, the majority of these have not been systematically evaluated and/or published. The lack of replication of these studies – and the small scale of the majority of this work – is problematic in terms of deriving general messages, as the interventions have not been tested in different contexts. It is not possible, therefore, to compare the relative effectiveness of these interventions.

This should not detract from the creative and wide-ranging manner of these interventions, many of which are thought to have a role in improving children's resilience, encouraging participation in a wide range of arts-based activities and providing support for school work through homework clubs. One such scheme that is being evaluated on an ongoing basis is the Letterbox Club (Griffiths *et al* 2008). This provides books, number games and stationery items to looked after children in Years 3 to 6. Children receive individual parcels through the post. Reading, maths and attitudinal tests were administered to participating children prior to receipt of the parcels, and then tested again after the six months during which parcels had been sent. A questionnaire survey of the children and carers (n=221) was also undertaken. The results from the evaluation have been encouraging, showing that the majority of the children involved enjoyed the parcels and made use of the materials. Progress in reading and maths was also either maintained or improved. Clearly this cannot be attributed solely to the Letterbox project, but highlights the value of additional resources and support.

Service providers, carers and children and young people frequently identify such activities and projects as having played a key role in raising aspiration, broadening experience and helping young people develop new relationships. Where studies included these projects, they were viewed positively by participants and seemed to result in a high level of engagement from young people and carers (Harker *et al* 2004; Dobel-Ober *et al* 2006; Berridge *et al* 2009).

5. Views on what constitutes positive educational outcomes

This section explores looked after children and young people's (looked after children and young people's) views on what constitutes positive educational outcomes and asks how they compare with those of policy-makers, children's services personnel and independent sector providers. It includes evidence drawn from research, local practice examples and a group of nine young people involved in Action for Children's Looked after Children projects, who took part in a podcasting workshop.

Key messages

- Positive educational outcomes are generally seen as encompassing experiences beyond the school gates and including participation in a variety of extra-curricular activities, including sports and the arts.

- Overall, children and young people viewed entry to care as having had a positive effect on their education, though experiences were uneven.

- Young people think that their current and past experience should be considered on an individual basis.

- Young people value recognition and celebration of their achievements. Their immediate peer group is central to young people's school experience.

- Emotional and social support is key to engagement with education, including relationships with birth families where this is in the child's best interests.

- Satisfaction with a placement, rather than the type of placement, is important in relation to educational progress.

- The differences in the views of young people concerning their educational experience highlight the importance of talking and listening directly with children and young people.

- The diversity of care and educational experiences present in the care population make 'representative' sampling difficult.

The screening process generated 17 studies in this category. Five of these studies contained a longitudinal element and tracked young people through longer periods of their journeys through the care system. These studies explored young people's views through qualitative methods, mainly interviews, but usually combined these with surveys, file searches, analysis of local authority data and interviews with key professionals. Sample size varied considerably.

Evidence is stronger regarding the experiences of teenagers than younger children in relation to their educational experience. The weight of this evidence also tends towards those in contact with social care services, for example, leaving care teams. There is also some bias towards those living in residential care, partly because generally more research about this population has taken place, and partly because samples are more accessible.

To this extent the inclusion of information based on consultation exercises is important, in that these may be more accessible – for example, via the internet – and may reach a slightly different group of children (A National Voice 2007; Morgan 2009a, 2009b, 2010). Review of the literature leads to the conclusion that the experiences of some children are absent from the literature. These include, for example, children who experience especially high levels of mobility and are, therefore, more easily lost from research samples (Berridge *et al* 2008) and those whose educational experiences are especially problematic, for example, those who have been excluded or have been out of school for long periods for other reasons. Children and young people with disabilities also tend not to be integrated into studies focusing on the care experience.

Analysis of these studies in relation to the review question is difficult, as the research has tended to be fairly general in its approach to children's educational experience and their perceptions of outcomes. Questions tend to focus on young people's school status and experience, for example, their experience of difficulties such as school exclusion. With exceptions (for example, Barn *et al* 2005), there is little discussion of the differential experiences of gender and ethnicity, the children's peer groups or indeed the nature of the classroom experience. C4EO's feedback from children and young people, and evidence from consultations (Morgan 2009a, 2009b, 2010) demonstrates that these issues are very important to young people's experience of school, and suggests that further exploration through research and practice initiatives is important.

The care experience

The care experience is, inevitably, an individual one. The research studies reviewed suggested that for most young people entry to care was considered to have been beneficial for their welfare, including their education (Jackson *et al* 2005; Morgan 2009a) and long-term outcomes (Pritchard and Williams 2009). This is a key message of the review.

This does not mean that children and young people's experience had been uniform throughout their time in care or that they did not have bad experiences. Bullying and violence, especially within residential establishments, was identified as a particular problem (Morgan 2007). Young people who participated in the Action for Children podcasting workshops further emphasised the variability of the experience and the need to treat young people as individuals. In response to the idea that most young people benefited educationally from their entry to care, comments ranged as follows:

'I think that's rubbish because I don't think it's really true. Not that high a proportion of people benefit from being in care. For most people I'd put it the other way round, literally opposite to that.'

'I don't know the proportions, but from my point of view it is beneficial. When I was at home we didn't have lots of resources, whereas now I have more opportunities.'

Young people defined positive educational outcomes in terms of a shift in their school experience – for example, going to school regularly, or getting on better with

teachers – or in relation to the encouragement they received from carers and teachers. Rewards for their achievements – for example, through reward ceremonies – were also highly valued as a marker of achievement (Harker *et al* 2004).

Active interest from carers and teachers

The evidence is clear that young people value individual support in relation to their education. It does not appear to matter who gives this support, though it is more likely to be found from carers and teachers than from social workers or other professionals. Peer groups are also very important. The input from social workers, in particular, tends to be seen as either irrelevant (owing to frequent changes or lack of contact with social workers) or related to procedural issues, such as personal education plans (PEPs) (Harker *et al* 2004).

Although access to resources such as computers is considered important by young people, emotional support features even more highly when young people rate barriers to learning or, equally, key factors of effective support (Jackson *et al* 2005; A National Voice 2007).

A weakness of studies involving young people is the failure to provide adequate information on the type of placements young people are living in, and the bearing this has on educational progress. Young people themselves recognise problems associated with some of the characteristics of certain placements.

Support involves:

- everyday interest in, and attention to, educational issues, such as homework
- a child-centred focus, ensuring that children and young people participate in everyday discussion as well as the formal care planning and review process, concerning their education
- encouragement, which can take different forms, and may include incentives and rewards, or larger-scale celebrations of achievement
- practical support, in the form of books, computers, software and stationery, which needs to be available to all looked after children in a consistent way
- financial support and access to safe and secure accommodation in the longer term, in order to participate in further and higher education
- interest and concern to ensure children and young people are made aware of the consequences of not working hard or going to school
- ensuring that planning takes place in advance concerning the future education and training of young people
- focusing individual attention on progress, not problems.

Validated local practice example

The Kirklees Blueprint project

This is a partnership initiative between Voice, looked after children and young people LE and stakeholders in Kirklees. The project began in 2006 and aimed to improve the participation of looked after children and young people in the statutory review process. Specifically, the Blueprint project wanted to change the culture in Kirklees to enable looked after children and young people to participate in the planning of all aspects of their lives.

The project team included staff from across the Children's and Young People's Service, together with a group of 16 young people aged six to 18. A Cultural Change Board consisting of project members and senior managers met regularly to oversee progress and discuss any obstacle.

The project has generated a range of outputs, including a 'review menu' giving children choices about where, when and how their review is held; a looked after children review pack; increased use of new technology; a new website; the approval of new child-friendly review venues; and improved training, managements tools and monitoring forms for staff.

Stable care placements

The relationship between placement stability and positive educational outcomes has been a major theme of policy and guidance (DfEE and DH 2000; DfES 2005). A sense of having a secure base is considered an important factor in developing children's resilience (Gilligan 2000) and there is good evidence to illustrate the negative effects – educationally and emotionally – of placement change. This is supported by the views of children and young people, parents and carers and service providers.

In considering this relationship, it is important to distinguish between the length of a single care episode and the amount of movement a child may experience within the system. Statistical evidence also suggests that children are remaining within the care system longer, and analyses of the data suggests that longer periods in care result in more positive outcomes for looked after children (Berridge *et al* 2008). However, the evidence is complex and research also indicates that, for example, disabled children are likely to remain longer within the care system with fewer opportunities for permanency or a return home (Baker 2006).

Asking young people about their experiences of placement stability and change and the impact of this on their educational achievement was common to almost all the studies examined. The evidence suggests that the number of placements experienced by children and young people in the research samples varied greatly, as did the number of school changes associated with this. More important than the number of placements, however, are young people's perceptions that the level of

disruption was high and had a negative impact on their education. Specific groups, such as young asylum seekers, may experience especially high levels of disruption (Stanley 2001).

Studies suggested that placement change usually occurred in relation to the care system, rather than for reasons of schooling. In other words, young people tended to move as part of planning that was intended to meet young people's needs more effectively, rather than to attend a different educational placement. Disruption was associated with periods of non-attendance at school. However, the timing of moves can also be crucial and if these occur at key points in a child's schooling – most obviously, close to school transition points, or near an assessment – the impact can be very serious indeed, significantly reducing a child's chances of sitting examinations and thus gaining important qualifications (O'Sullivan and Westerman 2007).

Conversely, stability was associated with a positive view of the care experience (McAuley 2005). There is also evidence that a move to a placement that is more supportive educationally may be viewed by young people as an important 'trigger' to improved educational achievement (Dearden 2004; Harker *et al* 2004).

All the research studies emphasised the need for planning and for children to feel secure about the future. Evidence from young people attests to the anxiety many feel about what is going to happen to them, both in the short and longer terms – suggesting that this issue is not always effectively addressed by professionals (Jackson *et al* 2003; O'Sullivan and Westerman 2007; Berridge *et al* 2009). Young people would also like advice about how to cope with changing schools (Morgan 2010). These future plans are especially important as young people move into secondary school and are considering their future plans for education, accommodation and employment. Feedback from service providers as well as children, young people and front-line carers suggests that such planning will only take place if there is a broader culture of child-centred working, enabling children to participate in decisions about all aspects of their lives (see the Kirklees Blueprint project validated practice example).

School-based support

This review has already established that the role of schools in supporting looked after children and young people is a neglected part of the evidence base. Harker *et al* (2004) found that, most commonly, young people cited teachers as their main source of educational support. School is also a place where many young people say they feel safe and secure (Morgan 2010). C4EO's feedback from young people highlighted the importance of the classroom experience and the extent to which learning needs were recognised:

'I had no people to help me with reading, writing and things like that. They just think it's one class with all the same abilities. They don't think about individual kids; it's all just shoved together. If they'd given me individual help I'd have found education easier and wouldn't have wagged it all the time.'

Where appropriate support is available at school, this can change a child's experience and perception of education.

'I had problems with maths and I had to go to learning support to get special lessons. I did like being at school.'

In turn this highlights the potential importance of policy measures such as the availability of additional tutoring and the designated teacher role. In interviews with 55 young people, Harker *et al* (2004) found that 24 had heard of the designated teacher role, while 31 had no knowledge of it. The evidence was unclear about whether having a designated teacher enhanced existing support, as the designated teacher role tended to overlap with another pastoral role, in which capacity students would have expected help from the member of staff. Young people were, however, enthusiastic about the idea of a designated teacher and thought this role would be useful.

Berridge *et al* (2009) evaluated children's and professionals' awareness and experience of the virtual school head (VSH) role in 11 pilot authorities. The nature of the VSH varied in the different authorities, but overall these were senior and primarily strategic roles. The work these individuals had undertaken – which often involved focusing on key areas such as the implementation of PEPs, coordination of the work of designated teachers or addressing problems such as non-attendance – was valued and appeared to have a positive impact on practice.

Despite the evidence demonstrating the high levels of non-attendance and exclusion, there is an absence of detailed evidence regarding the way in which this experience is managed by teachers, or indeed views of the experience from young people. In accordance with other evidence, Barn *et al* (2005) found that gender and ethnicity were significant to the experience of exclusion for looked after children: boys and Caribbean, mixed parentage and white young people were more likely to be excluded than Asians and Africans. A high proportion reported not receiving any education at all (44 per cent), a quarter had home tuition and the remainder went to a special-school unit. Mixed parentage and white young people reported receiving less help from their social worker with learning and tuition than any other group. Daniels *et al* (2003), who included looked after children and young people in a wider study of school exclusion, emphasise the reduced likelihood of young people obtaining qualifications post-exclusion and their limited aspirations for the future.

Information sharing and confidentiality

The question of information sharing and confidentiality is a powerful theme in the accounts of looked after children and young people . The research message is that this is an issue that should be addressed with individual young people.

Views among children and young people vary greatly about the sharing of information in school, ranging from those who see their care status as irrelevant to their schooling, to those who want both teachers and peers to know they are in care. There is some difference between samples: for example, most young people interviewed by Harker *et al* (2004) wanted to ensure that only their closest friends know they are looked after – but the overriding message concerns diversity and the

need for sensitive, individual negotiation of this issue. Inevitably, these views are coloured by negative and positive experiences and interviews revealed that young people tended to focus on one key incident that had a particular effect on them.

Overall, the views of young people do not appear to contradict policy, which emphasises the importance of information sharing. Rather, these views reinforce the need – also present in policy and guidance – for teachers, carers and others to ensure young people are engaged actively in discussions about information sharing at school, perhaps especially when there are changes in a young person's situation. Evidence from designated teachers (Dobel-Ober *et al* 2006) indicates some confusion concerning confidentiality and a similar spectrum of views to those expressed by young people.

Moving on to further and higher education and employment

National statistics have demonstrated the disparity between the proportion of care leavers progressing to further and higher education and the general population (see Data annexe and Research Review 9). This reflects lower pass rates in GCSE and A level examinations, but also the lack of planning and support for the transition to further and higher education that is available to other young people (Jackson *et al* 2005). As previous sections have indicated, young people are very anxious about the future and want to be clear on what is going to happen to them. Advice on further and higher education and careers needs to be available in a range of formats, in addition to face-to-face discussion (Morgan 2010).

Barn *et al* (2005) found that young people from minority ethnic groups (especially those of Asian, African and Caribbean background) appear to be more likely to attend college to try to further their studies than the white and mixed parentage young people in their sample. Young women were also more likely to obtain qualifications. Jackson *et al* (2003, 2005), in their sample of looked after young people who went on to higher education, found that those born outside the United Kingdom had clearer educational goals, were more highly motivated and worked harder than their UK counterparts.

Young people moving to further and higher education did not always find the transition easy. The amount of practical and financial support was variable, though this improved slightly in the course of the Jackson *et al* (2003, 2005) research. This was attributed to changes in legislation and policy. Young people highlighted their need for, and frequent lack of, social and emotional support, for example, during university vacations. Critically, however, the majority completed or continued their studies and felt that undertaking further education had been of immense value.

