In March 2001, the Prime Minister asked the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) to make recommendations on how best to raise the educational attainment of children in care.

The Unit launched a written consultation exercise in July 2001, seeking views on the factors affecting children's education and good practice at raising attainment. The consultation was sent to agencies, organisations and individuals working, or with a particular interest, in this area. A consultation with children and young people in care was launched in October 2001, in conjunction with The Who Cares? Trust. Children and young people were asked about their school and other educational activities, and particular likes and dislikes. The adult consultation generated responses from 200 individuals and organisations, and just under 2,000 responses were received for the children and young people's consultation. The Children's Society organised consultation events on behalf of the SEU with a small number of children and young people with disabilities.

As part of its research, the Unit studied the work of five local authorities in detail, and spoke to a wide variety of people with an interest in the education of children in care. These included children and young people in care and care leavers, social workers, teachers and head teachers, foster and residential carers, local authority officers in the education and social services departments, educational psychologists, Connexions personal advisers, youth workers and other key professionals. The five authorities were Brighton and Hove, Dorset, Greenwich, Herefordshire and Leeds. Further visits took place to over 20 other local authorities across the country.

The Unit prepared this report in consultation with other relevant government departments, and an advisory forum with representatives from national public and voluntary organisations working with children in care and frontline staff. The SEU met with national and local organisations with an interest in children's education, visited private and voluntary sector service providers, and commissioned additional research from the Thomas Coram Institute and the London School of Economics. The SEU also looked at international evidence, but found insufficient data on education to draw valid comparisons.

The Unit's remit covers England only. A version of this report for children and young people, a summary of the main report, and best practice guidance are also available. Further information about the SEU can be found at www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk
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FOREWORD

If we are serious about building a prosperous, fair and strong society, then every child, whatever their background, must have the chance to make the most of their talents and potential. That’s true of a child in care as much as any other.

It’s why the Government is committed to giving children in care all the same life chances any parent would give their child, and none is more important than a good education which is crucial to a brighter future.

This sets major challenges. Being separated from family and friends, changing neighbourhoods and spending time out of school are difficult experiences for any child. Such an unsettling time makes it much harder to learn. It helps explain why almost half of children leave care with no qualifications at all. It is also a measurement of how society has failed these children in the past.

We are determined to put this right. We have already put the basic building blocks in place through investment and reform to provide all children with a better education. But we need to do more, which is why I asked the Social Exclusion Unit to look at what the Government can do to help raise the educational attainment of children in care.

This report is the result of a thorough investigation into the problems we must overcome to provide children in care with a good education. The changes identified will mean fewer children frequently moving placements or spending time out of school. Young people in care will be given more help, encouragement and support to access education, to turn up to school and to stay on after reaching 16. There will be more help for those children who fall behind and better training for teachers, social workers and carers to improve the health and wellbeing of every child.

These reforms are all part of the Government’s wider aim to provide children with the services they need, when they need them. We have also announced today the Government’s plans for children’s services set out in the Children’s Green Paper Every Child Matters. This includes proposals to improve integration of services, provide clearer accountability and responsibility, and reform and empower the workforce. It will bring stronger child protection and provide a voice for the disadvantaged.

I am confident that together these changes will at last give children in care the chance they deserve to fulfil their potential – vital for the young people themselves, but also for the health and prosperity of our society as a whole.

Tony Blair
Our aim

1. The Government’s long-term policy objective is to ensure that every child in care is able to fulfil his or her potential.

2. This report from the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) examines the barriers that prevent children in care achieving their educational potential and highlights specific areas of action to improve their life chances.

Key changes – Social Exclusion Unit report on the education of children in care

- **Greater stability** – so that children in care do not have to move home or school so often.
- **Less time out of school – longer in education** – help with school admissions, better access to education with more support to help children in care attend school regularly and stay on after age 16.
- **Help with schoolwork** – more individual support tailored to the child backed by more training for teachers and social workers.
- **More help from home to support schoolwork** – by giving carers better training in children’s education.
- **Improved health and wellbeing** – with teachers, social care staff, health workers and carers all working together in the interests of the child.


Key proposals in the Children’s Green Paper

Action will be focused on four main areas:

- **Supporting families and carers**
- **Early intervention – early identification and effective protection**
- **Improving accountability and increasing integration**
- **Workforce reform**
4. The SEU reviewed the existing target for the education of children in care, and a new target has been set. Increased funding is available to underpin delivery.

**New target**

The revised Public Service Agreement is to:

**Improve life chances for children, including by:**

- substantially narrowing the gap between the educational attainment and participation of children in care and that of their peers by 2006.

This target will have been achieved if, by 2006:

- outcomes for 11-year-olds in English and Maths are at least 60 per cent as good as those of their peers;
- the proportion who become disengaged from education is reduced, so that no more than 10 per cent reach school leaving age without having sat a GCSE equivalent exam; and
- the proportion of those aged 16 who get qualifications equivalent to five GCSEs graded A*-C has risen on average by 4 percentage points each year since 2002; and in all authorities at least 15 per cent of young people in care achieve this level of qualifications.

**Increased funding**

The Government announced increased funding in the Spending Review 2002:

- the Vulnerable Children’s Grant, £252 million over 2003–06, will provide additional educational support for children most in need, including children in care; and
- an additional £113 million over 2003–06 will improve care placements and stability through the Choice Protects programme.

**Government progress**

5. The actions set out in this report come in addition to recent investment and reform aimed at improving the life chances of children in care. Developments include:

- *Quality Protects*, a five-year programme launched in 1998 with national objectives for children’s services and £885 million of new money;
- joint *Guidance on the Education of Children and Young People in Public Care* (the ‘joint Guidance’), published by the Department of Health (DH) and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in 2000;
- National Minimum Standards for children’s homes and fostering services, published in 2002; and
- additional responsibilities for local authorities to support care leavers, introduced in October 2001.

6. These have brought notable improvements for children in care, such as better training for frontline workers on children’s educational needs. However, progress has been inconsistent. Fewer than one in four local authorities met the 2001 target of half of care leavers obtaining one or more GCSE level qualifications.

7. The SEU was commissioned to look at what more could be done to improve the life chances of children in care by analysing the problem, talking to children in care and staff, and delivering cross-government plans.
Background – the current situation

8. Many children in care enjoy school, and almost all think it is important. But as a group they have poor experiences of education and very low educational attainment.

Children in Care – Key Statistics

- At any one time, around 60,000 children are in care. In 2001–02, 41 per cent of children in care were aged 10 or under.
- Most children – 80 per cent – enter care because of abuse or neglect, or for family reasons. Less than 10 per cent enter care because of their own behaviour.
- Two thirds live in foster care and one in 10 in children’s homes.
- One in four children in care lives outside their ‘home’ local authority.
- In 2001/02, only 8 per cent of children in care achieved five or more A*-C grades at GCSE, compared to half of all young people.
- Children in care have poor results in Key Stage tests at age seven, 11 and 14. Just 1 per cent go to university.

9. Some care leavers go on to be very successful later in life. However, for many, poor experiences of education and care contribute to later social exclusion:

- between a quarter and a third of rough sleepers were in care;
- young people who have been in care are two and a half times more likely to be teenage parents; and
- around a quarter of adults in prison spent some time in care as children.

10. As well as the cost to individuals, this has high social and economic costs. Improving education, employment and training of care leavers to the level of their peers could save an estimated £300 million over three years. Savings from reduced crime and homelessness would be even greater.

