**Central South Consortium**

**Children Looked After Friendly Schools**

Over the past year, a project to promote good practice for CLA within schools and educational settings has been put into place. This project is composed of three elements:

1. **Children Looked After Friendly Schools Handbook – a resource that supports the practice of schools and settings in this area.**
2. **CLA Friendly Schools Training – a three tier training programme for those who work in educational settings that reinforces and develops the practice set out in the Handbook.**
3. **CLA Friendly Schools Quality Mark – A quality mark for schools achieved by evidencing a high standard of practice for CLA pupils. The Mark is based on a set of indicators that have been derived from the CLA Friendly Schools Handbook.**
4. **Children Looked After Friendly Schools Handbook**

This innovative project was developed between two local authorities who work closely together. Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil’s LACES worked with Andrea Higgins who has 33 years’ experience as an Educational Psychologist (EP), including working as the Principal EP for these LAs. Andrea is now the Programme Director for the EP training course at Cardiff University. Having worked extensively with CLA throughout her career, Andrea, who has 33 years’ experience as an Educational Psychologist (EP), including working as the Principal EP for these LAs. Andrea is now the Programme Director for the EP training course at Cardiff University. Having worked extensively with CLA throughout her career, Andrea used these experiences, with the support and advice of others, as the foundation for a handbook for those who work in schools and other settings called “The CLA Friendly Schools”. This book was launched in September 2017 and has been very well received by teachers and support staff. The resource is currently being made available to other local authorities across the Central South Consortium region so that all schools can benefit from it. Schools can download the resource from the internet and it is available on Exchange Wales.

The handbook is divided into five different chapters:

Chapter 1 – provides background information, terminology and contextual data.

Chapter 2 – provides an overview of the impact of trauma on brain development and attachment patterns, and how these can influence behaviour. This will help in understanding CLA and why they behave in a different way from children with more secure backgrounds.

Chapter 3 – looks in detail at what makes a school CLA Friendly. This includes:

* The whole school systems and practice
* Preventive approaches: building the resilience of our CLA;
* Responsive strategies to support the CLA who are presenting more challenges.

Chapter 4 – reports on the views of professionals working directly with children in the care system and provides important messages from the children themselves and their carers.

Chapter 5 – details further sources of advice and information.

1. **CLA Friendly Schools Training**

Central training support is a key component of the PDG LAC Grant. In order to promote the development of this across the Central South Consortium, whilst also ensuring quality and consistency, it was agreed that a regional training package that sat alongside the CLA Friendly School handbook was required. Surveys at events attended by teachers and support staff showed that they were keen to have levelled training that would support in the establishment of Children Looked After Friendly Schools. A training group was formed, led by the regional lead for the PDG LAC but with a broad membership that included Andrea Higgins; a Motivational Interviewing trainer; all five of the LACES from within the Consortium; representative Designated Looked after Children Persons and senior staff from a range of schools. This ensured a balanced, stakeholder perspective that has been central in the achievement of a quality training package, differentiated to meet the needs of different members of a school team and focused on ensuring whole school approaches. During the last six months, level 1 and level 2 has been developed, piloted and is now being rolled out to school and staff with the aim of launching Level 3 in the Autumn Term.

Level 1

This is a whole school ‘awareness raising’ training session, that runs for 60-90 minutes, to be delivered in staff meetings, induction training or as part of twilight sessions. There is an emphasis on the message that each and every practitioner has a responsibility for all CLA in their settings, schools and Local Authorities.

The training covers a range of topics including:

* Terminology
* Attachment and the impact on the brain and its development
* Adverse Childhood Experiences
* The Impact on outcomes of CLA
* The role of everyone in Education
* Strategies and ways of working that will help CLA.

Level 2

This second level of training is targeted at those who will be working very closely with CLA and other vulnerable groups, throughout each day, such as classroom and subject teachers and teaching assistants. The focus is on ensuring equality and high standards of good practice within classrooms across the Consortium. The teaching and learning strategies include promoting high aspirations and reducing low achievements, ensuring permanency and consistency, using positive language and communication and promoting emotional literacy. This should support teachers and support staff to think about an appropriate provision map for vulnerable pupils, including strategic responses such as literacy support, social interaction groups, mentoring, study skills, foster carer links and transition support. This is at a pilot stage at present and will be implemented into the central training provision from September 2018.

Level 3

The Level 3 training package is aimed at those working in schools who have additional responsibilities for CLA including Designated Persons, members of Senior Leadership teams and Teaching assistants with specialist responsibilities. In primary schools this could be a member of Senior Staff or/and the Designated Persons or support staff who have pastoral responsibilities and may be ELSA/Thrive trained. This level of training is also a whole day training which helps develop techniques for individual or small group support for children and young people who may need time and space to deal with issues related to trauma in a safe environment. Whole school approaches and the fostering of CLA Friendly School practice at all levels of practice will also be addressed. It is hoped that this will be available from autumn 2018 onwards within the region.

1. **CLA Friendly Schools Quality Mark**

A multi professional team from Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil have been devising a Quality Mark for schools, which is currently being piloted. The development team includes an Educational Psychologist; an Advisory Teacher for CLA; the LACES from the two LAs, Designated Persons from local schools and Andrea Higgins from Cardiff University. The Quality Mark process is based on an audit tool that aims to recognise high standards of practice. Schools will be able to achieve awards at two levels: Gold and Platinum. The former is composed of indicators that are both desirable and essential and schools will be expected to evidence practice against these. The latter will highlight examples of sector leading and innovative practice as well as the achievement of a number of further indicators. It is hoped that once it has been trialled and evaluated, the system will then be launched across the Consortium

As part of process of creating a strategic plan for the PDG LAC grant, all schools within the Central South Consortium region are being required to link their planning to pertinent indicators from the Quality Mark audit tool. Applications will be made within school clusters, and use of the Quality Mark indicators will ensure that school leaders are using the grant strategically to make the changes needed to improve the lives of the children and young people who are Looked After. The pupils who have experienced adverse childhood experiences need the support of schools and their partners to ensure that they are helped to achieve well. Practice that enhances strategic planning and processes is an important aspect of the PDG LAC Grant.