6. The contribution of the attitudes, skills and abilities of foster, residential, kinship carers, teachers and birth families to positive educational outcomes

This section examines the contribution made to positive educational outcomes for looked after children and young people by the attitudes, skills and abilities of foster, residential, kinship carers, teachers and birth families and identifies interventions to support this contribution.

Key messages

- A high quality of care will include recognition of the role of education and school in a young person's life, and support this.

- Honest and up-to-date information about a young person's educational experience is needed if carers are to be able to support children effectively.

- Carers value additional support and information regarding education and appreciate input from other professionals.

- Relationships with birth families continue to be very important to children and young people, and there is scope for greater consideration of how birth families remain 'in the loop' regarding their children's education. This is a sensitive and complex issue, and clearly there are some circumstances where more extensive contact on this issue is not possible.

Eleven studies were included in regard to this review question. Discussion of Review Question 2 highlighted the importance young people accorded to the contribution of carers, teachers and birth families in supporting their education. The research available is less able to identify the nature of these attitudes, skills and abilities and there is an absence of literature that evaluates interventions that might support this contribution.

Overall, the evidence base for this question was judged to be weak. No studies were identified that examined the role of birth families in supporting the education oflooked after children and young people . Other evidence is therefore extremely important, and the review also draws on a consultation with a group of birth parents in which they were asked about their experiences in relation to their children's education and on feedback from C4EO's parents' panel.

Foster, residential and kinship carers

There is a consensus in the research that a high quality of care in a placement will embrace a commitment to education. This view is not new; a similar view was expressed in previous research studies (see, for example, Hicks *et al* 2007 regarding residential care). This suggests that evidence demonstrating ways in which overall skill levels can be

improved will have an impact on support for education. The extent to which current models of training for carers integrates care and education appears variable and is less developed than in continental Europe (Cameron *et al* 2007).

Analysis of the literature suggests that there is a tension between the attributes of individuals and the systems within which they are working. Thus, carers and teachers may be very skilled in working with an individual child or young person, but their work may be limited by, for example, placement location or the nature of care planning. Unreliable support from, or frequent changes of, social workers were viewed as unhelpful (Harker *et al* 2004). Young people moving on to further and higher education reported differences between authorities in relation to ongoing support from foster carers (Jackson *et al* 2003, 2005). Carers are also aware that, when new projects or practical resources are introduced, information is not always readily available or new resources are felt to be distributed unequally. This includes knowledge of the virtual school head (VSH) role and access to funding for computers and other resources.

Even where these tensions exist, however, it is clear that the individual, emotional qualities of carers and other adults can help promote positive educational outcomes for looked after children and young people . In order to deliver a **high quality** of **educational** care, it is essential that carers receive appropriate and comprehensive information relating to education. The absence of this can have long-term implications for children's placements and on their progress and achievements at school (Cooper and Johnson 2007).

An early UK study (Heath *et al* 1994) argued that the educational deficit experienced by looked after children made it necessary to provide interventions that helped **compensate** for earlier disadvantage. There is some indicative support for this in terms of support offered to foster carers. In a United States-based randomised trial of 48 kindergarten children placed in foster care, Pears *et al* (2007) reported findings from a pilot evaluation of an intervention designed to improve school outcomes in pre-school foster children. A therapeutic playgroup was provided weekly to children in the summer holiday prior to entering school, with the aim of improving emotional and social skills. The findings from this small-scale study were encouraging in relation to children's readiness for, and successful management of, the transition to school.

Support to foster and residential carers should also be considered in broader terms. The research evidence attests strongly to the challenges that carers face in meeting the needs of looked after children with serious emotional and behavioural difficulties (see companion knowledge review, *Improving the emotional and behavioural health of looked after children and young people*). Services support carers either through additional services or through the provision of respite services (as in the validated local practice example below).

Validated local practice example

Dreamwall (Southampton City Council)

This project provides 'time out' for young people living in foster care. It aims to support placements by providing planned respite for foster carers and thus reducing

carer burnout.

The initial delivery of Time Out provided each young person deemed to be at risk of placement breakdown with a four-day residential activity break during the summer and a subsequent package of twelve weekends throughout the year. Each residential trip varies according to the interests of different groups. The general culture of the programme is seen as key to facilitating positive change for young people, rather than any particular benefits supposedly inherent in one activity rather than another.

An external evaluation has been carried out, and there is evidence of benefits to both young people and foster carers. The programme has been well received and there has been a significant reduction in the numbers of foster carers leaving the service as a result of burnout. Young people participating in the programme are achieving educationally and enjoying participating in a wider range of activities.

There is evidence of medium strength that interventions involving added expertise and liaison are perceived positively by carers. Berridge *et al* (2009) report positively on the introduction of additional tutoring services for looked after children. Golding (2002) describes the development of a support project involving psychological counselling for foster carers. Evidence from the United States would also appear to support this, though studies are again dependent on single case studies (Zetlin *et al* 2004, 2006a and 2006b). The nature of the role appears to vary from a liaison figure who is based in another agency, to the more strategic role provided by the VSH (Berridge *et al* 2009). The extent to which they help build carers' own expertise is weaker: findings indicate that the presence of an educational expert results in more consultation on the part of carers and the perception that such collaboration results in better outcomes for children and young people.

The precise impact of such interventions has not been measured and findings should be treated cautiously, on the grounds that any support may be viewed as better than none – but the take-up of such services indicates some value.

Birth parents

The experience of birth families prior to entry to care, in terms of education and schooling, stands outside this review. No studies were identified that examined the role of birth families in supporting the education of looked after children and young people E. That said, studies highlighted the pre-care educational experiences of the looked after group as key to understanding their in-care progress (Berridge *et al* 2008). Other research evidence also attests to the high proportion of looked after children who return home (Biehal 2006), which raises questions about how educational support is continued in the longer term.

The question of relationships and contact with birth families was considered in the majority of studies, though not from an educational perspective. Additional feedback from carers and parents as part of the knowledge review process emphasised the complexity of this,

the significance of the different problems that birth parents themselves were experiencing, and the need to ensure that children themselves felt safe and secure in their placement. This knowledge review message should be considered in conjunction with the findings from the companion knowledge review *Improving the emotional and behavioural health of looked after children and young people*.

The evidence from the consultation with birth parents highlighted the way in which their involvement in education is mediated by the quality of contact and communication more generally about their children's lives (see companion review). The parents who participated in the consultation felt they had little opportunity to contribute to their children's education and would like more opportunity and support in doing this. However, other research evidence highlights the complexities of maintaining these relationships for both children and their carers (McAuley 2005). For some children, increased contact will not be in their best interests. This is a very complex area of practice and the feedback from birth parents must be considered in the light of the wider body of research evidence and practice knowledge.

Teachers

The support received from teachers was highly valued by young people (Harker *et al* 2004; Morgan 20010. Overall, teachers who were 'good teachers' and non-stigmatising appear to be most appreciated. There were examples of specific instances where teachers had provided additional support – for example, when a child had just moved to a new school. Although limited, there was some evidence that teachers also supported carers (Harker *et al* 2004; Dobel-Ober *et al* 2006). Studies that included teachers found that they were sympathetic to the role of foster carers in particular (some were, in fact, foster carers themselves) and were anxious to provide support where this was possible. Understanding of residential care was more limited and at times unsympathetic. Nevertheless, there is evidence from studies including teachers that considerable efforts are made to support looked after children, including advocacy for young people and to avoid sanctions such as exclusion (Daniels *et al* 2003). This is reinforced by the feedback from the parents and carers with whom C4EO consulted. Teachers in existing pastoral and support roles tend to view looked after children as part of a wider group of vulnerable children and provide pastoral support accordingly. There was also evidence that teachers were keen to emphasise the potential of many looked after young people and to give examples of high achievement from looked after students.

7. Conclusions and main messages

This section focuses on the main messages and conclusions arising from the literature and data, together with C4EO's feedback from children and young people, carers and birth families, and service providers. This feedback is especially valuable in a research context where there are significant gaps. It tries to relate the review questions concerning improving educational outcomes for looked after children and young people to C4EO's model of whole-system change against the five outcomes: staying safe, being healthy, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic wellbeing.

The scoping review concluded that improvements in the educational outcomes of looked after children required a more **sophisticated modelling** of the relationship between the experience of looked after children and other dimensions of their experience. Specifically, a better understanding of their experience at school and as learners – together with consideration of other emotional and care needs – was required. This knowledge review reiterates these conclusions, and it is important that findings are considered alongside those from the two partner reviews:

- Improving the emotional and behavioural health of looked after children and young people.
- Increasing the number of care leavers (young people) in 'settled, safe accommodation'.

C4EO's feedback from children emphasised strongly the overlap between improving their emotional and behavioural health and improving their educational prospects. These two issues need to be viewed as interacting and to be approached in an integrated way. The review has revealed ongoing gaps in the evidence base. This is due, in part, to the rapid development of policy and practice regarding the education of looked after children and young people The impact of other areas of policy, including that relating to care leavers, will also have a direct impact on educational experience and future life chances. The expertise of different groups of looked after children and young people , carers, families and other professionals is, therefore, especially important in order to appreciate fully the current state of knowledge.

Findings and feedback from practice and young people support the view that looked after children and young people **children first** and that their school experiences are an important part of their personal histories and identities. As with all children, some will find school easier or enjoy the experience more readily than others, and their perceptions of school will also change over time. The concerns they express regarding their education are more often concerned with the extent to which adults take account of their learning needs, recognise when help is needed in specific subjects and notice when personal problems are impeding learning. The experience of being looked after is, similarly, important but not all-defining. To this extent, research findings are consistent with current policy messages. Children value the individual support they receive from adults, and especially their carers and teachers. Ideally, this is offered within a stable placement situation. Encouragingly, the review

concludes that entry to care is by no means negative in respect to children's educational wellbeing and progress, even where this is not apparent in local authority statistics. Indeed, children and young people are more likely to view care as making a positive contribution to their schooling experience. However, this care must involve placements of a consistently high quality, where carers have access to appropriate support from key professionals. For some looked after children and young people , this will involve specialist therapeutic support and extensive cross-agency collaboration in order to meet very complex needs. This support also needs to be ongoing, supporting young people through key transitions in their educational experience.

The evidence remains weak in respect of the mechanisms through which inter-agency governance contributes to improved educational outcomes for looked after children and young people . These structures are in place, but the measurement of impact is problematic – though this may change as more time elapses. There is medium-strength evidence that integrated strategy and processes are having some effect on the educational experience of looked after children and young people, especially through the personal education plan and through the new role of virtual school head. This is supported by service provider feedback relating to a range of projects intended to strengthen policy initiatives such as personal education plans and aiming to extend the work of virtual schools and the virtual school head.

There is an emerging body of evidence concerning integrated front-line delivery. There is also some evidence that communication and liaison between social care services and schools has improved. Comparative research testing the **social pedagogy** model suggests this is useful in integrating care and education but is yet to be evaluated in a United Kingdom context (Cameron *et al* 2007). This is promising in offering a different conceptual framework that would integrate current thinking about good practice in respect to the support offered by carers and others tolooked after children and young people .

Evidence is weak from this review concerning the specific skills of front-line professionals that support the learning and educational achievements of looked after children and young people . It is suggested that this question is necessarily linked to wider issues of quality of care and to the much larger body of evidence relating to the skills and training of carers, teachers and other professionals. There continues to be unevenness in the way in which children experience support for their education while being looked after, suggesting that further efforts are required to ensure good practice is embedded for all groups of children and young people. If front-line professionals are to be able to provide the emotional and practical support for children's education, including their progression into further and higher education and employment, then it is clear that appropriate training, payment and support needs to be available from local authorities. It is important that these resources are equally available to foster carers, residential carers and family and friends carers.

Data annexe

Key messages

The Department for Education (DfE) is the main data source on educational outcomes of looked after children. It provides data on a range of national indicators (NIs) relating to looked after children including: attainment at Key Stages 2 (NIs 99–100) and 4 (NI 101); care leavers in employment, education or training at age 19 (NI 148); school attendance; permanent exclusions from school; and statements of special educational needs.

- Main findings from the data include:

  o A far higher proportion of looked after children compared with all children are identified as having special educational needs.

  o Although Key Stage 2 attainment for looked after children is far below attainment of all children, between 2005 and 2009 the gap narrowed.

  o The proportion of care leavers in education, employment or training at age 19 increased between 2005 and 2009.

- A new data source that involves matching SSDA903 returns (individual level information collected by local authorities about looked after children) to the National Pupil Database (containing individual level attainment and pupil characteristic data) will be used to monitor the attainment and characteristics of looked after children from 2010 onwards. This will provide a more detailed insight into educational outcomes of looked after children.

Introduction and availability of data

The main focus of this priority is 'improving educational outcomes of looked after children'. In the majority of cases, children cease to be looked after on their 18th birthday, although, under the provisions of the *Children Act 1989 Section 20(5)* (GB. Statutes 1989) young people may be looked after until their 21st birthday if they are being looked after in a community home which is suitable for children aged 16 and over. In practice, few young people fall into this category, and those that do tend to be young persons with severe physical or mental disabilities (DCSF 2009f).

The DfE is the main source of data on Every Child Matters outcomes for looked after children up to the age of 16. It provides comprehensive data on a range of educational outcome indicators (including attendance and attainment at Key Stages 1 to 4) for young people who have been looked after continuously for at least 12 months. DfE has also published KS2 and KS4 attainment data, breaking down attainment for longer periods of care in the bridging series – see

www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/STR/d000894/Bridging_Series_Nov_2009_Text.pdf
(DCSF 2009d). Data on young people who have been looked after for a shorter
period (or for short-term breaks as respite care) is not published nationally.

Longer-term tracking of educational outcomes, once young people have left care, is
not comprehensive, since data on activities and accommodation on their 19th
birthday is only collected on young people who were looked after during the final
year of compulsory education (Year 11). Tracking data on young people who were
looked after in previous academic years, but who returned to their families by Year
11, is not systematically recorded.

This data annexe presents further discussion about the data currently available on
looked after children. It provides:

- a summary of the search strategy for identifying data

- an overview of the nature and scope of the data that was found, with a brief
  commentary on the quality of this data and any gaps that have been identified

- examples of the type of charts and diagrams that could be produced, showing, for
  example, comparisons between outcomes for looked after children and all
  children.

A summary table of the data sources of readily available, published data for looked
after children at a national, regional and/or local authority level can be found in
Appendix 4.

Search strategy

There are a number of archival databases in the UK, such as the National Digital
Archive of Datasets (NDAD) and the UK data archive, some of which have services
that facilitate searching or access to macro- and micro-datasets (including ESDS
International). Even so, searching for current and recently published data cannot yet
be conducted in the same way as searching for published research findings. Access
to newly published data is not supported by comprehensive searchable databases in
the same way that literature searches are supported, although the Department for
Education (DfE; formerly the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF))
produces a publications schedule for statistical first releases and statistical volumes.