Underlying problems

11. Five underlying factors have inhibited change and led to slow progress:

- capacity – extremely high vacancy rates in the children’s social care workforce and insufficient staff training about the educational needs of children in care;
- management and leadership – lack of commitment and time at a senior level, staff feeling powerless to affect change compounded by a lack of understanding between frontline staff and managers;
- resources – while funding has increased in real terms, some areas struggle to deliver an adequate service, exacerbated by a lack of strategic planning and poor use of resources;
● **systems and structures** – a widespread lack of joint working between frontline workers and between local authority officers in different departments; and

● **attitudes** – many carers and social workers are positive about children in care, but negative attitudes and low expectations can be commonly found among professionals and wider society.

The five big issues

12. The SEU has identified five key reasons why children in care underachieve in education:

   (i) too many young people’s lives are characterised by **instability**;

   (ii) young people in care spend too much **time out of school** or other place of learning;

   (iii) children do not have sufficient **help with their education** if they get behind;

   (iv) carers are not expected, or equipped, to provide sufficient **support and encouragement** at home for learning and development; and

   (v) children in care need more help with their **emotional, mental or physical health and wellbeing**.

Stability

13. Most children in care only enter care once and only have one care placement. However, **one in seven had three or more placements** in 2001–02. **Over a third of the young people the Social Exclusion Unit consulted had changed school at least twice** as a result of a change in care placement.

14. Finding and keeping a suitable care placement is key to improving stability. The lack of placement choice and poor strategic planning and commissioning of care placements can hamper social workers.

Time out of school and time in education

15. Evidence on access to early years provision is very limited. Many local authorities do not know how many three- and four-year-olds in their care attend nursery.

16. Most school-aged children in care are in stable places in mainstream schools. However, **a significant minority are in non-mainstream settings**, with some only receiving a few hours tuition per week. Many miss long periods of school because:

   ● they do not have a **school place**;

   ● they are **excluded**; or

   ● they do not attend **regularly**.

17. In 2001–02, only 46 per cent of care leavers were known to be in employment, education or training at age 19, compared to 86 per cent of all 19-year-olds.
Help with schoolwork

18. Children in care may need **extra support in education**, either because they have **missed out on schooling**, or because they have special educational needs (SEN). **Of those children in care for a year or more, 27 per cent have a statement of SEN**, compared to 3 per cent of all children.

19. Children in care can benefit from whole school support measures such as learning mentors, or anti-bullying and anti-truancy initiatives. In addition, the joint Guidance introduced Personal Education Plans for each child in care and designated teachers in every school. Early evidence about the impact of these is mixed.

20. Children in care and care leavers in further and higher education may need additional support, particularly if they are re-engaging in education having missed out on school.

Help and encouragement from home

21. Carers and social workers who support education successfully have high expectations, a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities, up-to-date information about education, and the skills to support development and learning.

22. There is **wide variety** in the amount and quality of support provided for children’s education, even within the same local authority. Although some carers provide excellent support, others do not – either because they do not know how best to help the child or do not see it as their responsibility.

23. **Youth work and out-of-school activities** can make a significant contribution to children’s wider learning and development. Around three-quarters of those in care have access to after-school activities and clubs.

Health and wellbeing

24. Educational outcomes are strongly influenced by a **child’s emotional, mental and physical health**. School can boost a child’s health through raising self-confidence and self-esteem, enabling participation in sports and access to health education.

25. Placement moves can exacerbate health problems and make diagnosis harder. Instability, bullying and trauma can all impact on a child’s emotional health.

26. Children with mental health problems can have difficulty accessing Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Waiting times can be as long as 12–18 months in some areas. The Government aims to expand CAMHS by a minimum of 10 per cent year-on-year, with additional funding of £250 million over the next three years.
Delivering for children in care – national Government action

27. The Government will take action to build on Quality Protects and other programmes in eight areas. The full list of action is in chapter nine, and includes:

(i) **Improving accountability through the Children’s Green Paper consultation on legislating to:**

- create the post of a Director of Children’s Services;
- create a lead council member for children; and
- introduce a duty on the local authority to promote the educational achievement of children in care.

(ii) **Supporting the frontline more effectively:**

- by clarifying roles and responsibilities for social workers and others working with children in care; and
- by improving training and support for foster carers, to prevent placements breaking down and so that carers can provide better support for schoolwork from home.

(iii) **Ensuring that local authorities have adequate resources:**

- through the Vulnerable Children’s Grant (£252 million over three years) and Choice Protects funding (£113 million over three years). From 1 April 2004, the Quality Protects Grant will be mainstreamed into local authority budgets.

(iv) **Improving understanding of care, and attitudes towards those in care:**

- by working with local authorities and others to consider how best to promote understanding and positive images of care, helping to prevent bullying and stigma.

(v) **Refining the legal framework and guidance in the longer term to improve placement planning, the Government will consult further on plans to:**

- reduce the number of school moves due to changes in care placements;
- reduce long distance placements; and
- improve regional commissioning of specialist services.

(vi) **Improving standards:**

- by recommending to the General Social Care Council (GSCC) that social care staff working with families must have up-to-date knowledge of children’s education and development needs to remain on the GSCC register.
(vii) **Prioritising children in care in current and future policy development:**

- by recognising explicitly the needs of children in care and their carers in national programmes for pre-school children; and
- by working to improve children’s emotional and mental health.

(viii) **Making better use of information and research:**

- using data from the School Census (particularly to understand outcomes for children from ethnic minority groups and children with disabilities).
- by harmonising central government data requirements over the longer term.

**Delivering for children in care – recommendations for local action**

28. Local authorities, schools and independent care providers need to take action to build on progress in six areas. The full list is in chapter ten and includes:

(i) **Improved planning:**

- at a strategic level, improved management information should be used to assess likely future placement needs to reduce frequent moves; and
- each child should have an individual education target.

(ii) **Putting a priority on children in care:**

- local authorities should ensure carers are fully aware of, and able to access, local services for pre-school children; and
- local education authorities should consider using the available funding to provide bursaries for children in care to schools to facilitate admissions.

(iii) **More support for children in care:**

- local authorities should ensure every child has access to good quality out-of-school activities and to appropriate and up-to-date educational books, toys and Information and Communication Technology equipment;
- local authorities should make immediate arrangements to provide full-time education for children who do not have a school place; and
- leaving care services should work with colleges and universities to raise awareness of the specific needs of care leavers, including through staff training.
(iv) **Listening and responding to children in care:**

- social workers should consult the Advisory Centre for Education exclusions helpline if a child has been excluded from school and, taking the views of the child and carer into account, mount a challenge as appropriate; and

- children and young people should be consulted about matters relating to their education provision, and their views acted upon.

(v) **Training and support for social workers and teachers:**

- local authorities should develop joint training for staff which includes sessions delivered by children and young people in or leaving care where possible; and

- local authorities should assess foster carers’ ability to support a child’s education as part of their initial assessment and give extra help to those yet to reach the required standard.

(vi) **Use of data to inform service improvements:**

- local authorities should monitor the number of children changing schools as a result of entering or leaving care, or a change in care placement; and

- local authorities should collect information on the proportion of children’s individual education targets that are met.

To support local action, the SEU has produced a best practice guide that includes case study examples of action to address these issues. Find it at www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk or call 020 7944 8133.

**Measuring success – how will we know it’s working?**

29. As well as the new Public Service Agreement target, the Government will put in place a number of arrangements for ensuring that the action in this report is implemented in full.

