

The Looked After Children and Education Project

Why did the Looked After Children and Education project take place?

- Research shows that, in the UK, looked after children and young people do not achieve as well in education as non-looked after children and young people.
- In Wales, the Welsh Government has established LAC education coordinators, support workers, designated teachers and personal education plans. But the educational achievements of looked after young people are still not improving.
- The Welsh Government asked CASCADE (The Children's Social Care Research and Development Centre) at Cardiff University, along with Voices from Care Cymru, the Fostering Network and Spice Innovations, to find out about:
 - looked after children's experiences of education
 - their opinions about what could be done to improve their education.

How did we find out about looked after children and young people's experiences of education?

- CASCADE and the Fostering Network organised interviews in primary schools and in secondary schools in North and South Wales.
- CASCADE and Voices from Care Cymru helped care leavers to carry out group interviews with 16-25 year olds in North and South Wales.
- Spice Innovations gave the young people who helped with the project time credits for the work they had done.

What did we find out about looked after children and young people's educational experiences and aspirations?

- There is still a gap between the educational achievements of looked after and non-looked after children and young people.

The key problems for looked after children were found to be:

- Instability in placements and in schools
- Lack of help with education
- Carers not being able to support learning
- Lack of help with mental or physical wellbeing
- Low expectations of what looked after young people can achieve in education
- Schools and social workers not communicating enough

The key findings were:

- Looked after children and young people had lots of aspirations and ideas about their education and their employment and future careers
- Some of their aspirations might be hindered by emotional problems, lack of resources, and unstable or unsupportive relationships with carers, teachers and social workers
- School days could be disrupted by meetings
- Looked after children and young people wanted better resources, especially IT resources
- Some foster carers were not able to help with school work and homework
- Some looked after young people felt 'labelled' as problems, troubled and different
- Stable placements and equal support, resources and opportunities helped looked after children and young people to participate in education

What did we say to the Welsh Government about how to help looked after children and young people with their education?

- 1. Find out more about how to help and support them in education*
- 2. Education and arrangements for moving schools should be a priority*
- 3. Don't make them hear arguments about who is responsible for money*
- 4. Involve children and young people in deciding if they should or shouldn't move schools*
- 5. Foster carers should get educational opportunities to help support young people's education and aspirations*
- 6. Foster carers should be able to learn how to help with homework*
- 7. There should be LACYP 'education ambassadors' independent from social services and schools.*
- 8. Meetings about care should not take place in school hours*
- 9. Provide extra learning opportunities and 1-to-1 support for LACYP*
- 10. Mentoring projects, possibly by people who are care experienced, could offer support*
- 11. Careers services and social workers should not have low expectations of what LACYP can achieve in school*
- 12. Social workers and schools should communicate more with each other*
- 13. Offer support and projects based on the individual needs and opinions of each young person*
- 14. Help young people manage when support or access to projects ends*
- 15. Support and projects open to all children and young people may be less stigmatising and more beneficial*
- 16. Create opportunities to meet other care-experienced children and young people*
- 17. Offer resources such as computers and books*



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