Data for this data annexe was obtained by a combination of search methods but
primarily by obtaining online access to known government publications (such as the
statistical first releases and statistical volumes from the DfE) and access to data
published by the Office for National Statistics. Since the main focus was on
educational outcomes, sources of data on other outcomes (including other
government departments; the National Health Service and other national, regional
and local bodies) were not explored in great detail. It should be noted that links to
statistical sources that were live at the time of searching may not remain live at the
time of publication.

Nature and scope of the data

Data on looked after children was collated by local authorities until 2002/03 by CLA100, AD1, OC1 and OC3 returns and then through the SSDA903 return, and until 2008/09, also via OC2 returns (DCSF 2009a).While this facilitates the provision of some trend data, it is important to recognise that the OC2 returns are on an aggregate basis at local authority level, providing, for example, information on the number of children who were looked after, the ethnicity of children who were looked after, their educational status (mainstream or other education, including home schooling) and attainment levels of the various cohorts of children and young people. This means that while we can identify the number of boys, the number of pupils from white ethnic backgrounds and the Key Stage 4 attainment outcomes of any looked after children in a particular cohort (such as those in Year 11 in Summer 2009) we cannot identify, for instance, the Key Stage 4 outcomes for looked after boys from white ethnic backgrounds. Outcomes and trends in outcomes that are currently presented in published statistics are primarily from cross-tabulated data. However, the new matched dataset will enable more illuminative multivariate analysis – see www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/STR/d000894/Bridging_Series_Nov_2009_Text.pdf (DCSF 2009d) for further information.

The SSDA903 collects data on individual children using a unique local authority generated identifier that follows the child through the care system. From 2010, the Department will use the Unique Pupil Numbers (UPNs) collected through the SSDA903 statistical return and match child level data to the National Pupil Database in order to measure the attainment of looked after children (DCSF 2009d).

This move towards the collation of individual level data provides the possibility of looking at more than one trait of the child. For instance, as stated in the earlier paragraph, the Key Stage 4 outcomes for boys from white ethnic backgrounds would be easier to ascertain, which would not have been possible otherwise. The individual level data will also enable us to present the trends in attainment over years for each cohort.

4.   Trends and regional data

Data on the demographics of looked after children and their educational outcomes at Key Stage 1 to 4 have been identified (DCSF 2008; 2009e; 2010b). In addition to cohort data, these cover the national indicators specific to looked after children (NI 99 to NI 101; NI 148) as well as national indicators for attainment and educational progress for which data on looked after children can be identified, such as NI 74, NI 87 and NI 114.

Looked after children – demographic information

Of the 60,000 or so children and young people who were recorded as looked after in each year from 2005 to 2009, over half in each year were male (see Figure 1) and over 40 per cent were aged between 10 and 15 (see Figure 2). There has been little observable change in the proportion of each age group who were looked after;
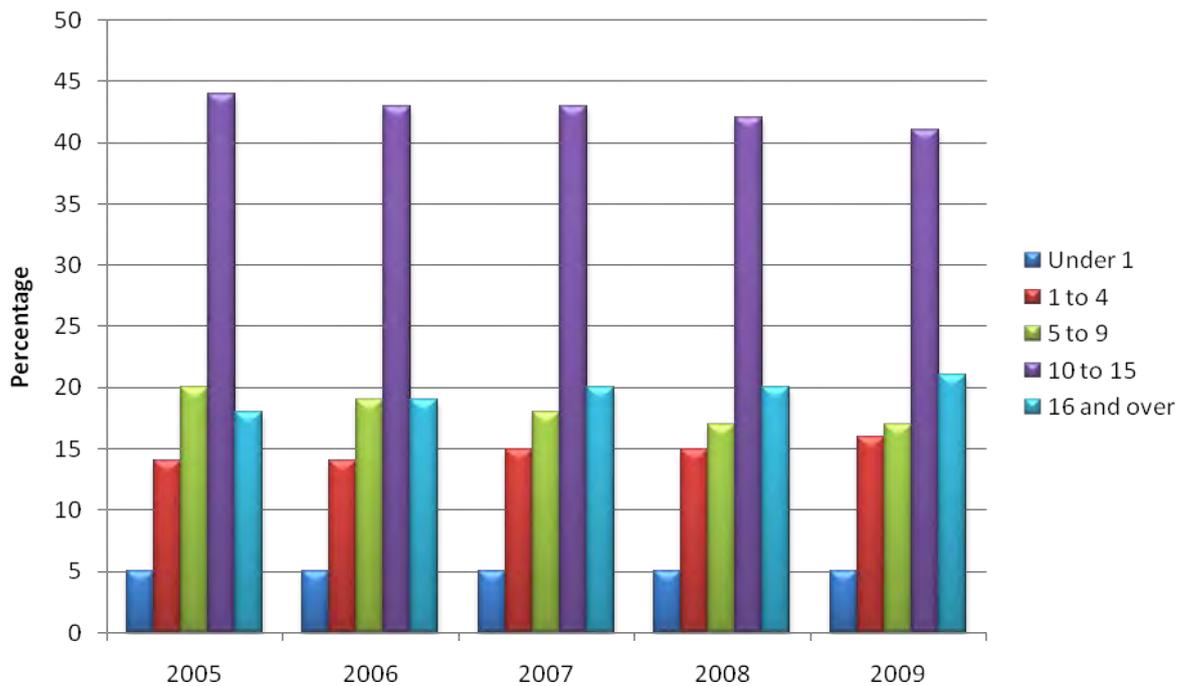
although there have been small decreases of the proportion of children recorded as looked after in the age groups five to nine, and 10 to 15; and small increases in the proportion aged one to four and 16 and over.

Figure 1.   Looked after children 2005 to 2009: by sex
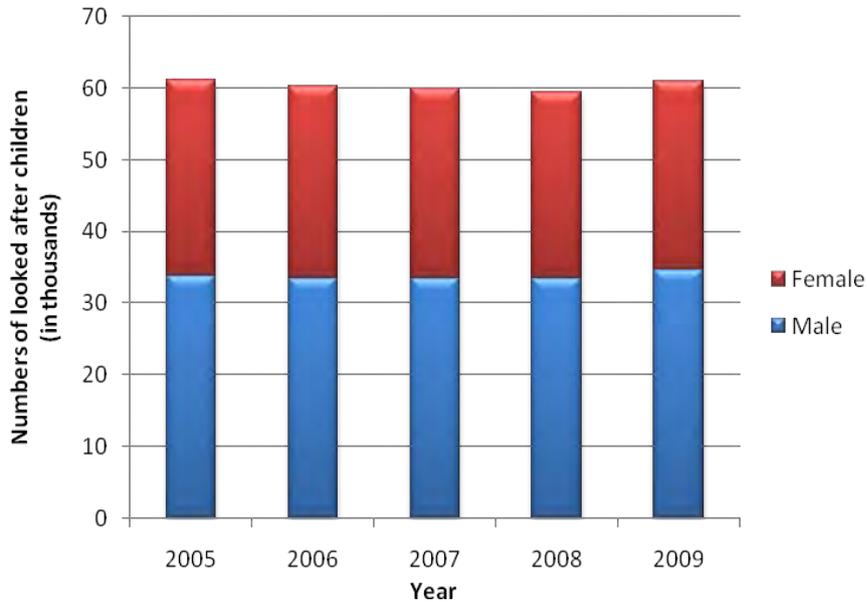
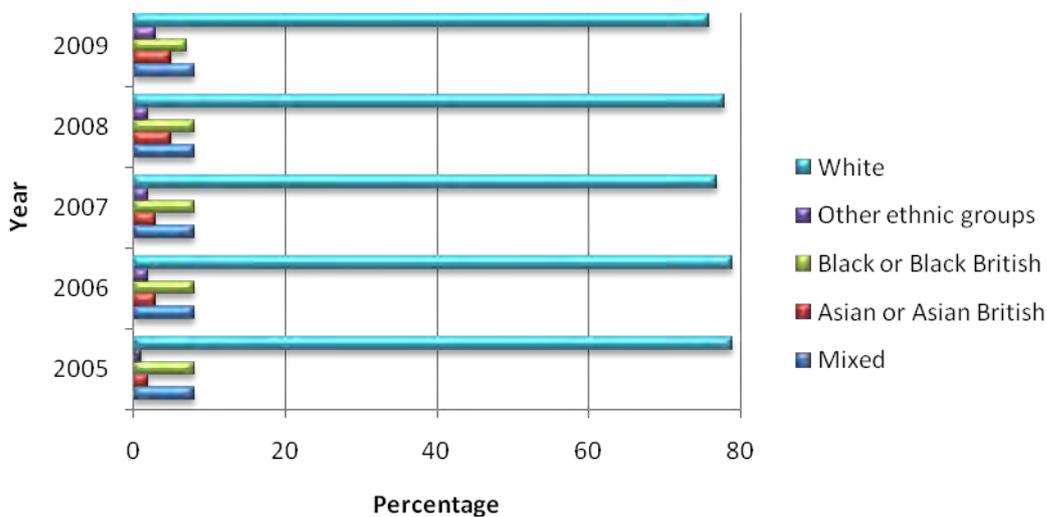**Source**: DCSF 2009e

Figure 2.   Looked after children 2005 to 2009: by age

The highest proportion of looked after children came from a white ethnic background; over three quarters of all looked after children in each year were from this group. Of those from different minority ethnic groups, the greatest percentage came from black or mixed-race backgrounds (around eight per cent in each case). Although the proportions of children from each of the minority ethnic groups who were looked after remained relatively stable between 2005 and 2009, there appeared to be some minor increases in the number of Asian and 'other' ethnic group children becoming the responsibility of the local authority, corresponding with minor decreases in the proportion of white looked after children (see Figure 3).

The primary reasons for children and young people becoming looked after appear, predominantly, to be related to abuse or neglect. This was the category of need that was identified for over 60 per cent of looked after children at the time when they were taken into care (see Figure 4); but it may not be the sole reason for which they remained in care. Family dysfunction, family in acute distress and absent parenting were the other main reasons for children being looked after. Although low income was recorded as the primary reason for up to 130 cases in each year from 2005 to 2009, the proportion of such cases was less than 0.2 per cent of the total, and so does not appear in Figure 4.

Figure 3.   Looked after children 2005 to 2009: by ethnicity

Figure 4.   Looked after children 2005 to 2009: by reason for being taken into care
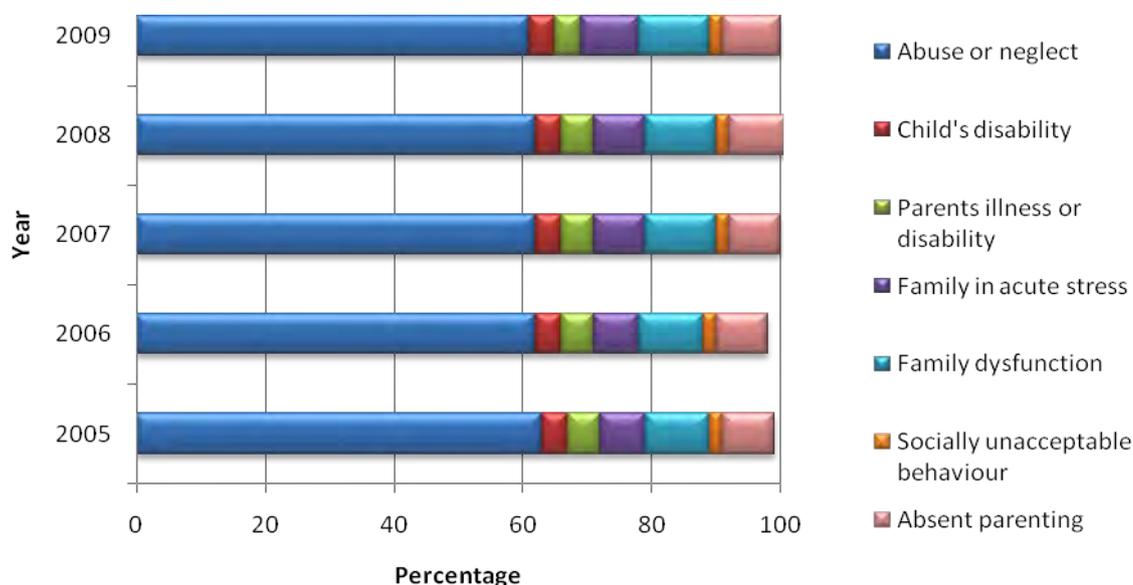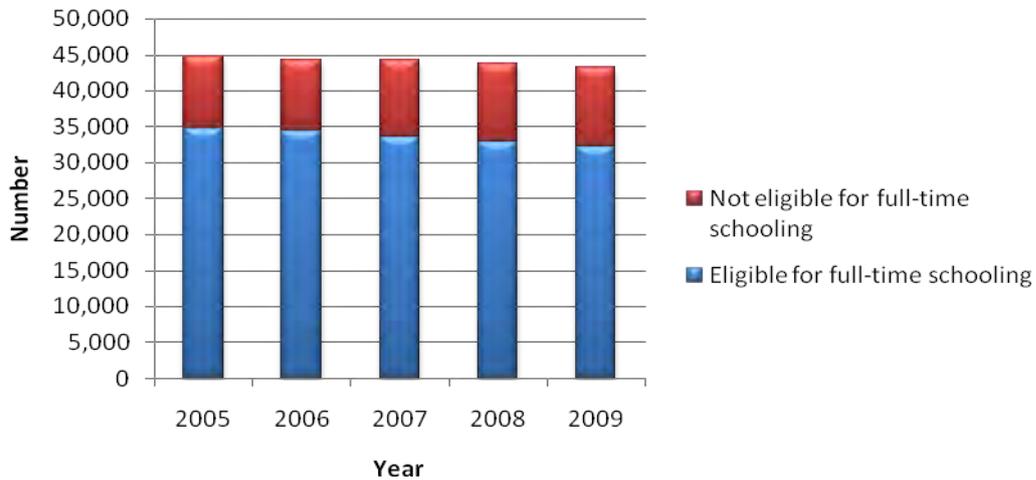
Looked after children eligible for schooling

Data on the outcomes for children and young people who are looked after is presented for fewer young people than would have been in care in total, since it refers only to those young people who were in care continuously for a period of at least 12 months. In 2009, for example, a total of 60,900 were recorded as having been looked after (DCSF 2009e). Over a similar time period (the twelve months to 30 September 2009) 43,200 (just under three quarters) were identified as having been in long-term care (DCSF 2010b).

Data from the statistical first releases (DCSF 2008; 2010b) showed little change in the numbers of children and young people in long-term care in England between 2005 and 2009, although the proportion eligible for schooling slightly decreased (from 77.9 per cent in 2005 to 74.8 per cent in 2009), suggesting that marginally more pre-school children may have been taken into long-term local authority care (Figure 5).