Progress will be monitored and checked through:

- working with key inspectorates to ensure that local implementation of the report’s action is included in performance assessments;

- using existing indicators of educational outcomes for children in care to monitor progress, and working with inspectorates to develop new indicators that monitor children’s attainment in Key Stage tests, basic skills and participation in university or college post-16;

- considering, as part of the Spending Review 2004, whether to introduce additional targets and indicators, including the option of ‘value-added’ targets to measure individual children’s progress; and

- establishing a new project group to take forward implementation of this report. The group’s work will be overseen by the Ministerial Committee on Social Exclusion and the Ministerial Sub-committee on the Delivery of Services for Children, Young People and Families, and an external advisory group on the education of children in care.
CHAPTER ONE: WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

- Many children in care have poor experiences of education and very low educational attainment. Most enjoy school, and almost all think it is important. But they are disproportionately likely to be bullied, excluded or miss long periods of schooling.
- Participation and completion rates in further and higher education are low.
- Although socio-economic and other factors contribute to low attainment among children in care, they are not the only explanation.
- The poor experiences and low attainment of many children in care contributes to their later social exclusion, and has high social and economic costs.

Educational outcomes of children in care

1.1 In 2001–02, just 8 per cent of young people in year 11 who had spent at least one year in care gained five or more GCSEs graded A*–C, compared with 50 per cent of all young people. Almost 50 per cent had no qualifications at GCSE level. Of year 11 pupils who had been in care for one year or more, 42 per cent did not sit GCSEs or GNVQs, compared to just 4 per cent of all children.

GCSE or equivalent outcomes (2001/02)
Children in care

This report uses the term *children in care* to mean all children and young people who are *looked after* by a local authority in accordance with the Children Act 1989. That is, children and young people who are the subject of an interim or full care order or a protection order, and those accommodated by the local authority with the agreement of their parents.

This report does not directly address the needs of, or outcomes for, children and young people who are:

- looked after by local authorities on a series of agreed short-term placements (‘respite care’);
- disabled and in residential provision where parental responsibility does not lie with the local authority;
- living with people other than their parents but not under the supervision of social services; or
- on remand in, or sentenced to, local authority secure units – as opposed to welfare cases.

However, much of the analysis and many of the recommendations in the report will also be relevant to these groups of children and young people.

1.2 There are significant variations in educational attainment within the care population. Those who are likely to do better include: children who have been in care for a long time; those who have stable care placements; and/or those whose main placement is in foster care. Girls also outperform boys by a greater margin than is seen in the rest of the population, and children do better when they are placed within their own local authority. Data on the relative attainment of different ethnic groups in care is not currently available, although it will be available in future years.

**Percentage obtaining at least one GCSE graded A*–G by length of time in care (2000)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of time in care</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
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<tr>
<td>Less than 3 weeks</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3–8 weeks</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2–6 months</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 months–1 year</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1–2 years</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>2–5 years</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
<td>45</td>
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</table>
1.3 It is not just at GCSE level that children in care do less well. Of those who sat Key Stage tests in 2001–02, children at Key Stage 1 (aged seven) achieved at just under 60 per cent of the level of other children. The performance of children at Key Stage 2 (aged 11) was just over half that of their peers, and at Key Stage 3 (aged 14) they did one-third as well as their peers’. The graph below shows comparisons between Maths results, although similar differences exist for other subjects.
1.4 Data on those achieving ‘A’ levels and NVQ3 is not collected. However, in 2001–02, just 46 per cent of care leavers were known to be engaged in education, training or employment at the age of 19, compared to 86 per cent of their peers6. An estimated 1 per cent of young people from care go to university, compared to around 40 per cent of all school leavers.

Who is in care?

- At any one time, around 60,000 children are in care. Over the course of a year, around 80,000 will spend some time in care.
- Almost half of children in care (41 per cent) are aged under 10, including one fifth aged under five.
- Boys, children from some ethnic minority groups, disabled children and those from lower socio-economic groups are over-represented in care.
- Most unaccompanied asylum-seeker children aged under 16 are taken into care upon arrival in the UK. They now represent approximately 6 per cent of all children in care.
- Most children come into care because they have been abused or neglected, or for family reasons. Fewer than one in 10 are in care because of their own behaviour.
- Two-thirds of children in care live in foster placements. Of the remainder, most live in children’s homes or with their parents (usually as part of the transition back home).
- One in four children lives outside their home local authority. Out of authority placements can make planning for, and supporting, children’s education particularly difficult.

Further information on the characteristics of the care population and different care settings is included in Appendix A. The Government produces an annual report on the impact of the Children Act 1989, which describes recent changes and progress in children’s services.

Experiences of education

“I love doing Shakespeare, it’s brilliant!”
(13-year-old female, foster care)

“I was bullied because they knew I was in foster care and my family was falling apart.”
(16-year-old female, secure unit)

School age

1.5 Despite the common perception that children in care are ‘uninterested in learning’, the vast majority (97 per cent) consider education important, with nearly two-thirds (61 per cent) giving future employment as the reason6. Many enjoy school, with around a third (35 per cent) identifying specific subjects or learning as their favourite aspect.

1.6 However, not all children in care have good experiences of school.

- They are 10 times more likely than others to be permanently excluded from school9. Over a third say they have been excluded at some point10.
- Six out of 10 say they have been bullied at school11 compared to roughly one in six of all children12.
- One in eight missed five or more weeks schooling in 2001–213.
1.7 Education and learning is not confined to the classroom, but also includes activities such as going to museums or historical buildings. Activities such as sports, drama, arts or music help improve self-esteem, social skills and motivation as well as contributing to learning. Adult support is important to enable children to access these activities successfully.

**Beyond compulsory school age**

1.8 Young people who go on to further and higher education are more likely to drop out without completing the course, with accommodation and financial difficulties, or a lack of support from a nominated person being the main reasons. Problems include local authorities not having a specific budget to support care leavers in higher education, or a lack of accommodation in university vacations. Funding to implement the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 can be used to support young people’s education.

**What explains these poor outcomes?**

1.9 At least some of this poor achievement is explained by other disadvantages. Children in care are more likely to be from groups that tend to do less well in education (discussed further in Appendix A). They are also much more likely to have statements of special educational need – 27 per cent have statements compared to 3 per cent of all children. However, even taking account of these factors, children in care as a group do significantly worse than their peers.

1.10 Longitudinal data on outcomes for children in care is very limited. However, analysis undertaken for this project of outcomes for children in care in the 1970s and 1980s suggests that where children spent time in children’s homes, around half of their low attainment could be attributed to their care status. Although the care system and the profile of the care population have changed since that time, they do indicate that the low attainment of children in care cannot wholly be explained away by other factors.

**Educational progress of children in care: Coventry**

Coventry has collected attainment data for children in their care since 1995. They have used the Department for Education and Skills ‘autumn package’ to compare individuals’ actual attainment to their predicted attainment based on previous Standard Assessment Test (SAT) results. The analysis relates only to children who were in care for two consecutive rounds of SATs. The results suggest that:

- at Key Stage 2, children in care generally did better than their Key Stage 1 scores predicted, thus ‘being in care’ was adding value;
- at Key Stage 3, children who had low Key Stage 2 scores generally performed at around their predicted levels, but those who did well at Key Stage 2 had dropped back, and under-performed relative to predictions; and
- by Key Stage 4 the vast majority of children performed below the level predicted by their Key Stage 3 scores, thus being in care was negative.

This value-added analysis is being used to inform practice developments within both the education and social services departments.
Why does it matter?

1.11 Bad experiences of education and poor educational attainment among children in care are important because:

- school directly impacts on their quality and enjoyment of life;
- low attainment contributes to increased likelihood of social exclusion in later life; and
- both low attainment and subsequent social exclusion have high social and economic costs.

Quality of life

“[School] has helped me go on with life and if it was not for school I wouldn’t cope at all.”
(15-year-old female, children’s home)

1.12 Opportunities for socialising with their peers at playgroup or nursery are an important part of pre-school children’s development. School is a major source of friendships, interests, and opportunities for most children.

1.13 School can assume greater importance for children in care than other children as it can provide a source of stability – something constant while their home lives are in flux. The flip side of this is that when school goes badly, or when children are not at school at all, their quality of life can suffer much more than those who have a secure home life.

Social exclusion in later life

1.14 The Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) report, Bridging the Gap, identified non-participation in education, training or employment at 16–18 as a major predictor of later unemployment. It also noted the links between non-participation and higher than average rates of poor health, criminal activity, drug use and depression. Low educational attainment is an important contributor to the high levels of social exclusion faced by care leavers:

- between a quarter and a third of rough sleepers were once in care. The Big Issue found that nearly one in five vendors had been in care;
- young people who have been in care are two and a half times more likely to become teenage parents than other young people;
- the children of women who have spent time in care are themselves two and a half times more likely to go into care than their peers; and
- over a quarter of prisoners were in care as children.

Social and economic costs

1.15 Preliminary research for the SEU has estimated the total cost of social exclusion among adults who were formerly in care. If those leaving care who do not go into education, employment or training had the same pattern of activity as their peers, the saving over three years would be in the order of £300 million.
CHAPTER TWO: PROGRESS SO FAR

The Government has introduced measures to improve support for children and parents at home, so that fewer children need to spend time in care.

Initiatives to support children in care include:
- the Quality Protects initiative, supported by £885 million over five years;
- joint Department for Education and Skills and Department of Health Guidance on the Education of Children and Young People in Public Care;
- National Minimum Standards for children’s homes and fostering services; and
- additional responsibilities for local authorities to support care leavers.

These initiatives have led to notable improvements in some areas, but there is still a long way to go.

Supporting children, parents and families

2.1 There are three strands to the Government’s work to support children, parents and families before they reach a point of crisis:

- **universal** measures to improve outcomes for all children, such as smaller class sizes for five- to seven-year-olds, or the National Childcare Strategy;

- **targeted** measures to support children and families who might be at risk – for example because they have low incomes or live in deprived areas. These include the new Child Tax Credit, and Excellence in Cities aimed at raising standards in inner city schools; and

- measures to identify and support **individual** children and their families such as Behaviour and Education Support Teams being introduced in some schools, or the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families, used by social services and other local authority staff.

Sure Start local programmes

Sure Start local programmes aim to improve the health and wellbeing of families and children before birth and aged nought to three in the most disadvantaged areas of the country, so children can flourish at home and when they go to school. Programmes are led by local partnerships with strong parental, carer and community involvement. By April 2004, there will be 524 Sure Start local programmes helping up to 400,000 children². 
2.2 The Government has integrated national policy for children and young people within the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). These changes bring together policy on children’s social services, teenage pregnancy, family and parenting law and support, and family policy with education. At the same time, the first Minister of State for Children was appointed.

2.3 Government initiatives to improve services for children – which, over time, should reduce the numbers of children coming into care, and improve outcomes for all children – include:

- the Green Paper, *Every Child Matters* (the Children’s Green Paper), which sets out radical options to improve children’s services including social services, family support and schools;

- the Children’s National Service Framework (NSF), which will develop new national standards across the NHS and social services for children;

- local preventative strategies, which will improve the way that different bodies provide services to children and young people work together; and

- Children’s Trusts, which will pilot new ways for local organisations to work together to commission and, if appropriate, provide services to children and families.

Improving the life chances of those in care

‘Corporate Parenting’

2.4 The whole local authority, not just the social services department, has a responsibility to act as a ‘corporate parent’ for children in care, and to “provide the kind of loyal support that any good parent would give to their children”\(^2\).

**Corporate Parenting: Bolton**

Bolton councillors maintain an active interest in the wellbeing of the children in their care. They carry out spot checks on children’s homes, asking questions of staff and managers, and discussing any follow-up action that needs to be taken. Their interest and support raises the profile of children in care across the authority, and results in increased effort to meet their needs across all authority services.

A joint education and social services panel oversees the education and wider development of children in care. The panel addresses problems facing both individual young people and services as a whole. It has led to improved local services for children in care and better training for school governors, teachers, foster carers and residential workers.

**Quality Protects**

2.5 From 1998 Quality Protects (QP) was the main vehicle for delivering the Government’s objectives for all children’s social services, including care services. It was supported by a grant of £885 million over five years. The 11 objectives include promoting placement stability, improving educational and healthcare opportunities, listening to children’s needs, and improving social care worker skills. Many of the good practice examples in this report have been funded using QP money.
2.6 QP has been used to kick-start improvements in children’s social services. These improvements need to be embedded into standard practice, and to this end, the programme funding will be mainstreamed into council budgets from 2004 rather than being paid as a separate grant.

Listening to children: Hampshire

Hampshire recognises that consulting properly with children and young people requires sustained commitment from the council. Their Care Action Team is run by 15 young people in care, seven of whom receive bursaries of around £150 per month in return for their work for the council. The team run events for children in care in Hampshire, including fun events, events associated with learning (such as a recent literacy day) or for consultation. Team members are also involved in interview panels for inclusion social workers who work with specific groups of schools, and run training sessions for designated teachers and school governors to explain what it is like to be in care. The group has recently introduced a Charter Mark for excellence (CAT Mark) which is awarded to organisations that involve young people in creating better services.

Guidance on the Education of Children and Young People in Public Care

2.7 The DfES and Department of Health jointly published Guidance on the Education of Children and Young People in Public Care (the ‘joint Guidance’) in May 2000. The main requirements are:

- a nominated champion for children in care to promote inter-agency working;
- Personal Education Plans for children in care;
- a designated teacher in each school to promote the interests of children in care; and
- the expectation of a time limit of 20 school days within which children in care who change school must be found an education placement.

2.8 Implementation of the joint Guidance was supported through the Standards Fund and QP. A dedicated team was established to help local authorities implement the Guidance, encourage inter-authority links and the dissemination of good practice, and monitor progress. The team has also helped the Government understand the difficulties faced by frontline staff.

Recent legislative changes

Care Standards Act 2000

2.9 The Care Standards Act 2000 established National Minimum Standards (NMS) for providers, including children’s homes and fostering services. The NMS require fostering services and children’s homes to prioritise education (see chapter six). The National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) is responsible for registering care providers and ensuring that they comply with the Standards.

Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000

2.10 Since October 2001, each young person aged 16–17 who is in or leaving care should have a personal adviser and a pathway plan. This should set out their goals and needs and how these might be met, including the provision of accommodation and financial support. Assistance relating to education, training and employment should continue until they are 21 or, if they are completing education or training, until the age of 24. Leaving care advisers, if appropriately trained, may also act as Connexions Personal Advisers. Implementation of the act is supported by funding of £347 million in 2003–04, as part of the total QP grant.
Adoption and Children Act 2002

2.11 The Adoption and Children Act will safeguard and promote the rights of children and support adoptive families. It will also introduce Independent Reviewing Officers who will chair review meetings to look at the care plans of children in care, and ensure that all the key stakeholders (including children) are included in reviews. Local authorities will also have to arrange advocacy services for children in care and care leavers to handle any complaints.

Joint working between Connexions and the Leaving Care Team: Cornwall and Devon

Connexions Cornwall and Devon, one of the early Connexions pilots, has developed a Partnership Agreement with Social Services. This has led to joint ownership of targets aimed at helping care leavers succeed in their transition to working life and adulthood. It has also meant:

- minimal duplication and a more seamless service for young people;
- more awareness of available services and how they may be accessed; and
- increased trust between professionals from different agencies, and between young people and service providers.