Figure 5.   Numbers of looked after children 2005 to 2009: by eligibility for schooling

Of those looked after children who were eligible for schooling, the proportion who were designated as having special educational needs remained constant between 2005 and 2009, at around 27 per cent (see Figures 6 and 7). Similarly, the proportion of looked after children who were eligible for schooling and who missed at least 25 days of school also remained fairly constant, at around 13 per cent (see Figure 6).

Figure 6.   Looked after children 2005 to 2009: special educational needs and absence data
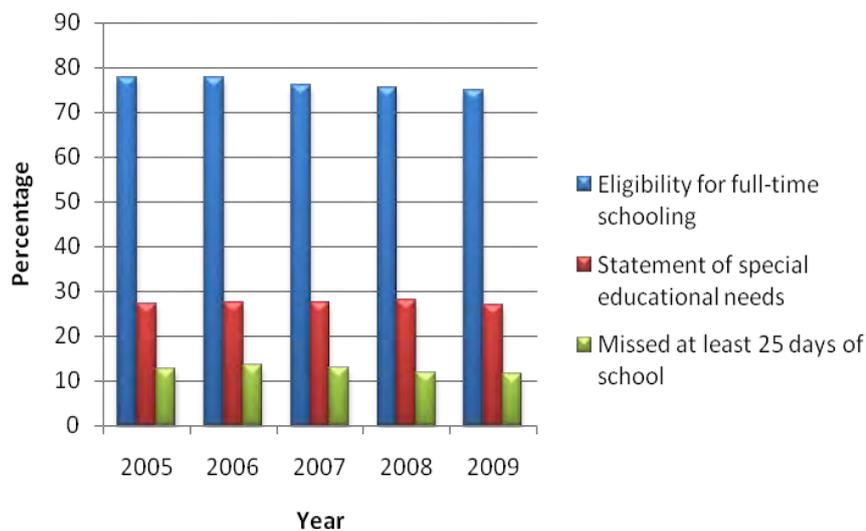
By comparison with all children, a far higher proportion of looked after children are identified as having special educational needs (see Figure 7) and have been subject to permanent exclusion from school (see Figure 8). However, the proportion of looked after children subject to permanent exclusion has been gradually decreasing since 2005. It is not possible to compare school absence of looked after children with absence of all children, as it is not recorded in the same way. However, this will be possible using the new matched data source – see www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/STR/d000894/index.shtml.

Figure 7.   Statements of special educational need 2005 to 2009: by status
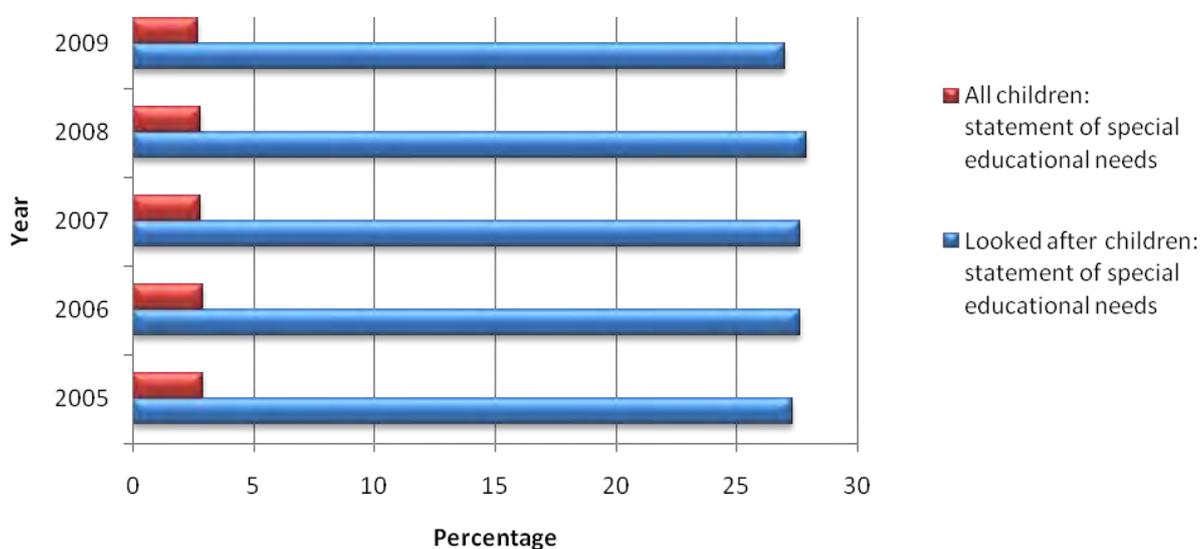
Source: DCSF 2008, 2010b

Figure 8.   Permanent exclusion from school 2005–2009: by status
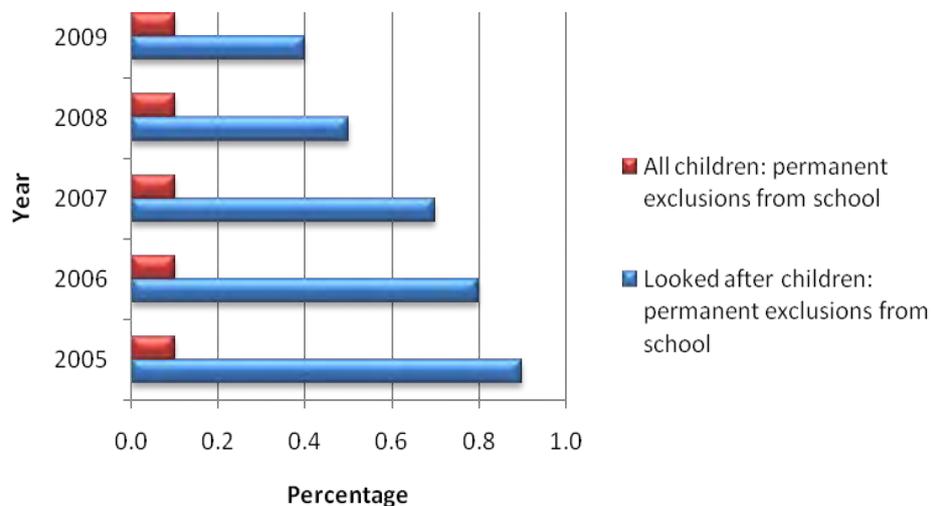
Source: DCSF 2008, 2010b

Attainment at Key Stage 2 (national indicators 99 to 100)

Data on national indicators (NI 99 to 100) for the proportions of pupils who were **looked after children achieving Level 4 or above in English and** mathematics at Key Stage 2 are presented in Figure 9.

The data suggests that, although overall outcomes for looked after children are significantly below those of their peer population as a whole, the proportion achieving at least Level 4 in mathematics at Key Stage 2 have increased year-on-year since 2005 (with a higher percentage points increase for looked after children than all children – eight percentage points compared with four percentage points). For English, although the gap between looked after children and their peers began to narrow between 2005 and 2007, the percentage of looked after children achieving at least Level 4 has remained stable at 46 per cent since 2007 (Figure 9).

No specific national indicator has been established for the attainment of looked after children in science. Nonetheless, the data published by the DCSF enables a comparison of outcomes in science at Key Stage 2. This shows that the proportion of looked after children achieving at least Level 4 at Key Stage 2 increased by nine percentage points between 2005 and 2009 (from 53 per cent to 62 per cent), but has remained stable for all children since 2007 at 88 per cent (see Figure 9). This indicates that for Key Stage 2 science, mathematics and (to some extent) English, looked after children are catching up with their peers.

Figure 9.   English, mathematics and science attainment at Key Stage 2: by status (national indicators 99–100)
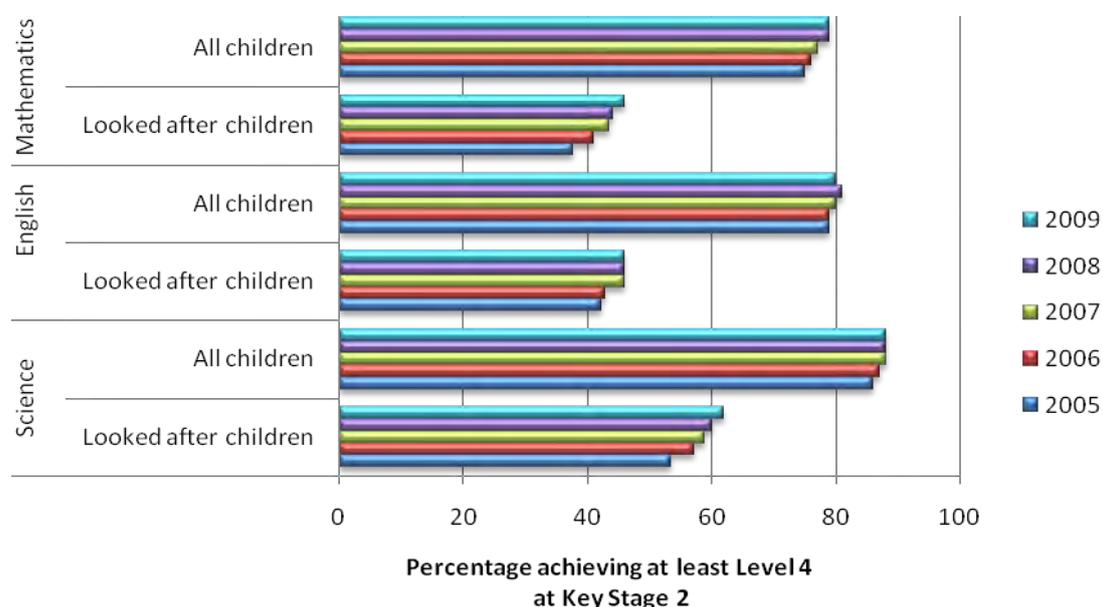
Source: DCSF 2008, 2010b

Attainment at Key Stage 4 (national indicator 101)

The national indicator for Key Stage 4 (NI 101) is the proportion of looked after children achieving five or more A* to C grades (or equivalent) including English and mathematics. Trend data on the overall proportion achieving five or more A* to C grades is available (see Figure 10). However, data on this indicator (the proportion achieving five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics) is currently only available through a voluntary part of the OC2 return since 2009 (DCSF 2010b). This also available through experimental statistics on the new matched data source for 2005 to 2009 – see www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/STR/d000894/index.shtml.

Attainment at Key Stage 4 for looked after children is much lower than attainment for all children (see Figure 10). Attainment on NI 101 is even lower, with only 9.8 per cent of looked after children achieving five or more A* to C grades (or equivalent) including English and mathematics in 2009 (DCSF 2010a). This compares with 49.8 per cent of their peers (DCSF 2010c).

Figure 10.   Outcomes at Key Stage 4: by status
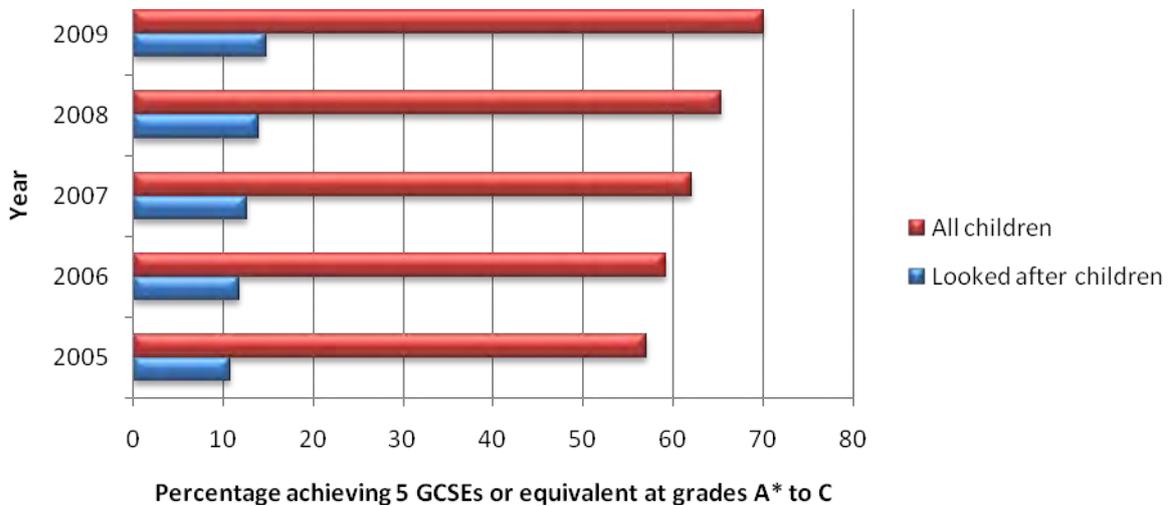
Source: DCSF 2008, 2010b

Outcomes at age 19 (national indicator 148)

National indicator 148 refers to the percentage of care leavers in employment, education or training, and is measured at age 19. The data on outcomes of looked after children at age 19 is not comprehensive, since it draws only on data about young people who were in local authority care during Year 11, and relies on the ability to track these young people into their post-16 destinations and beyond.

As Figure 11 indicates, the proportion of care leavers in education, employment or training at age 19 increased between 2005 (58 per cent) and 2009 (63 per cent). This is mainly due to increases in the proportion of young people in education other than higher education, as fewer former care leavers were in training in 2009 than in 2005 (see Figure 12). Numbers of young people not in education, employment or training have remained relatively stable over the past five years, at around 30 per cent, including five per cent owing to illness or disability. The percentage of former care leavers no longer in touch with the local authority after leaving care decreased from 11 per cent to six per cent between 2005 and 2009.