As a result of this agreement, joint working is underway in Plymouth, where Connexions have placed a Personal Adviser into the Leaving Care Team.

Progress in raising achievement

“The raised awareness of the needs of children in public care through the Quality Protects initiative and through the issuing of the [joint Guidance] is having a positive effect on provision in schools, and on expectations and outcomes for the children.”

(Ofsted)

2.12 For local authorities, the overarching performance management framework is the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). Performance in both social services and education is given a high profile within the Assessment, with a marking of ‘fair’ required in both areas if authorities are to achieve an overall marking of ‘excellent’ or ‘good’. The assessment of corporate health undertaken as part of the CPA includes an assessment of the authority’s success in promoting joint working.

2.13 Local authority performance indicators that relate to the education of children in care aim to measure the percentage who:

- leave care aged 16 or over with at least one GCSE or GNVQ;
- were in care aged 16 and are engaged in education, training or employment at the age of 19;
- miss at least 25 days of schooling for any reason during the previous school year;
- have three or more care placements in a year; or
- have been in care continuously for four or more years and in their current foster placement for two years or longer.
2.14 These indicators have shown an improvement since QP was launched. The new initiatives have also brought benefits that are likely to lead to improved outcomes in the future. For example:

- training for frontline workers about children’s educational needs;
- the introduction of ‘education co-ordinators’ who work across education and social services boundaries and support frontline workers;
- improved quantity and quality of local authority data on children in care;
- councillors playing a more active role in promoting the wellbeing of children in care; and
- involving children in the design of services.

2.15 Progress towards key targets is less promising. The main Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets between 2001–04 were:

- to increase the proportion of children leaving care aged 16 or over with at least one GCSE or GNVQ qualification to at least 50 per cent by 2001, and to 75 per cent by 2003;
- to increase the proportion of children leaving care aged 16 and over with at least five GCSEs at grade A*-C to 15 per cent in 2004; and
- to improve the level of education, training and employment outcomes for care leavers aged 19, so that the levels for this group are at least 60 per cent of those achieved by all young people in the same area by March 2002, and 75 per cent by March 2004.

2.16 Just under one in four authorities met the target of 50 per cent of care leavers obtaining one GCSE or GNVQ in 2001, and 38 per cent met the target for improved educational, employment and training outcomes at age 19 in 2002\textsuperscript{4}. They do not appear on track to meet the 2004 GCSE target. In 2002, just two reached the target level\textsuperscript{35}.

2.17 A new PSA target has been set as a result of the Spending Review 2002 (see chapter eleven).
Reasons for low attainment

2.18 The initiatives described above have started to tackle the low attainment of children in care, but further work is needed to help more children to reach their potential. This project has identified five key reasons that continue to affect outcomes:

(i) too many young people’s lives are characterised by instability;

(ii) young people in care spend too much time out of school or other place of learning;

(iii) children do not have sufficient help with their education if they get behind;

(iv) carers are not expected, or equipped, to provide sufficient support and encouragement at home for learning and development; and

(v) children in care need more help with their emotional, mental or physical health and wellbeing.
CHAPTER THREE: STABILITY

- Stable care placements are essential to allow children to bond with their carers and have continuity of schooling. Children’s learning and development can be seriously disrupted by instability.
- The majority of children in care only have one care placement. However, one in seven has three or more care placements in a year. Over a third have moved school twice or more because of a change of care placement.
- Under half of all placement moves are planned in advance. Around one in five occurs because of a breakdown in relations between carer and child.
- Successfully matching children to carers is difficult. It is hampered by:
  - a shortage of care placements; and
  - a lack of forward planning.

The importance of stability

“We won’t learn nothing if we are moved from place to place. Stability is necessary.”

(quoted in ‘Make It Happen!’)

3.1 The importance of stability for children has been demonstrated extensively in research. Stability is essential to allow children to develop bonds with their carers, to facilitate continuity of schooling, and to develop friendships and participate in extra-curricular activities. If children are unable to develop secure bonds with carers, particularly when very young, it can have a significant impact on their development and learning.

3.2 Recognising the importance of stability does not mean preserving care placements at all costs. There will be occasions when maintaining a care placement is not in a child’s best interests, such as when a child is unhappy in a care placement, or if significant needs (including education, health or cultural needs) are not being met.

What happens now?

3.3 Most children in care only ever enter the care system once, and the majority only have one care placement. Improving placement stability is a central objective for Quality Protects. The number of children having three or more placement moves fell from 19 per cent in 1999–2000 to 15 per cent in 2001–02. This is welcome progress, but still means that one in seven children has high levels of moves each year. At the same time, the average number of placements during a spell in care has risen in recent years.

3.4 Teenagers and babies under one are more likely to have unstable care placements. Given the particular importance of bonding with carers for small children, the Government has commissioned research to examine the causes of placement moves for babies.
Stability

Amin was taken into care aged seven. When he was nine, a move back home broke down and resulted in a succession of placement moves. In total, he moved eight times within one school term, including two moves back to his family and once to live with his grandmother. After so many changes, he was unable to cope with living in a family setting and went to live in a children’s home. He has now lived there for two years, and is expected to stay there for the remainder of his childhood.

Throughout this time he continued to attend the same school, which proved to be an important source of stability. His attainment levels dropped as a result of the moves and his reading age remains below average. However, he has made great progress in his education over the past year.

Impact of placement breakdown on education

“How many times have you had to change school as a result of a change in care placement?” “I don’t know but I’ve moved a lot of times.”

(12-year-old male, foster care)

3.5 Lack of stability can have a critical impact on educational attainment.

- Unsettled children are not generally able to learn as effectively as those in stable environments. This applies both to children who need stability to recover from past experiences, and to those who find it difficult to focus on learning when other aspects of their life are in flux. Children might be unsettled either because of their own placement moves, or because they live in a home with a high turnover of staff or children.

- A change in care placement can also trigger a change in school placement, for example, if the child moves too far away from the school. Just over half the young people consulted by the Social Exclusion Unit had changed school at least once because of a change in care placement, and over a third had changed school at least twice.
Causes of placement breakdown

3.6 Almost half of placement moves are planned – for example, a child might have one or two short placements before a long-term placement is found\(^4\). Around one in five moves occur because of a breakdown in the relationship between carer and child\(^4\). Factors causing breakdowns include:

- the child’s behaviour;
- school problems, particularly if the child is excluded. If the child is at home all day, this can place great strain on the care placement;
- the child having unmet or unidentified needs; and
- lack of support for carers from social workers\(^4\).

3.7 There is a general shortage of carers for disabled children and those from ethnic minority backgrounds, especially where English is not their first language. This can mean children lack support for their cultural needs or to follow their religion\(^4\).

3.8 Matching a child to a carer is an inexact process, as it can be hard to predict the factors that will lead to a successful match. However, it is hampered by placement shortages and poor planning.

Placement shortages

3.9 Current shortages make it more difficult to find appropriate care placements, and can mean that a child’s views or education, health or support needs are not taken into account, particularly when placements need to be found at short notice. There is an estimated shortage of over 6,000 foster carers in England, with a shortage of over 1,000 carers in London\(^7\). The number of places in children’s homes dropped by 16 per cent between 1997 and 2000, largely because of closures of local authority homes\(^8\). The reasons behind these shortages are set out in more detail in chapter eight.
3.10 Local authorities often do not have contingency plans to cope with placement shortages, and either use an exemption to increase the number of children that a foster carer can care for, or use independent provision. Independent provision can lead to children being placed outside their home authority. Difficulties arising from this include:

- social workers being unable to find school places from a long distance;
- children being unable to maintain contact with family and friends, or access support services (including help with education) where they live; and
- social workers having to co-ordinate planning and review meetings with all key players and monitor the quality of care and education from a long distance.