Figure 11:   The proportion of former care leavers in education, employment or training at age 19, 2005 to 2009 (NI 148)
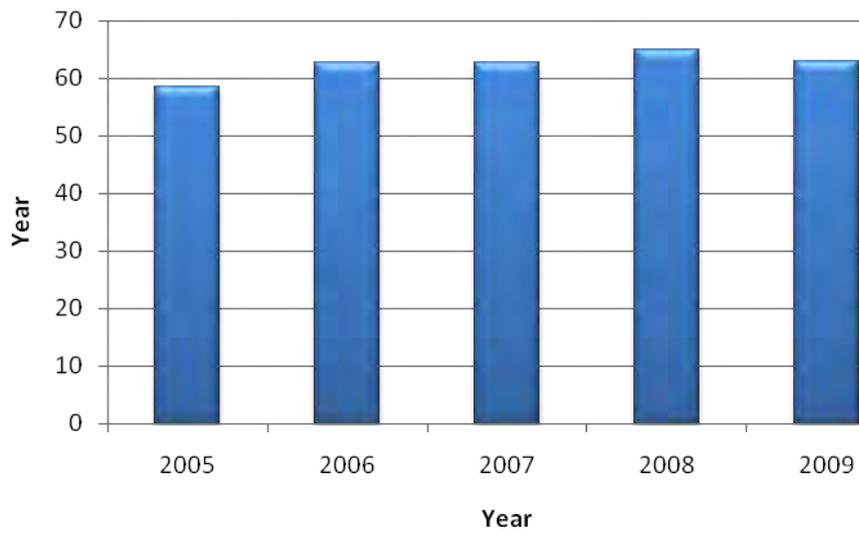
Source: DCSF 2009e

Figure 12.   Outcomes at age 19: by activity
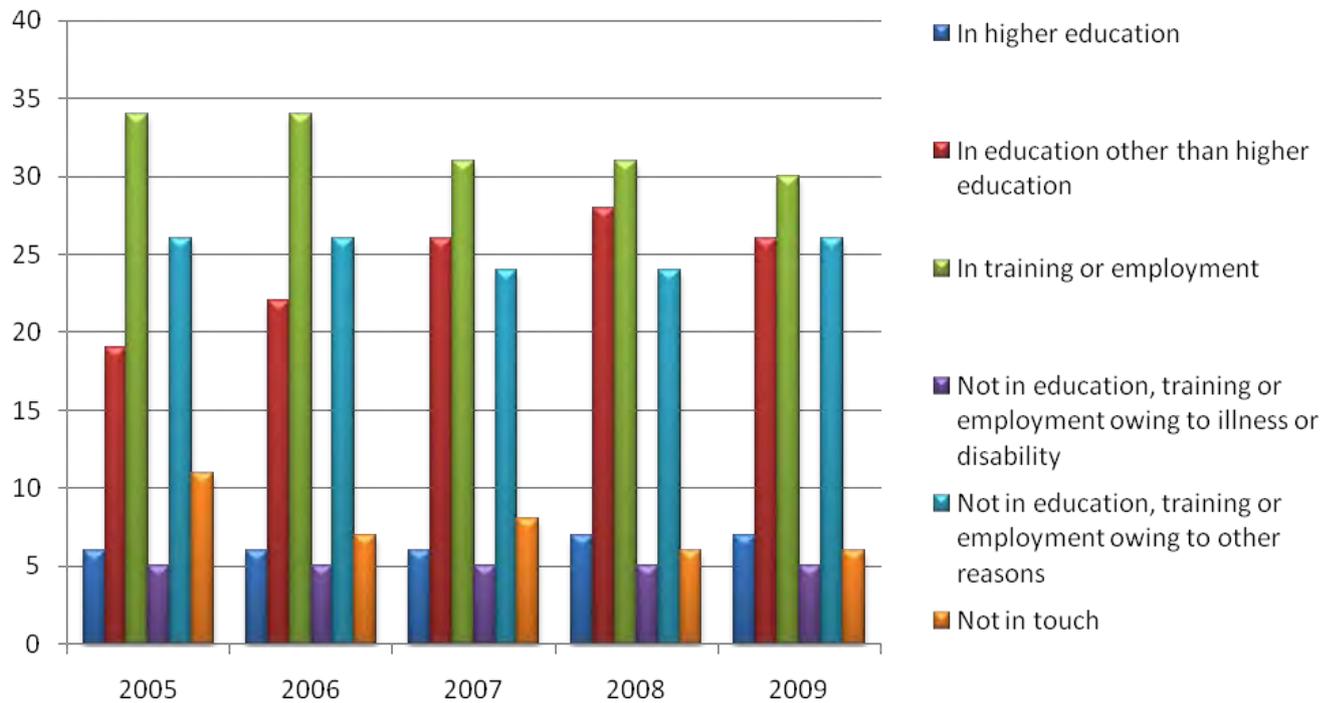
Source: DCSF 2009e

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Appendix 1: Knowledge review methods

The review includes literature identified by a C4EO scoping study (*Improving educational outcomes of looked after children and young people* (Brodie *et al* 2009)) as being relevant to the review questions. The scoping study used systematic searching of key databases and other sources to identify literature that was then screened and coded. Apart from reference harvesting, no further searching for material other than that located by the scoping review was undertaken for this review. However, literature recommended by the Theme Advisory Group and C4EO has been considered for inclusion.

The review team used a 'best evidence' approach to select literature of the greatest relevance and quality for the review. This entailed identifying:

1. The items of greatest relevance to the review questions.
2. The items that came closest to providing an ideal design to answer the review questions.
3. The quality of the research methods, execution and reporting.

The team reviewed all priority items and summarised their findings in relation to the review questions. The reviewer also assessed the quality of the evidence in each case. In judging the quality of studies, the team was guided by principles established to assess quantitative research (Farrington *et al* 2002) and qualitative studies (Spencer *et al* 2003). In view of the applied nature of the review questions, issues of 'relevance' and 'fit' proved especially important.

The scoping study had generated a total of 68 items; the more stringent research review process resulted in a sample of 23 items. This final sample of research literature was predominantly based on UK studies, which in turn can be attributed to the significance of the UK policy and practice context in answering the review questions. Almost all the final sample consisted of empirical studies, usually involving a mix of qualitative, survey, case study and secondary analysis. An overall weakness in the literature is the absence of experimental and comparative studies. With honourable exceptions, there is also very limited discussion of theoretical, methodological and analytical issues, even while researchers acknowledge the difficulties of research in this area.

Appendix 2: Scoping study process

The study began with the Theme Advisory Group (TAG) – a group of experts in the policy, research and practice field of vulnerable (looked-after) children – establishing the key questions to be addressed and the parameters for the search (see Appendix 1). The scoping study used a broad range of sources to identify relevant material:

- searches of bibliographic databases

- searches of research project databases

- browsing relevant organisations' websites

- recommendations from the Theme Advisory Group.

See the Search strategy section below for the sources and strategy used.

The research team undertook an initial screening process of the search results, using record titles and abstracts (where available) to ensure the search results conformed to the search parameters and were relevant for answering the scoping study questions. Items were excluded if they were:

- not about looked-after children or care leavers, aged up to 25

- published before 2000

- not from a peer reviewed journal or report or not a key book

- not empirical research

- not relating to a study in the UK, Ireland, USA, Canada, Australia or New Zealand

- did not answer the scoping study questions

- a fuller report was published elsewhere

- could not be obtained in full text, either at all, or within the scoping study deadline

- duplicate records.

The inclusion/exclusion criteria are shown in Table 6.

Inclusion/ exclusion criteria		Guidance

1	**EXCLUDE Date of publication** before 2000	Published before 2000	The following criteria were applied sequentially from the top down:
2	**EXCLUDE Publication type** not peer reviewed journal or report	Exclude books, dissertation abstracts, trade magazines, policy (unless evaluated), guidance (unless evaluated) Include relevant reports, evaluated policy	
3	**EXCLUDE Location** not UK, Ireland, USA, Canada, Australia, NZ		
4	**EXCLUDE Population** Not about looked-after children or care leavers, or their care	Upper age limit 25	
5	**EXCLUDE Research type** Not empirical research	Exclude case study, vignette, opinion piece, commentary, or briefing	
6	**EXCLUDE Scope**	Use if not excluded above but does not answer one of the questions	
7	**EXCLUDE insufficient details** to identify reference		
8	**EXCLUDE unable to retrieve**	Covers records for which full text could not be obtained at all or not in time for this piece of work	
9	**EXCLUDE full study already reported**	For studies where identical methodology and findings are reported in more than one record	
10	**INCLUDE**	Not excluded by above	
EXTRA EXCLUSION CRITERION for emotional behavioural priority questions where interventions involved	**EXCLUDE Not intervention**	Intervention is defined as a named, bounded, activity or set of activities with specific objectives that are assessed/ evaluated in some way	

Additional criteria were applied in relation to emotional behavioural priority sub-questions on interventions and the records re-screened. This served to define interventions more strictly as a specific activity with specified outcomes that concerned the emotional and behaviour health (EBH) of looked-after children and young people (LACYP). The papers included in Emotional behavioural priority sub-questions on interventions were also required to include some evaluation of outcomes, whether related to effectiveness,

accessibility or acceptability: descriptive accounts were excluded as it was felt they did not contribute to our understanding of interventions. These measures were intended to narrow the focus and to exclude system-wide approaches (such as an account of introducing LACYP into a child welfare system). While system-wide approaches may concern the EBH of LAC and young people, they are not always linked directly to outcomes addressing emotional and behavioural difficulties and usually have a wide remit to improve the overall performance and accountability of the child welfare system. Policy was excluded unless evaluated. A proportion of records of doubtful relevance according to the available abstract/title were set aside for later examination.

Records from the searches that were screened as relevant according to title or abstract were then loaded into the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre (EPPI)-Reviewer database. Full texts were retrieved for the second stage of screening, since the team considered that scoping required the use of full texts. All records screened for inclusion were sought. Inclusion/exclusion criteria were then applied to the full text articles. Approximately one third of retrieved items were excluded using full texts (see exclusion criteria above; see flow chart, below). 38 items could not be retrieved in full text within the scoping study deadline.

The content of the **rejected** records included those that focused on:

- adopted children
- policy
- overviews or briefings of the topic
- descriptions of interventions with no indication of outcomes.

The research team then assessed the remaining items and coded them in relation to the following:

- relevance to research question or questions

- country (UK, Ireland, Canada, USA, Australia or New Zealand)

- study type (including experimental study with comparison/control, non-experimental study and systematic review)

- main methods (including survey, interviews and focus groups, control trial, and literature review)

- intervention setting (including foster care, residential care, school, housing services or floating support)

- study population (including LACYP, care leavers, health, education, housing and education staff)

- cross-cutting issues (child poverty and safeguarding).

It was subsequently agreed that the term 'intervention setting' is an ambiguous, and therefore unhelpful, term. It can capture, for example, both the environmental space in which an intervention happens (such as a school meeting room) or the context in which the child(ren) are placed. Many studies don't report either and therefore, the scoping review does not analyse the responses checked on this section of the coding form.

An agreed part of the scoping methodology was to undertake independent coding quality assurance checks on 10 per cent of the references. References were selected randomly from Endnote listings of papers allocated to each sub-question. In addition, all studies excluded on reading the full text were checked (ie reviewed by at least two people). The checks on coding demonstrated a high degree of consistency and reliability in the use of the coding tool. With minor exceptions (such as varied understanding of 'intervention setting': see above), the result of double-coding was principally to add to the recording of methodological detail.

The check on exclusions at full text again demonstrated the consistent and reliable use of scoping criteria, and did not reveal any systematic bias in the decisions. In three cases, an exclusion decision was subject to further discussion before being resolved.

The process is summarised in Table 7 below.

Table 7. Summary of different stages

	Stage	Material used
1	Question setting	
2	Searching, browsing and recommendations to identify relevant material	
3	Initial screening using inclusion/exclusion criteria	Using title and abstract
4	Included studies entered into EPPI Reviewer software	
5	Second stage screening	Using full paper
6	Final included studies coded	Using full paper
7	QA on 10% of coded papers	Full paper
8	Assessment of content and scope of included papers	Full paper

Please see Table 10 for a full copy of the coding tool.
The numbers of items found by the initial search, and subsequently selected, can be found in the following table. The three columns represent:

- items found in the initial searches

- items selected at first screening for further consideration (those complying with the search parameters after the removal of duplicates)

- items considered relevant to the study at second screening by a researcher who had read the abstract and/or accessed the full document.

Table 8. Overview of searches for all topics

Source	Items found[1]	Items selected for	Items identified as relevant to

		consideration	this theme
Databases			
Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA)	3,508	128	7
Australian Society and Family Abstracts	59	52	2
British Education Index (BEI)	443	291	7
ChildData	8,576	977	57
Cinahl	3,889	576	29
Cochrane Library	71	10	1
EMBASE	2,929	277	2
Google	n/a	1	1
HMIC	2,615	154	0
IBSS	900	47	6
Medline	3,325	235	15
PsycInfo	4,539	908	26
Social Care Online	7,673	490	35
Social Services Abstracts	3,114	257	6
Social Work Abstracts	2,044	187	3
Zetoc	1,159	4	1

[1] Where n/a is indicated, this is because these resources were browsed rather than searched. Initial output was publication date from the beginning of 1990, this was restricted to the start of 2000 at first screening.

Internet databases/portals (also see Search strategy section)			
Barnardos	n/a	1	1
British Library Welfare Reform on the Web	n/a	n/a	n/a
CERUKplus	57	47	1
INTUTE	n/a	n/a	n/a
INVOLVE	n/a	n/a	n/a
JSTOR	n/a	n/a	n/a
Research Register for Social Care	Incorporated in Social Care Online search		
Reference harvest "Taking care of education"	n/a	9	2
TAG recommendations (including texts and organisations)	n/a	56	8

NB duplicate removal was ongoing throughout the process.

Total number of relevant records by question

Whole priority: Improving educational outcomes: 68

By question:

Services/interventions (effectiveness, acceptable, accessible): 36

LACYP's views: 28

Attitudes and skills of carers and families: 17

Note: studies may be coded as relevant to more than one priority.

Table 9. Overview of search output for Improving educational outcomes

Source	Items identified as relevant to this priority
Database	
Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA)	3
Australian Society and Family Abstracts	0
British Education Index (BEI)	6
ChildData	16
Cinahl	5
Cochrane Library	0
EMBASE	1
HMIC	0
Google	1
IBSS	1
Medline	1
PsycInfo	12
Social Care Online	11
Social Services Abstracts	2
Social Work Abstracts	0
Zetoc	1
Reference harvest: "Taking care of education"	2
TAG recommendations (including texts and organisations)	4

Note: as this was derived from aggregated output of all searches, no columns are given for initial output.

Search strategy

The following section provides information on the keywords and search strategy for each database and web source searched as part of the scoping study. Searching was carried out by the SCIE social care information specialist.

The list of databases and sources to be searched included the databases recommended for systematic reviews, 40 organisations' databases and subject portals identified by a SCIE scope and recommendations from TAG members. The general approach was:

- A detailed search on terms relevant to the looked-after children population was carried out across 15 databases. The search strategy was translated for each database and the output was de-duplicated, creating a database of approximately 19,000 records.

- Topic specific searches were carried out on this combined population database, to create a second database.

- References obtained by recommendation and browsing were added to these records, creating a database of approximately 5,000 records.

- All these records were screened for relevance to all the questions. This approach dealt with significant overlap in topic relevance between the priorities.

All searches were limited to the publication years 2000 to 2008, in English language only. The keywords used in the searches, together with a brief description of each of the databases searched, are outlined below. The following conventions have been used: (ft) denotes that free-text search terms were used and * denotes a truncation of terms. (+NT) denotes that narrower subject terms have been included (where available).

Stage 1: Compiling the looked-after children population set

Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA)
(searched via CSA Illumina 27/08/08)

ASSIA is an index of articles from over 500 international English language social science journals.

#1	looked-after child* (ft)	#11	care orders
#2	child* in care (ft)	#12	special guardianship (ft)
#3	foster care (+NT)	#13	leaving care (ft)
#4	adoption (+NT)	#14	care leaver*
#5	kinship care (ft)	#15	secure accommodation
#6	children (+NT) or adolescents (+NT) or young people (+NT)	#16	unaccompanied asylum seeking child* (ft)
#7	residential care (+NT)	#17	placement (ft) and #6
#8	#6 and #7	#18	#1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #8 or #10 or #11 or #12 or #13 or #14 or #14 or #15 or #16 or #17
#9	group homes (+NT)		
#10	#6 and #9		

Australian Family and Society Abstracts
(searched via Informit 13/11/08)

#1	child* (ft)	#4	residential childcare
#2	adopt* (ft) or foster* (ft)	#5	looked-after children
#3	#1 and #2	#6	#3 or #4 or #5

British Education Index (BEI)
(searched via Dialog 11/11/08)

BEI provides information on research, policy and practice in education and training in the UK. Sources include over 300 journals, mostly published in the UK, plus other material including reports, series and conference papers.