3.11 Out of authority placements are usually more expensive, and are recognised as less good for the child (though with some important exceptions). Many councils therefore have a policy of ending any out of authority placement if a carer becomes available closer to home.

3.12 Not all out of authority placements result from placement shortages, and in some cases they can be in the child’s best interests. For example, if a child lives near the authority border, the placement might be nearer to his or her home and school. A child might need to be placed outside the home authority for his or her own protection, or to live with a family member or friend. The use of out of authority placements is discussed further in Appendix A.

**Poor planning**

3.13 Placement shortages can also be caused by insufficient forward planning both for individual children and across services more widely. A key factor behind the lack of forward planning is social worker shortages and a general lack of resources.

3.14 Heavy workloads make planning more difficult as social workers may lack the capacity to identify future placement needs or to take early action (such as developing support packages) to prevent placements breaking down. Resource shortages can mean that even where planning takes place, more expensive interventions are less likely to be approved, even if in the child’s best interests, unless cheaper options have already been tried.

**Choice Protects**

3.15 In the light of the Social Services Inspectorate report, *Fostering for the Future*, the Choice Protects review is looking at the way in which services for children in care are commissioned, and how to improve fostering services⁴⁹. Choice Protects is supported by funding of £113 million over three years. Early outputs of the review include a National Partnership in Placement Forum bringing together commissioners and providers, improvements in the tax and benefit status of foster carers, and good practice information about supporting foster carers⁵⁰.
CHAPTER FOUR: ACCESS TO NURSERY, SCHOOL, COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY

Early years

4.1 In recent years, the Government has invested heavily in education and care provision for pre-school children, such as providing free nursery places for three- and four-year-olds51. Current government policies for pre-school children do not specifically target children in care, nor is data collected on their education or development. Even where local authorities do collect and monitor data, it often only applies to three- and four-year-olds in nursery and does not include playgroups and other pre-school provision.

4.2 Anecdotal evidence suggests that the reasons why some children miss out on early years provision include:

- the lack of information for carers about local provision;
- insufficient awareness of the importance of pre-school provision among social workers and foster carers; and
- care placement moves that result in children losing nursery places.

Sure Start: Brighton and Hove

Brighton and Hove Sure Start has made a concerted effort to provide services for children in care. Families are assessed as to whether they need extra support from the ‘enhanced’ service. Children living away from home – either in foster care, with extended family or with adopters – would generally receive an enhanced service, particularly in the early stages of a placement. This includes additional support from health visitors and greater access to multi-disciplinary services as appropriate.

The team block-purchases 30 places at local nurseries that are specifically for children receiving enhanced services, although there is a small waiting list for these places.

If families move outside the area, the team continues to work with them until they are linked into services in their new location. This includes foster carers moving or children who are moved to a new care placement outside the area.
Compulsory school age

“I am doing very well at school. I have done every piece of homework so far and I have got one of the main parts in the school play.”

(10-year-old male, with parents)

“I’ve been out of school for a year and a half and I’ve realised how important it is.”

(15-year-old male, foster care)

4.3 National data is not collected on where children in care are educated. The Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) consultation found that around three-quarters were in mainstream schools, around one in 10 in special schools and the remainder were either in other settings, such as Pupil Referral Units or residential special schools, or did not have a school place.

4.4 Even though most children in care want to be in mainstream school, they are extremely vulnerable to missing out for three main reasons:

- they do not have a school place;
- they have been excluded; or
- they do not attend.

4.5 Those living outside their local authority are especially vulnerable to missing school, as it can be difficult for social workers to find school places and advocate effectively in admissions or when challenging exclusions. Local education authorities may not even know that the child is living there and needs a place.

Admissions

“Schools are concerned with their league tables. They are reluctant to take on young people who will affect the stats … Schools appear to work under the myth that all children looked after will be disruptive.”

(Local authority)

“Some of our schools don’t do children in care.”

(Local authority)

4.6 Local authorities can find it difficult to find school places for children in care for a variety of reasons:

- schools might assume children in care will have behavioural difficulties and poor attainment, or have additional support needs;
- care placement changes can require changes of school mid-term or mid-year, when many schools – especially popular ones – are already full;
- in rural areas, if children are unable to obtain a place at the local school, the next school might be several miles away;
- schools can be particularly reluctant to accept children mid-way through GCSE courses or in SATs years or those who cannot speak English (a particular issue for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children); or
social workers or carers might not see education as a priority for the child either because of a pressing need to remove the child to a place of safety, or because they do not think the child will succeed in education.

4.7 Local authorities are increasingly trying to minimise mid-year school changes by funding transport costs to enable children to attend the same school, including by sending children to school by taxi. However, this frequently raises tensions between social services and education departments about who should pay for school transport. This can be a particular concern in rural or geographically large areas that incur higher costs.

School admissions

Martin was offered a place to start year seven at a local secondary school. He had been in some trouble at his primary school, and had been given two fixed-term exclusions. The head of Martin’s primary school contacted the head of the new school to warn him that Martin was “trouble”. When Martin arrived at secondary school, he was told that there was no place for him. No other schools would give him a place at short notice, and he was referred to a learning support unit. Six months later, he was still attending the learning support unit. Despite efforts by his father and the education co-ordinator for children in care, no progress had been made in finding him a place in a mainstream school.

The ‘20 day rule’

“[The 20 day rule has had an impact on] stopping a child’s education being held up.”

(Local authority)

“The 20 day rule continues to cause problems as current systems do not support or encourage educational placement resolutions – especially for pupils with additional needs – within that time-frame.”

(Local authority)

4.8 The joint Guidance states that local authorities are expected to find children a full-time place in a local mainstream school within 20 school days, unless the child’s circumstances make this unsuitable. The ‘20 day rule’ has had a mixed response. Many local authorities feel it is impossible to meet or has switched the focus from getting the right place for a child to getting any place. However, a minority say it has improved access to school.

4.9 The Education Act 2002 introduced local admission forums to bring schools together to discuss and agree local admission criteria, including prioritising vulnerable children who change school mid-year.

Effective advocacy: Shaftesbury Homes and Arethusa

Shaftesbury Homes and Arethusa is a voluntary sector organisation that provides residential homes in the South East. They have taken an active approach to school admissions and exclusions, and are prepared to appeal when a child is refused a school place. They have used the ‘20 day rule’ to hold local authorities to account with regards to finding a school place, and will take legal action, if necessary, if the authority refuses to meet its commitments.
School transfer

“It is more likely that our children will be placed in ‘sink’ schools due to a general lack of school places across London and a lack of preparation time leading up to school transition/placement.”

(Local authority)

4.10 When a child in care is due to start primary school, or transfer to secondary or middle school or further education college, the social worker should work with carers and children to secure a suitable school place for the child. Problems with school transfer occur when social workers are unclear about their responsibilities for transfer planning, or do not understand the necessary procedures or timetable. Children might also change care placement and need to find a different school for the following year.

Exclusions

“Unofficial exclusions seem to take place more easily in residential homes as staff are on duty 24 hours and schools ask staff to come and collect children at short notice.”

(Local authority)

4.11 Children in care are 10 times more likely to be permanently excluded than their peers. Fixed-term and unofficial exclusions are also a significant problem. A number of schools and local authorities have successful policies in place to prevent exclusions by tackling the underlying causes of poor behaviour.

Tackling exclusion and truancy: Dorset

The Royal Manor Arts College in Portland has developed an inclusion policy that has resulted in a fall in exclusions. In the year before its introduction there were seven exclusions. In the five years it has been in place, there has been an average of one exclusion per year.

The school has a successful behaviour monitoring strategy for children causing concern, with individual targets for behaviour improvement. Children can use a ‘behaviour pass’ if they feel a need to leave the class because they are upset or angry. The school has a behaviour centre to act as a buffer between college discipline structures and fixed-term exclusions. It is also used as a point of return for students who have been temporarily excluded from school.

4.12 Parents and carers of children who are excluded have the right to challenge the decision including appealing against permanent exclusions. General advice on challenging exclusions is available from the Advisory Centre for Education (ACE). The joint Guidance expects local authorities to ensure young people have an advocate in exclusion cases. With proper training and support, carers can be effective advocates for the child. However, some children and carers are not properly supported during exclusion hearings and children do not always receive effective representation.

4.13 Some local authorities and care providers have a policy of appealing all exclusions of children in their care – both to ensure that individual children get a fair hearing, and to send a signal to schools that children in care are no easier to exclude than other children.
Attendance

“If I’m placing a primary school child, the first question I ask the potential carer is whether they will be able to take the child to school and collect him or her each day. I think that’s really important.”

(Children and families social worker)

4.14 There is little hard evidence about attendance rates among children in care, and views are mixed as to whether they are more or less likely to truant than other children. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that attendance is a significant issue for some children in care, with some children’s homes having a culture of non-attendance.

4.15 Measures to improve attendance that emphasise the parents’ role can be less effective with children in care. Legal responsibility for the child lies with the local authority, but practical responsibility for getting him or her to school rests with individual carers. Enforcing school attendance can be particularly difficult where children are placed with their parents, especially if in all other respects the placement is successful.

4.16 Government initiatives to tackle non-attendance include the Social Exclusion Unit report on Truancy and School Exclusion, and the Government initiative, Tackling It Together – Truancy and Crime. The Department for Education and Skills has a Public Service Agreement (PSA) target to reduce truancies by 10 per cent by 2004.

Local authority analysis of attendance rates

One local authority analysed educational outcomes for children who had been continuously in care for a year or more. They found that 7 per cent of primary school children and 30 per cent of secondary school children attended school for less than 85 per cent of the time.

Overall, non-attendance was higher among those who:

- were placed with their parents;
- lived with a family friend or relative;
- lived in a children’s home;
- had a statement of special educational needs; or
- had had two or more primary or secondary schools.

Further and higher education and training

“I had problems getting funding to go to university because I didn’t have leave to remain. My social worker helped me to get charity funding and now I am at university.”

(Female care leaver)

4.17 Young people can miss out on further and higher education or training opportunities for several reasons:

- a lack of qualifications and poor basic skills. Most colleges test the basic skills of new students and offer additional support as necessary. However, care leavers with little confidence in their academic abilities can find the basic skills test off-putting;
• insufficient information and advice about available options. Young people may not realise that they can take access courses to enable them to gain the necessary qualifications for pre-course entry. The majority of colleges and universities do not specifically target children in care;

• poor experiences of school can leave young people disinclined to continue with education. This can be linked to adults’ low expectations of children when in care, leading to young people thinking that they are ‘not good enough’ to go to college;

• a lack of provision of the right content, status, quality and range;

• lack of available transport; and

• financial concerns (see chapter six).

4.18 National initiatives, such as Partnerships for Progression, have used outreach to encourage take-up of further and higher education among groups of young people who would not otherwise have considered staying in education. The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and the PSA target for care leavers aged 19, have also led to improved encouragement and support from local authorities for further and higher education.

University summer school: Southampton

In 2001 and 2002, the University of Southampton ran a residential six-day summer school for care leavers and young people from inner city areas who might not normally go to university. It aimed to give participants a chance to experience university life and help raise their aspirations.

All students completed a questionnaire to examine their attitudes towards post-compulsory education as a means of assessing their aptitude for study, and identifying any additional help they might need. The course facilitators (undergraduate and postgraduate students in the university) were also asked to report on the progress of each young person in their team, and to indicate where they had developed skills, or what additional skills might be useful.

Following the course, the university received positive feedback from young people: “Thank you for helping me. I feel so much more confident now” (e-mail from a care leaver to the university).

Further and higher education taster courses: Coventry

In Coventry – although there have been some problems with wider children’s services – innovative work had been going on to raise the aspirations of children in care. Working in partnership, the Education Service in Coventry and the University of Warwick have established a non-residential programme to give young people in care a taste of further and higher education. The activities on offer are tailored to meet the needs and interests of individual young people. Examples include dance and drama sessions, children’s rights lectures, college open days and activity sessions, web design, cooking and food science, and an ecology study day.

The programme also seeks to improve understanding of further and higher education opportunities amongst foster carers and residential care workers – for those they care for, and for themselves.

Funding for the initial programme came from the Higher Education Funding Council for England, and the work is continuing using mainstream funding from the Coventry and Warwickshire Connexions Service and Coventry Education Service.
CHAPTER FIVE: SUPPORT IN EDUCATION SETTINGS

- Support for children in care in early years settings is inconsistent and often limited.
- Special educational needs among children in care, particularly in out of authority placements, are not always identified and supported.
- Specific measures designed to support children in care at school, such as Personal Education Plans and designated teachers, and school’s wider inclusion policies have been successful in some places. The impact has been limited where there is poor joint working among frontline staff.
- Lack of training and advice about what it means to be in care leads some teachers to underestimate the academic potential of children in care.
- Governors can play an important role in ensuring that schools meet the needs of children in care but few have the knowledge required to do this.
- Young people in further and higher education may also need additional support from their college or university, particularly if they are re-engaging in education having missed out on school.

Support in early years settings

5.1 Early years workers have a key role to play in identifying special educational needs (SEN) among children in care, such as language and communication problems. All providers delivering government-funded early education programmes should have a written SEN policy.

5.2 Many local authorities have focused attention on raising the educational attainment of school-age children in care. Initiatives to support pre-school learning and development are less common. The joint Guidance suggested the equivalent of a Personal Education Plan (PEP) for pre-school children. Where these exist, some authorities use the same format as the school-age PEP, others are tailored more closely to pre-school children with a greater focus on learning through play. Pre-school PEPs should be drawn up in consultation with the child, carers, parents, and key professionals such as nursery staff or health visitors.

Early years PEP: Somerset

Following a review of early years provision for children in care in 2001, Somerset have extended the procedures and practices which support school-aged children in care to those in care from birth to entry into reception class. The education and social services departments worked together to develop a PEP specifically designed for young children which can include information on early learning, access to play opportunities and individual learning targets. Foundation Stage Advisers (FSAs) have the same responsibilities for pre-school children as designated teachers in schools and are supported by the Children Looked After Education Team based in the local authority.

Carers are encouraged and trained to support the development of very young children using a range of materials which focus on raising self-esteem and early communication and literacy skills.
Supporting children in school

“I do not understand what is being said to me [in class as] I speak little English.”
(14-year-old male, foster care)

“My school has given me loads of catch-up because I’m in care.”
(14-year-old female, residential care)

5.3 Children in care are significantly more likely than others to need extra support in school:

- their pre-care experiences may have caused them to miss school or impacted on their ability to learn;
- they may have experienced frequent changes of care or school placement or spent time out of school for other reasons; and
- of those children continuously in care for at least one year, 27 per cent have a statement of SEN, compared to just 3 per cent of all children.