#1	looked-after children (ft)	#10	residential care and (child* (ft) or children)
#2	child* looked-after (ft)	#11	care order* (ft)
#3	child* in care (ft)	#12	special guardian* (ft)
#4	orphan* (ft)	#13	care leav* (ft)
#5	orphans	#14	leav* care (ft)
#6	adopted children	#15	secure accommodation (ft)
#7	foster (ft)	#16	unaccompanied asylum seeking child* (ft)
#8	foster care or foster children		
#9	residential child care (ft)		

#17	placement* (ft) and (child* (ft) or children)	#12 or #13 or #14 or #15 or #16 or #17
#18	#1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or	

Campbell Collaboration C2 Library
(searched 14/10/08)

The Campbell Collaboration Library of Systematic Reviews contains systematic reviews and review protocols in the areas of education, criminal justice and social welfare. The Education and Social Welfare sections were browsed but no relevant records were found.

CERUK Plus
(searched 11/11/08)

The CERUK Plus database provides access to information about current and recently completed research, PhD level work and practitioner research in the field of education and children's services.

    #1   (looked-after children) or (care leavers)

ChildData
(searched via National Children's Bureau Inmagic interface, 01/09/08)

ChildData is the National Children's Bureau database, containing details of around 35,000 books, reports and journal articles about children and young people.

#1	children in care	#11	care orders
#2	looked-after child* (ft)	#12	special guardianship
#3	child* looked-after (ft)	#13	leaving care
#4	orphans	#16	care leaver* (ft)
#5	foster care or foster carers or foster children	#17	unaccompanied asylum seeking child* (ft)
#6	kinship care	#18	placement
#7	adoption or adopted children	#19	#1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12 or #13 or #14 or #15 or #16 or #17 or #18
#8	residential care or residential care staff		
#9	group home* (ft)		
#10	children's homes		

Cochrane Library
(searched via Wiley Interscience 09/09/08)

#1	child, institutionalized (+NT)	#7	kinship care (ft)
#2	looked-after child* (ft)	#8	adoption (+NT)
#3	child* in care (ft)	#9	residential child care (ft)
#4	child, orphaned	#10	group homes (+NT)
#5	orphanages	#11	care order* (ft)
#6	foster home care	#12	special guardianship (ft)

#13	care leaver* (ft)	#16	#1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6
#14	secure accommodation (ft)		or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or
#15	unaccompanied asylum seeking child* (ft)		#12 or #13 or #14 or #15

Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (Cinahl Plus)
(searched via EBSCO Host 29/08/08)

CINAHL Plus provides indexing for 3,802 journals from the fields of nursing and allied health.

#1	looked-after child* (ft)	#9	leaving care (ft)
#2	child* in care (ft)	#10	care leaver* (ft)
#3	"orphans and orphanages" (+NT)	#11	secure accommodation (ft)
#4	foster home care (+NT)	#12	unaccompanied asylum seeking child* (ft)
#5	kinship care (ft)	#13	#1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6
#6	adoption		or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or
#7	residential child care (ft)		#12
#8	special guardianship (ft)		

EMBASE
(searched via Ovid SP 05/09/08)

The Excerpta Medica database (EMBASE) is a major biomedical and pharmaceutical database. There is selective coverage for nursing, dentistry, veterinary medicine, psychology, and alternative medicine.

#1	looked-after child* (ft)	#9	care orders (ft)
#2	child* in care (ft)	#10	special guardianship (ft)
#3	orphanage (+NT)	#11	leaving care (ft)
#4	foster care (+NT)	#12	care leaver* (ft)
#5	adoption (+NT) or adopted child (+NT)	#13	secure accommodation (ft)
#6	residential home (+NT) and (child* or adolescen* (ft))	#14	unaccompanied asylum seeking child* (ft)
#7	group homes (ft) and (child* or adolescen* (ft))	#15	#1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12 or #13 or #14
#8	children's homes (ft)		

Health Management Information Consortium (HMIC)
(searched via Ovid SP 03/09/08)

The Health Management Information Consortium (HMIC) database is a compilation of data from two sources, the Department of Health's Library and Information Services and King's Fund Information and Library Service. Topic coverage is on health services.

| #1 | looked-after child* (ft) | #2 | child* in care (ft) |

#3   children in care
#4   orphans
#5   disabilities (+NT)
#6   (foster care or foster children or foster parents) (+NT)
#7   kinship care (ft)
#8   (adoption or adopted children or adoptive parents) (+NT)
#9   residential child care (+NT)
#10 children's homes (ft)
#11 care orders

#12 special guardianship (ft)
#13 former children in care or care leavers
#14 secure accommodation
#15 unaccompanied asylum seeking child* (ft)
#16 placement (ft) and children (+NT)
#17 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12 or #13 or #14 or #15 or #16

International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS)
(searched via EBSCO Host, 05/09/08)

#1   looked-after child* (ft)
#2   children in care
#3   orphanages
#4   orphans
#5   (foster care or foster child* or foster parent) (ft)
#6   kinship care (ft)
#7   adopted children
#8   residential child care (ft)
#9   children's homes (ft)

#10 care order* (ft)
#11 special guardianship (ft)
#12 leaving care (ft)
#13 care leaver* (ft)
#14 secure accommodation
#15 unaccompanied asylum seeking child* (ft)
#16 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12 or #13 or #14 or #15

JSTOR
(searched 14/11/08)

JSTOR is an international archive of journal articles and 'grey' literature.

#1   children in care (ft)

Medline
(searched via Ovid SP 27/08/08)

MEDLINE is the primary source of international literature on biomedicine and health care.

- #1 looked-after children (ft)
- #2 child* in care (ft)
- #3 looked-after child* (ft)
- #4 child, orphaned (+NT)
- #5 orphanages (+NT)
- #6 foster home care (+NT)
- #7 kinship care (ft)
- #8 adoption (+NT)
- #9 residential child care (ft)
- #10 special guardianship (ft)
- #11 leaving care (ft)
- #12 secure accommodation (ft)
- #13 unaccompanied asylum seeking child* (ft)
- #14 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12 or #13
- #15 child (+NT) or adolescent
- #16 group homes (+NT)
- #17 #15 and #16
- #18 #14 or #17

PsycInfo
(searched via Ovid SP 05/09/08)

PsycInfo contains more than 2.5 million records on psychological and behavioural science.

- #1 looked-after child* (ft)
- #2 child* in care (ft)
- #3 orphans (+NT)
- #4 orphanages (+NT)
- #5 foster children (+NT) or foster care (+NT) or foster parents (+NT)
- #6 kinship care (ft)
- #7 adoption (child) (+NT)
- #8 adopted children (+NT)
- #9 residential child care (ft)
- #10 care orders (ft)
- #11 special guardianship (ft)
- #12 leaving care (ft)
- #13 care leaver* (ft)
- #14 secure accommodation (ft)
- #15 unaccompanied asylum seeking child* (ft)
- #16 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12 or #13 or #14 or #15
- #17 child (+NT) or adolescent
- #18 group homes (+NT)
- #19 #17 and #18
- #20 #16 or #19

Social Care Online
(searched 21/08/08)

Social Care Online is the Social Care Institute for Excellence's database covering an extensive range of information and research on all aspects of social care. Content is drawn from a range of sources including journal articles, websites, research reviews, legislation and government documents and knowledge of people who use services.

#1 looked-after children
#2 children looked-after (ft)
#3 child* in care (ft)
#4 foster care (+NT)
#5 foster children
#6 adoption (+NT)
#7 adopted children
#8 residential child care
#9 care orders
#10 special guardianship
#11 leaving care
#12 care leaver* (ft)
#13 secure accommodation and (children or young people)
#14 unaccompanied asylum seeking child* (ft)
#15 placement and (children or young people)
#16 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12 or #13 or #14 or #15

Social Services Abstracts
(searched via CSA Illumina 02/09/08)

Social Services Abstracts is an international database covering social work, social welfare and social policy.

#1 looked-after child* (ft)
#2 child* in care (ft)
#3 orphans
#4 foster care or foster children
#5 adoption (+NT)
#6 adopted children (+NT)
#7 residential care (ft) and (children (+NT))

Zetoc
(searched via British Library 03/09/08)

#8 children's homes (ft)
#9 special guardianship (ft)
#10 care leaver* (ft)
#11 secure accommodation (ft)
#12 unaccompanied asylum seeking child* (ft)
#13 placement and (child (+NT))
#14 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12 or #13

Social Work Abstracts
(searched via Ovid SP 03/09/08)

Social Work Abstracts covers material published in primarily US-based journals with social work relevance.

#1 looked-after child* (ft)
#2 child* in care (ft)
#3 orphan* (ft)
#4 foster* (ft)
#5 kinship care (ft)
#6 adoption (ft)
#7 residential child care (ft)
#8 children's homes (ft)
#9 care orders (ft)
#10 special guardianship (ft)
#11 care leaver* (ft)
#12 leaving care(ft)
#13 secure accommodation (ft)
#14 unaccompanied asylum seeking child* (ft)
#15 placement and (child* (ft))
#16 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12 or #13 or #14 or #15

Zetoc provides access to the British Library's electronic table of contents of journals and conference proceedings. This search interface has quite limited functionality.

#1   looked-after children (ft)
#2   foster care (ft) and health (ft)
#3   adopted children (ft) and health (ft)
#4   residential child care (ft)
#5   children's homes (ft)
#6   special guardianship (ft)
#7   care leaver (ft)
#8   care leavers (ft)
#9   secure accommodation (ft)
#10   placement (ft) and children (ft) and care (ft)
#11   #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10

Search output from each database was combined (using OR) in an EndNote library, which was subsequently searched for each priority. The EndNote library was produced from the above references on 05/12/08.

Stage 2: Topic-specific searches

(All later aggregated for screening for all priorities, due to overlap in relevance.)

Education priority

#1	school* (ft)		#4	pupil* (ft)
#2	education* (ft)		#5	#1 or #2 or #3 or #4
#3	learning (ft)			

The output from this set was searched using the following terms:
Educational outcomes and positive school experiences set

#1	achievement* (ft)		#14	friend* (ft)
#2	qualification* (ft)		#15	career* (ft)
#3	examin* (ft)		#16	occupation* (ft)
#4	key stage* (ft)		#17	job* (ft)
#5	college* (ft)		#18	employ* (ft)
#6	university (ft)		#19	citizen* (ft)
#7	degree* (ft)		#20	school refusal (ft)
#8	attendance (ft)		#21	school phobia (ft)
#9	truan* (ft)		#22	#1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12 or #13 or #14 or #15 or #16 or #17 or #18 or #19 or #20 or #21
#10	stability (ft)			
#11	dropout* (ft)			
#12	expulsion* (ft)			
#13	exclu* (ft)			

The output from this set was searched using the following terms:
Views set

#1	opinion* (ft)		#4	listen* (ft)
#2	view* (ft)		#5	voice* (ft)
#3	feedback (ft)		#6	#1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5

This output was used to answer the question on LACYP's views on educational outcomes.

The education set was searched using the following terms:
Educational policy and interventions set

#1	virtual school head* (ft)		#9	education at home (ft)
#2	education support (ft)		#10	guidance (ft)
#3	out of school hours learning (ft)		#11	policy
#4	specialist* (ft)		#12	green paper* (ft)
#5	designated teacher* (ft)		#13	white paper* (ft)
#6	club* (ft)		#14	Every Child Matters (ft)
#7	personal education plan* (ft)		#15	Children's Act
#8	mentor* (ft)		#16	Care Matters (ft)

#17 educational psychologist* (ft)
#18 mental health professional* (ft)
#19 camhs (ft)
#20 achievement ceremon* (ft)

#21 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12 or #13 or #14 or #15 or #16 or #17 or #18 or #19 or #20

The output from this set was searched using the following terms:
Acceptability, accessibility and effectiveness set

#1 acceptab* (ft)
#2 accessib* (ft)
#3 satisfaction (ft)
#4 service uptake (ft)
#5 service use (ft)
#6 engage* (ft)
#7 involv* (ft)
#8 participat* (ft)
#9 effective* (ft)
#10 What works (ft)

#11 outcomes (ft)
#12 evaluat* (ft)
#13 making a difference (ft)
#14 success* (ft)
#15 improvement (ft)
#16 implementation (ft)
#17 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12 or #13 or #14 or #15 or #16

This output was used to answer the question on the accessibility, acceptability and effectiveness of policies, services and interventions.

The education set was searched using the following terms:
Foster, residential and kinship carers and birth families

#1 carer* (ft)
#2 worker* (ft)
#3 assistant* (ft)
#4 guardian* (ft)
#5 family (ft)

#6 mother* (ft)
#7 father* (ft)
#8 parent* (ft)
#9 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8

The output from this set was searched using the following terms:
Attitudes, skills, aptitudes and behaviours set

#1 attitude* (ft)
#2 skill* (ft)
#3 abilit* (ft)
#4 behaviour* (ft)
#5 behavior* (ft)
#6 encourage* (ft)
#7 supportive (ft)
#8 supporting (ft)
#9 empathy (ft)

#10 promote (ft)
#11 help* (ft)
#12 assist* (ft)
#13 facilitate (ft)
#14 value (ft)
#15 engage* (ft)
#16 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12 or #13 or #14 or #15

The output from this set was searched using the following terms:
Training and support for above behaviours set

#1 training (ft)
#2 support* (ft)

#3 competen* (ft)
#4 regist* (ft)

| #5 | counselling (ft) | #7 | #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 |
| #6 | assess* (ft) | | |

The output from this set was searched using the following terms:
Quantitative, correlate set

#1	quantitative (ft)	#6	percentage (ft)
#2	correlate* (ft)	#7	significant difference (ft)
#3	effective* (ft)	#8	#1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or
#4	statistic* (ft)		#7
#5	cohort* (ft)		

The output from this set was used to answer the question on the contribution of carers and birth families, and interventions to support them.

Emotional/behavioural health priority

Population terms EndNote library above was searched using the following terms:
Emotional/behavioural health set

#1	children's centre* (ft)	#25	hyperactiv* (ft)
#2	family centre* (ft)	#26	relationship* (ft)
#3	confiden* (ft)	#27	risk taking (ft)
#4	esteem (ft)	#28	self harm (ft)
#5	grie* (ft)	#29	stress (ft)
#6	happy (ft)	#30	suicide (ft)
#7	happiness (ft)	#31	personality disorder* (ft)
#8	emotion* (ft)	#32	ADHD (ft)
#9	self control (ft)	#33	buddy (ft)
#10	mental* (ft)	#34	mentor* (ft)
#11	qaly (ft)	#35	counsellor* (ft)
#12	quality of life (ft)	#36	psych* (ft)
#13	resilen* (ft)	#37	advoca* (ft)
#14	respect (ft)	#38	therap* (ft)
#15	wellbeing (ft)	#39	support worker* (ft)
#16	antisocial (ft)	#40	key worker* (ft)
#17	anxi* (ft)	#41	#1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or
#18	attach* (ft)		#7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12
#19	behav* (ft)		or #13 or #14 or #15 or #16 or #17
#20	bereav* (ft)		or #18 or #19 or #20# or #21 or
#21	bully* (ft)		#22 or #23 or #24 or #25 or #26 or
#22	conduct (ft)		#27 or #28 or #29 or #30 or #31 or
#23	cortisol (ft)		#32 or #33 or #34 or #35 or #36 or
#24	depress* (ft)		#37 or #38 or #39 or #40

The output from this set was searched using the following terms:
Positive emotional and behavioural health set

| #1 | confiden* (ft) | #2 | esteem (ft) |

#6   happy (ft)
#7   happiness (ft)
#9   self control (ft)
#11   qaly (ft)
#12   quality of life (ft)
#13   resilen* (ft)
#14   respect (ft)

#15   wellbeing (ft)
#16   feeling good (ft)
#17   feel good (ft)
#18   #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or
       #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12
       or #13 or #14 or #15 or #16 or #17

The output from this set was searched using the following terms:
Views set

#1   opinion* (ft)
#2   view* (ft)
#3   feedback (ft)

#4   listen* (ft)
#5   voice* (ft)
#6   #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5

This output was used to answer the question on LACYP's views on emotional and behavioural health

The emotional/behavioural health set was searched using the following terms:
Emotional/behavioural health policy and interventions set

#1   advoca* (ft)
#2   mentor* (ft)
#3   counsell* (ft)
#4   therap* (ft)
#5   dedicated (ft)
#6   specialist (ft)
#7   policy (ft)
#8   legislation (ft)
#9   green paper (ft)
#10   white paper (ft)
#11   Every Child Matters (ft)
#12   Children's Act
#13   secure attachment (ft)

#14   Healthy Care (ft)
#15   mental health professional* (ft)
#19   camhs (ft)
#20   achievement ceremon* (ft)
#21   guidance (ft)
#22   educational psychologist* (ft)
#23   psychiatrist* (ft)
#24   #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or
       #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12
       or #13 or #14 or #15 or #16 or #17
       or #18 or #19 or #20 or #21 or #22
       or #23

The output from this set was searched using the following terms:
Acceptability, accessibility and effectiveness set

#1   acceptab* (ft)
#2   accessib* (ft)
#3   satisfaction (ft)
#4   service uptake (ft)
#5   service use (ft)
#6   engage* (ft)
#7   involv* (ft)
#8   participat* (ft)
#9   effective* (ft)
#10   What works (ft)

#11   outcomes (ft)
#12   evaluat* (ft)
#13   making a difference (ft)
#14   success* (ft)
#15   improvement (ft)
#16   implementation (ft)
#17   #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or
       #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12
       or #13 or #14 or #15 or #16

This output was used to answer the question on the accessibility, acceptability and effectiveness of policies, services and interventions.

The emotional/behavioural health set was searched using the following terms:
Foster, residential and kinship carers and birth families set

#1	carer* (ft)	#6	mother* (ft)
#2	worker* (ft)	#7	father* (ft)
#3	assistant* (ft)	#8	parent* (ft)
#4	guardian* (ft)	#9	#1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8
#5	family (ft)		

The output from this set was searched using the following terms:
Attitudes, skills, aptitudes and behaviours set

#1	attitude* (ft)	#13	facilitate (ft)
#2	skill* (ft)	#14	value (ft)
#3	abilit* (ft)	#15	engage* (ft)
#4	behaviour* (ft)	#16	bond (ft)
#5	behavior* (ft)	#17	sympath* (ft)
#6	encourage* (ft)	#18	warmth (ft)
#7	supportive (ft)	#19	love (ft)
#8	supporting (ft)	#20	belonging (ft)
#9	empathy (ft)	#21	#1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12 or #13 or #14 or #15 or #16 or #17 or #18 or #19 or #20
#10	promote (ft)		
#11	help* (ft)		
#12	assist* (ft)		

The output from this set was searched using the following terms:
Training and support for above behaviours set

#1	training (ft)	#5	counselling (ft)
#2	support* (ft)	#6	assess* (ft)
#3	competen* (ft)	#7	#1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6
#4	regist* (ft)		

The output from this set was searched using the following terms:
Quantitative, correlate set

#1	quantitative (ft)	#6	percentage (ft)
#2	correlate* (ft)	#7	significant difference (ft)
#3	effective* (ft)	#8	#1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7
#4	statistic* (ft)		
#5	cohort* (ft)		

This output was used to answer the question on the contribution of carers and birth families, and interventions to support them.

Safe, settled accommodation priority

Population terms EndNote library above was searched using the following terms:
Accommodation set

#1	accommodation (ft)	#8	independent living (ft)
#2	housing (ft)	#9	floating support (ft)
#3	homeless* (ft)	#10	tenan* (ft)
#4	flat* (ft)	#11	B&B (ft)
#5	bedsit* (ft)	#12	bed and breakfast (ft)
#6	lodging* (ft)	#13	#1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or
#7	hostel* (ft)		#7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12

The output from this set was searched using the following terms:
Safe, settled set

#1	safe* (ft)	#4	permanen* (ft)
#2	settled (ft)	#5	#1 or #2 or #3 or #4
#3	secur* (ft)		

The output from this set was searched using the following terms:
Views set

#1	opinion* (ft)	#4	listen* (ft)
#2	view* (ft)	#5	voice* (ft)
#3	feedback (ft)	#6	#1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5

This output was used to answer the question on LACYP's views on emotional and behavioural health

The accommodation set was searched using the following terms:
Not in settled accommodation set

#1	unsafe (ft)	#7	lost (ft)
#2	unsettled (ft)	#8	rough sleep* (ft)
#3	temporary (ft)	#9	on the street* (ft)
#4	homeless* (ft)	#10	#1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or
#5	out of touch (ft)		#7 or #8 or #9
#6	not in contact (ft)		

This output was used to answer the question on those not in suitable accommodation by age 19.

The accommodation set was searched using the following terms:
Accommodation policy and interventions set

#1	floating support (ft)	#3	housing service* (ft)
#2	housing support (ft)	#4	housing officer* (ft)

#5	benefit* (ft)		#15	Children (Leaving Care) Act (ft)
#6	credit* (ft)		#16	affordable (ft)
#7	grant* (ft)		#17	low cost (ft)
#8	fund* (ft)		#18	guidance (ft)
#9	dedicated		#19	joint working (ft)
#10	specialist* (ft)		#20	Homelessness Act (ft)
#11	policy		#21	#1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12 or #13 or #14 or #15 or #16 or #17 or #18 or #19 or #20
#12	legislation			
#13	green paper (ft)			
#14	white paper (ft)			

The output from this set was searched using the following terms:
Acceptability, accessibility and effectiveness set

#1	acceptab* (ft)		#11	outcomes (ft)
#2	accessib* (ft)		#12	evaluat* (ft)
#3	satisfaction (ft)		#13	making a difference (ft)
#4	service uptake (ft)		#14	success* (ft)
#5	service use (ft)		#15	improvement (ft)
#6	engage* (ft)		#16	implementation (ft)
#7	involv* (ft)		#17	#1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12 or #13 or #14 or #15 or #16
#8	participat* (ft)			
#9	effective* (ft)			
#10	What works (ft)			

This output was used to answer the question on the accessibility, acceptability and effectiveness of policies, services and interventions

The emotional/behavioural health set was searched using the following terms:
Foster, residential and kinship carers and birth families

#1	carer* (ft)		#6	mother* (ft)
#2	worker* (ft)		#7	father* (ft)
#3	assistant* (ft)		#8	parent* (ft)
#4	guardian* (ft)		#9	#1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8
#5	family (ft)			

The output from this set was searched using the following terms:
Attitudes, skills, aptitudes and behaviours set

#1 attitude* (ft)
#2 skill* (ft)
#3 abilit* (ft)
#4 behaviour* (ft)
#5 behavior* (ft)
#6 encourage* (ft)
#7 supportive (ft)
#8 supporting (ft)
#9 empathy (ft)
#10 promote (ft)
#11 help* (ft)
#12 assist* (ft)
#13 facilitate (ft)
#14 value (ft)
#15 engage* (ft)
#16 financ* (ft)
#17 fund* (ft)
#18 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12 or #13 or #14 or #15 or #16 or #17

The output from this set was searched using the following terms:
Training and support for above behaviours set

#1 training (ft)
#2 support* (ft)
#3 competen* (ft)
#4 regist* (ft)
#5 counselling (ft)
#6 assess* (ft)
#7 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6

The output from this set was searched using the following terms:
Quantitative, correlate set

#1 quantitative (ft)
#2 correlate* (ft)
#3 effective* (ft)
#4 statistic* (ft)
#5 cohort* (ft)
#6 percentage (ft)
#7 significant difference (ft)
#8 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7

This output was used to answer the question on the contribution of carers and birth families, and interventions to support them.

For all priorities

Literature suggestions from Theme Advisory Group and other experts
These were incorporated into the pool of references that were screened.

Policy, government agencies, academic and third sector websites
The following websites were browsed and searched for each priority, and relevant documents incorporated in the screening EndNote libraries. These websites included government departments and agencies, academic centres and third-sector organisations.

Output figures were not compiled for each website because this work was carried out during background preparation for this project.

Organisation	URL
4 Nations Child Policy Network	www.childpolicy.org.uk/
A National Voice	www.anationalvoice.org/
Barnardo's	www.barnardos.org.uk/
British Association for Adoption & Fostering	www.baaf.org.uk/
Care Services Improvement Partnership Knowledge Community	http://kc.csip.org.uk/
Caspari Foundation	www.caspari.org.uk/
Centre for Policy Studies	www.cps.org.uk/
Connexions Direct	www.connexions-direct.com/
DEMOS	www.demos.co.uk/
Department for Children, Schools and Families	www.dcsf.gov.uk/
Department of Health	www.dh.gov.uk/en/index.htm
Evidence Network	www.kcl.ac.uk/schools/sspp/interdisciplinary/evidence
Government Social Research	www.gsr.gov.uk/
Howard League for Penal Reform	www.howardleague.org/
Intute	www.intute.ac.uk/
INVOLVE	www.invo.org.uk/
Institute for Public Policy Research	www.ippr.org.uk/
Joseph Rowntree Foundation	www.jrf.org.uk/
Kings' Fund	www.kingsfund.org.uk/
Local Government Analysis and Research	www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pageId=1036233
Mental Health Foundation	www.mentalhealth.org.uk/
Nacro	www.nacro.org.uk/
National Centre for Excellence in Residential Child Care	www.ncb.org.uk/Page.asp?sve=934
National Centre for Social Research (NATCEN)	www.natcen.ac.uk/
National Children's Bureau	www.ncb.org.uk/Page.asp

National Library for Health	www.library.nhs.uk/
Office for National Statistics	www.statistics.gov.uk/default.asp
NCVCCO (Children England)	www.ncvcco.org/
National Foundation for Educational Research	www.nfer.ac.uk/index.cfm
National Youth Agency	www.nya.org.uk/
Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People	www.niccy.org/
Personal Social Services Research Unit	www.pssru.ac.uk/
Prison Reform Trust	www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/
Promising Practices Network	www.promisingpractices.net/
Research in Practice	www.rip.org.uk/
Restorative Justice Consortium	www.restorativejustice.org.uk/
Rethink	www.rethink.org/
What Works for Children	www.whatworksforchildren.org.uk/
York Systematic Reviews in Social Policy and Social Care	www.york.ac.uk/inst/chp/srspsc/index.htm
Young Minds	www.youngminds.org.uk/

Figure 15. Literature flow chart

Note: removal of duplicate references took place throughout; referral between priorities took place at second screening.

Output from searching 15 bibliographic databases using population terms
19992

Output from searching population database using specific question terms
4375

Output from scoping and expert suggestions
336

Combined output from searches and suggestions
4709
Plus 2 duplicates

Exclude

Exclude date of publication   1373
Exclude publication type   670
Exclude location   263
Exclude population 795
Exclude research type 490
Exclude scope 403
Exclude insufficient details 25

Duplicate 38
Full study already reported 3
Queried relevance and parked 113

Output from first screen (on title and abstracts)
536
Breakdown:
Education question: 137
Wellbeing question: 372
Accommodation question: 79

Exclude

Exclude date of publication 4
Exclude publication type 13
Exclude location 1
Exclude population 34
Exclude research type 52
Exclude scope 120
Exclude insufficient details 1
Exclude unable to retrieve** 38
Duplicate 7
Full study already reported 11

Output from second screen (on full text)
219
Breakdown*:
Education question: 68
Wellbeing question: 113
Accommodation question: 83

Appendix 3: Parameters document

1.C4EO Theme 3 Vulnerable Children

2.Priority

3.1 Improving the educational outcomes of looked-after children and young people (LACYP)

3.Context for this priority

The recent narrowing in the gap between the educational attainment of LACYP and other CYP, has began to increase again largely due to improvements in the educational achievements of children in the non-looked-after population. Educational attainment is a key indicator of outcomes identified by Every Child Matters (ECM), enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, stay safe and achieve economic well-being as well as future health experiences. Improving the educational attainment of LACYP is therefore at the forefront of government policy initiatives, such as piloting virtual schools heads as part of the Care Matters implementation. It should be noted that the wider educational literature highlights that socio-economic risk factors, such as poverty and social class, linked with family breakdown and admission to care also predict low educational achievement (Berridge 2008). Where information exists from young people themselves, while recognising that educational difficulties often predate coming into care, they emphasise that LACYP should be encouraged to achieve regardless of their circumstances (A National Voice 2007).

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4. Main review questions[1] to be addressed in this scoping study (no more than five; preferably fewer)

Overall question:

What do we know about how to improve the educational outcomes of LACYP?

Sub-questions:

1. **What are LACYP's views on what constitutes educational outcomes and positive school experiences and how do they compare with those of policy makers, teachers, social workers and other service providers?**

2. **What do we know about the accessibility, acceptability and effectiveness of policies, services and interventions initiated by central, regional and local government and the independent sector for LACYP?**

3. **What do we know about the accessibility, acceptability and effectiveness of school-initiated (if not -based) policies and interventions?**

4. **What do we know about the contribution made to the educational outcomes of LACYP by the attitudes, skills and abilities of foster, residential and kinship carers and birth families and interventions to support their contribution?**

Which cross-cutting issues should be included? **(Child poverty; safeguarding; equality and diversity; disability; workforce development; change management; leadership; learning organisations)?** Please specify the review questions for cross-cutting issues in this scope, and please keep these limited in number.
Child poverty
Safeguarding
Equality and diversity

1. Definitions for any terms used in the review questions
Population of young people:

- Looked-after children and young people in medium- and long-term care (more than six months) – wherever they are looked-after (for example, residential care, foster care, young offenders institution) – up to age 25, and their families.

- Children and young people who have several short-term (up to six months) periods in local authority care (either under a care order, or on a voluntary basis).

- Children and young people preparing to leave medium-term or long-term local authority care.

Outcomes:

ECM Outcomes:

- Be healthy

- Stay safe

- Enjoy and achieve

- Make a positive contribution

- Achieve economic well-being.

Government indictors of the above outcomes:
National indicator set 99: Looked-after children reaching Level 4 in English at KS2
National indicator set 100: Looked-after children reaching Level 4 in Maths at KS2
National indicator set 101: Looked-after children achieving 5 A*–C GCSEs at KS4 (including English and Mathematics)
Plus
National indicator set 61: Stability of placements of LAC: number of placements
National indicator set 62: Stability of placements of LAC: length of placement
PSA 14: increasing the number of young people on the path to success
Specific LACYP-defined outcomes to be identified during the scope.

Service provision definitions:

Definition of central, regional and local government includes local authorities and children's trusts.

"School" is defined very broadly to include e.g. pupil referral units; educational psychologists, educational welfare officers, youth services; including partnership working; residential care homes and fostering services that provide education, extended day.

7. What will be the likely geographical scope of the searches?
(Work conducted in/including the following countries)

☐ **England only**

☐ **UK only**

☐ **Europe only**

☐ **Europe and other countries (English language)**

NB: UK, US, Canada, Australia and NZ.

8. Age range for CYP:

Up to 25

9. Literature search dates
Start year

2000

10. Suggestions for key words to be used for searching the literature

Education base library	
Setting	school Education Learning (pupil) Pupil referral units

Educational outcomes and positive school experiences	
Attainment	Achievement Qualification Examin Key stage College University degree

	Attendance NEET truan	
Other outcomes	stability dropout expulsion exclu friend career occupation job Employ citizen School phobia School refusal	

Views (common across all priorities)
Opinion View Feedback Listen Voice

Suggest specific phrases:
Children's views
Children's opinion
Listening to children

Accessibility, acceptability, effectiveness (common across all priorities)		
Accessibility and acceptability	Acceptability (acceptab*) Accessibility (accessib*) Satisfaction (satisf*) service uptake service use engagement (engage) involve participat	
Effectiveness	Effective What works Outcomes Evaluat Making a difference Success	

	Improvement implementation	

Educational policy and interventions

Virtual school head

Education support
Out of school hours learning
Specialist
Designated teacher
club
personal education plans
mentor
Education at home
guidance
Policy
Legislation
Green paper
White paper
Every Child Matters
Children's Act
Care Matters
educational psychologist
mental health professional
Camhs
achievement ceremony

Foster, residential and kinship carers and birth families terms (common across all priorities)

Carer
worker
assistant
guardian
family
Mother
Father
parent

Attitudes, skills, abilities and behaviours

Attitude
Skill
Abilit
Behaviour
behaviour
Encourage

Supportive
Supporting
Empathy
Promote
Help
Assist
Facilitate
Value
Engage

Training and support for above (common across all priorities)

Training
Support
Competen
Regist
Counselling
Standards
Assess

11. Suggestions for websites, databases, networks and experts to be searched or included as key sources.

CYP Bill and Care Matters: http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/
Other DCSF commissioned resources
New national indicator statistics on achieving KS4 English and Maths and 5 GCSEs A*-C
NFER work in this area
Children's Rights Directors http://www.rights4me.org/reports.cfm
Rainer's mentoring scheme: http://www.raineronline.org/
A National Voice: Please Sir, can I have some more? Report on LACYP views on education needs and outcome
Voices from Care Cymru (http://www.voicesfromcarecymru.org.uk/main.htm)
Professor Sonia Jackson – LAC educational outcomes
http://ioewebserver.ioe.ac.uk/ioe/cms/get.asp?cid=470&470_0=7866
Professor David Berridge – LAC educational outcomes
https://www.bris.ac.uk/iris/publications/details/person_key$rzvR3LEQCqiyYJmTKNaeAUNxGOhSxl/personPublications
Professor Ian Sinclair – placement stability
http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/swrdu/Staff/ian.html
Teaching and learning Scotland
http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/lookedafterchildren/index.asp
Fostering Network
BAAF
Voice http://www.voiceyp.org/ngen_public/default.asp

12. Any key texts/books/seminal works that you wish to see included?

SCIE's work on fostering outcomes, residential care and challenging behaviours
Key works by Sonia Jackson
Key works by David Berridge with colleagues Isabelle Brodie & Rachel Harker
Ian Sinclair Review of outcomes for LACYP for DH Choice Protects programme
ANV's *Please Sir, can I have some more? Report on LACYP views on education needs and outcome*
Barnardos: *Failed by the system: care leavers views on on their educational experience:*
http://www.barnardos.org.uk/failed_by_the_system_report.pdf
Better education, better futures: Research, practice and the views of young people in public care
Harker,R., Dobel-Obel, D., Berridge, D., and Sinclair, R., (2004) 'Taking Care of Education: An Evaluation of the Education of Looked-after children',

13. Anything else that should be included or taken into account?

Looked after children education support teams (LACES)

Virtual school heads bring together teams of multi-disciplinary colleagues to improve education

attainment, this is a useful presentation on their by various heads to Young London Matters

http://www.younglondonmatters.org/uploads/documents/implementingcarematterspresentationwork

shop1virtualschoolheadgreenwichandsouthwark.ppt#270,9,Initial work focus

Note on setting review questions

The review questions are important because the scoping team will use these to assess the available literature. Review question need to be clear, specific and answerable. For example, the questions addressed in a scoping study on diversity in the early years might identify the following questions:

1. What is the evidence of different outcomes for children from diverse backgrounds and with different characteristics?

2. In what ways do early learning environments impact on children's sense of identity and understating of diversity?

3. What is the evidence to support specific strategies that help children from all backgrounds and with diverse characteristics to access the curriculum and make good progress in the early years?

In addition to suggesting review questions, it is important to provide definitions of key teams and concepts (for example, for 'outcomes' 'diversity' 'early learning environment' and 'early years' in the above example).

Appendix 4: National indicators and key data sources

National indicator (NI) number	NI detail	Source (published information)	Scale	Frequency of data collection	Latest data collection	First data collection	Link
Enjoy and achieve							
NI 72	Achievement of at least 72 points across the Early Years FS with at least six in each of the scales in personal social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy	DCSF: Foundation Stage Profile	National, regional and local authority	Annual	2009	2007	www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000879/index.shtml
NI 73 –74	Proportions of pupils achieving Level 4 or above in both English and maths at each of Key Stages 2 and 3	DCSF: Outcome indicators for children looked after, twelve months to 30 September 2009 – England	National, regional and local authority	Annual	2009 (2008 for Key Stage 3)	Trend data available since 2005	www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000930/index.shtml

NI 75	Proportion of pupils achieving five or more A*–C grades (or equivalent) including English and maths	DCSF: Outcome indicators for children looked after, twelve months to 30 September 2009 – England	National, regional and local authority	Annual	2009	Trend data available since 2005	www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000930/index.shtml
NI 83	Achievement at Level 5 or above in Science at Key Stage 3	DCSF: Outcome indicators for children looked after, twelve months to 30 September 2008 – England	National, regional and local authority	Annual	2008	Trend data available since 2005	www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000842/index.shtml
NI 87	Secondary school persistent absence rate	DCSF: Outcome indicators for children looked after, twelve months to 30 September 2009 – England	National, regional and local authority	Annual	2009	Trend data available since 2005	www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000930/index.shtml
NI 99–100	Looked after children reaching Level 4 in each of English and maths at Key Stage 2	DCSF: Outcome indicators for children looked after, twelve months to 30 September 2009 – England	National, regional and local authority	Annual	2009	Trend data available since 2005	www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000930/index.shtml

NI 101	Looked after children reaching five A*–C GCSEs (or equivalent) at Key Stage 4 (including English and maths)	DCSF: Outcome indicators for children looked after, twelve months to 30 September 2009 – England	National, regional and local authority	Annual	2009	Trend data available since 2005	www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000930/index.shtml
NI 114	Rate of permanent exclusions from school	DCSF: Outcome indicators for children looked after, twelve months to 30 September 2009 – England	National, regional and local authority	Annual	2009	Trend data available since 2005	www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000930/index.shtml
Make a positive contribution							
NI 79 and 81	Achievement of a Level 2 qualification (and gaps) by the age of 19	Data not yet identified for looked after children					
NI 80 and 82	Achievement of a Level 3 qualification (and gaps) by the age of 19	Data not yet identified for looked after children					

Achieve economic wellbeing							
NI 148	The proportion of former care leavers in education, employment or training	DCSF: Children looked after in England (including adoption and care leavers) year ending 31 March 2009	National, regional and local authority	Annual	2009	Trend data available since 1997/98	www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000878/index.shtml
Additional indicators							
Demographics	Characteristics of looked after children	DCSF: Children looked after in England (including adoption and care leavers) year ending 31 March 2009	National, regional and local authority	Annual	2009	Trend data available since 1997/98	www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000878/index.shtml

Appendix 5: Validated local practice process and assessment criteria

What is validated local practice?

Validated local practice examples describe how local authorities and their partners have successfully tackled key challenges and improved outcomes for children and young people. Their success in achieving improved outcomes has been assessed as being sufficiently well evidenced to merit inclusion within the review.

Collection methods

C4EO collected practice examples by sending invitations to local authorities and trusts to submit promising or proven practice examples to C4EO relevant to each theme after the knowledge workshops. The call for local practice examples was also advertised at the Vulnerable Children knowledge workshops and was placed on the C4EO website and publicised through various publications. Members of the Theme Advisory Group were also asked to use their own contacts and networks to publicise the call for practice examples. Respondents submitted examples in hard copy or via email.

Validation process

Local authorities and their partners were asked to submit their practice examples in a form that was designed to encourage them to fully describe their practice and to provide evidence of how it had improved outcomes. The forms were then assessed by a validation panel made up of a small group of sector specialists, professionals drawn from across the children's sector who have an expertise and a track record of achievement in vulnerable (looked after) children. Two sector specialists assessed each example against the following validation criteria:

Adequacy of the information supplied. Is there enough to apply the validation process?

Strength of the rationale. Was the intervention/practice fit for purpose and based upon a clear and sound rationale? Was it based on prior and good quality evidence of need and what works in similar contexts?

Sufficiency of impact and outcome evidence. Is there sufficient external and/or internal evaluation evidence that the practice/intervention has made a difference and led to improved outcomes? Are there good practitioner, service user and other stakeholder views? Do others implementing the same or similar practice or strategy changes or interventions report similar findings?

Evidence of what has/has not worked and why. Is there some good guidance here that will be useful to others? What are the golden threads for what works? What barriers and ways of overcoming these have been documented?

Actual or potential for replication or transfer to other contexts and settings. What evidence is there that the practice has already been successfully transferred to different settings, or has the potential for replication? Which elements are especially transferable? What elements are non-negotiable, and which are open to adaptation to suit other contexts? What do people need to put in place to transfer the practice, without substantial loss of effect?

Where two sector specialists assessed an example as being strongly supported by practice experience and evidence or as describing promising practice along with a good rationale for the intervention and some evidence of success and potential to be replicated, the Theme Lead reviews the assessment. Only examples that are endorsed by the Theme Lead are validated.

This review has drawn on four validated practice examples.

All the practice examples featured within the review, and those submitted and validated since the review was written, are available at www.c4eo.org.uk

Appendix 6: Stakeholder data

The views of parents, young people and service providers were sought in four ways.

1. Parents and carers panel

First, the executive summary of the research review on improving educational outcomes for looked after children and young people was sent to the parents and carers panel, organised by C4EO. Their views were sought on the following questions:

- What are your views on the main findings of the report?
  Seven parents, all mothers, responded to this question.

- The research evidence suggests there are lots of projects for young people that might help them educationally – arts-based projects, homework clubs, tutoring and so on.
  Are you aware of these projects in your local area?
  Six parents, all mothers, responded to this question.

- What support and training do foster carers need to support their children's education?
  Eight parents (seven mothers and one father who was also a foster carer) responded to this question.

- There is currently an absence of evidence about how birth families participate (or not) in looked after children's education. How could birth families contribute to their children's education?
  Seven parents, all mothers, responded to this question.

2. Consultation with birth parents

Second, C4EO also organised a consultation event with a group of four birth parents who have or have had children in care. The group, comprised of two mothers and two fathers, included: a single father whose daughter had returned home from foster care; a mother whose five children had been in care since 2003, and whose 18-year-old son had recently left care; a father whose children had been placed for adoption; and a mother whose son accessed respite care, and whose son-in-law was a care leaver.

The group met several times a year to advise their local authority on issues relating to children in care. In respect of increasing the number of care leavers in 'settled, safe accommodation', the group's views were sought on the following issues:

- if they were informed of their child's educational progress

- the kinds of information, services and support they had accessed

- what might be done to help improve educational outcomes for their children.

3. Young people's podcasting workshop

Third, a group of nine young people who were involved with two Action for Children's looked after care projects spent two days together exploring issues raised by the C4EO research reviews, including improving educational outcomes for looked after children and young people .

The young people were aged between 16 and 23 and had experience of being looked after in foster care, supported accommodation and a residential school. Their views were contained within a podcast.

They identified the skills, experiences and competences of their 'ideal carer'. Their views were also sought on the following questions in respect of accommodation:

- What resources does your carer provide to help with your education?

- What do you think of the statement that 'a high proportion of children and young people see their entry into care as beneficial in relation to their education?

- What kind of help would you have liked in order to help with your education?

- Why don't you want to be in school?

4. C4EO service provider workshops

Evidence has also been gathered from service providers during discussion groups held at C4EO knowledge workshops. Six events were held at which the authors presented the findings from the Vulnerable Children reviews. These were attended by senior managers and practitioners from statutory and voluntary agencies. Seventy-nine delegates attended discussion groups on educational outcomes for looked after children and young people.The 'local challenges' discussed in the groups included:

- How do we effectively support and promote the educational needs of children and young people placed out of area?

- How do we ensure that carers and teachers fully understand the issues that looked after children experience and the impact on their education?

- How do we meet the complex needs of looked after children within the classroom and other learning environments?

- What good practice examples exist which aim to help improve looked after children's attainment and help them achieve at school?

- How do we raise the profile of the education of looked after children across all agencies?

- How do we address the impact of children's earlier experiences on their learning?

- How do we improve the interface between education and other services to meet other needs – such as social and emotional needs – that impact on their education?

- What is the best way to capture soft outcomes and progress?

- How can we best address the need for appropriate, accredited, alternative educational provision?

- How do we ensure consistent transition planning in relation to education?

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