5.4 Where children miss substantial periods of schooling and fall behind their classmates, this can lead to disaffection, particularly if children lack literacy and numeracy skills. Those for whom English is an additional language might need extra language support to enable them to participate in class and help make friends in school. Money for additional catch up support is available through the Standards Fund, the Literacy and Learning Strategy and the Key Stage 3 National Strategy.

5.5 Most schools provide extra support for children who need it. This might be as a result of government initiatives focused on a particular aspect of schooling (such as the anti-bullying campaign) or on a specific geographical area (such as Excellence in Cities), or schools might develop their own initiatives in response to local needs. A number of local authorities have introduced bursaries to enable schools to provide tailored support to individual children.

Bursaries for children in care: Leeds and Dorset

Leeds operates a Dowry Fund scheme for children in care who have complex needs but are unable to access support through traditional methods of funding. Around 10–15 children are supported each year, with one-off payments of up to £3,000 made to the child’s school for additional support. In one case funding was used to pay for a lunchtime supervisor for a child who persistently ran away, in others the funding has been used to pay for additional tuition. To date, none of the children who have been helped by the scheme have been excluded.

Dorset provides schools with an annual £500 bursary for each child in care to fund additional provision to meet individual needs. Funding decisions are taken as part of the PEP process, involving teachers, social workers, carers and children to decide how best to support that child’s education. Funds have been used for a wide variety of means of support including extra tuition, music lessons, field study trips, provision of laptop computers, and one-to-one support/counselling. Experience has shown that this funding improves children’s self esteem and enables corporate parents to offer a similar level of support to that which families generally give to young people.
Special educational needs

“The special educational needs of children in care are not always identified. The usual early warning signs – such as poor behaviour in class – are often attributed to the child being in care, and other possible causes are not investigated. By the time we are asked to work with the children, the problems have become much worse and more difficult to treat.”

(Clinical Psychologist)

5.6 Early identification and early intervention are key themes in the new SEN code of practice, which came into force in January 2002. Statementing practices vary between local authorities – for example, 4 per cent of children in care in Buckinghamshire have a statement compared to 72 per cent in Wokingham. When agreeing the SEN of a child in care, local authority policies should set out:

- who is responsible for monitoring and taking forward assessments;
- procedures to ensure that all relevant professionals are involved as required under the SEN Code of Practice; and
- who, if necessary, will appeal at a SEN tribunal.

5.7 Frequent movements between care and education placements can mean that SEN are not identified or are misdiagnosed. Mobility can also delay the assessments and provision of support.

5.8 Where a child with a statement of SEN is educated outside the local authority, the Education (Areas to which Pupils and Students Belong) Regulations 1996 (the Belonging Regulations) require that the placing authority is financially responsible for any additional educational costs associated with the SEN statement. As a result, some authorities are reluctant to statement children who are likely to be placed outside the local authority. This can lead to delays as local authorities dispute the funding for, and extent of, a child’s needs.

Personal Education Plans

“PEPs have enabled a greater focus to be put on the educational needs of children in care.”

(Local authority)

“Sometimes we only find out that one of our children is in care when a completed PEP turns up in the post into which we have had no input.”

(School)

5.9 Every school age child in care should have a PEP drawn up as part of the care planning process. The process of agreeing the PEP should be the central mechanism for making and recording decisions about a child’s education and development. It should cover schooling or an alternative, as well as extra-curricular activities. It should be completed by the child’s social worker in consultation with the child and teacher within 20 school days of the young person entering care or joining a new school, and be regularly reviewed.

5.10 PEP reviews allow social workers and teachers to find out what children want from their education, and for children to raise issues that are affecting their education such as bullying. Pupil participation in school policy is an important theme in the new citizenship curriculum and in the Education Act 2002. Guidance for schools on involving young people in all aspects of school life will be published later in 2003.
Where schools and social workers have a good working relationship, PEPs have been a valuable tool. Elsewhere they can be seen as a bureaucratic burden or “someone else’s problem”. In such cases, teachers and social workers often complete the PEP without discussion.

If a child is placed and educated outside their local authority, the child’s social worker from the home authority retains responsibility for the PEP, but has to complete it in conjunction with the child, carers and teachers in the new authority. Where an authority has many children outside its borders, or where the child is placed a long way from home, effective co-ordination becomes more difficult. In many cases, this results in key stakeholders – such as the child or the school – not being involved in discussing and reviewing the PEP, or the child not having a PEP at all.

Designated teachers

“Designated teachers are hard to get hold of, they do not take the role seriously. Teachers are often given the role without being consulted.”

(Voluntary sector provider)

“Having designated teachers in every school is valuable. They provide a point of contact (for professionals as well as children); for example, staff can phone the designated teacher prior to transition between schools and ensure successful planning for [the child’s] induction.”

(Local authority)

“Teachers are really nosy and think it is their right to know everything.”

(15-year-old female, residential care)

Every school should have a designated teacher to act on behalf of children in care. The designated teacher role can be adapted to meet local needs. It could include advocating for children in care, monitoring their progress and performance, or providing coaching to other staff on the needs and experiences of children in care.

Reviewing the effectiveness of Personal Education Plans: Harrow

The London Borough of Harrow has reviewed the first generation of PEPs for children in care. Out of 131 completed PEPs, they found:

- 90 per cent included information on the factors affecting educational performance such as attendance or exclusion;
- 85 per cent recorded the young person’s views;
- just under 50 per cent recorded non-academic achievement and success;
- standardised information on educational attainment was not always available which is believed to have prevented effective target setting;
- in the main, short term targets reflected individual education plans but long term plans appeared to be more difficult to define and report on; and
- when a young person was considered to be achieving well, there tended to be no short term targets or long term plans.

As a result of the review, changes to the PEP proforma include explicit prompts for information, and references to the revised SEN code of practice. Social workers have been trained on target setting and planning and issued with revised guidance on PEP completion.
The majority of schools now have a designated teacher in place – usually the head, deputy head or inclusion co-ordinator. Local authorities should provide training for designated teachers, to cover all aspects of the care system, the impact of care on education, responsibilities under the Children Act 1989 and associated regulations and guidance.

Evidence about the impact of designated teachers is mixed. Some schools allow non-contact time for designated teachers to liaise with other agencies (especially social services), and attend planning and review meetings. Elsewhere, designated teachers have few or no additional resources and can struggle to reconcile their different roles, particularly where they have to combine teaching and advocacy functions.

Designated teachers: Sunderland

Social services send details of children in care directly to designated teachers as changes occur. Limited teaching roles allow regular contact with young people and their carers. Designated teachers in secondary schools liaise with primary school counterparts over secondary school transition and share knowledge about the needs of individual children. Designated teachers represent schools at care reviews, and receive an annual programme of training provided by the local authority.

Education support teams

“Educational support service workers have proved effective in keeping children in school who might otherwise be at risk of exclusion, organising remedial services for specific learning difficulties, supporting carers and acting as advocates.”

(Research body)

A number of local authorities have created education support teams for children in care, usually to provide a source of advice for schools and liaise between teachers and social workers. Schools and teachers have been highly supportive of these teams. They can be particularly helpful in schools that are unused to working with children in care.

Education Liaison and Support Service (ELSS): Herefordshire

ELSS is a team of teachers, enhanced by school-based learning support assistants. It provides a liaison and support service for Herefordshire’s children and young people in care aged three to 19 including an outreach service for those placed outside the county. It has a dedicated database to monitor each student’s progress.

The team, which works closely with schools and social care staff, is highly valued. It continues to develop and has recently recruited an early years teacher and play support assistant. The teacher with responsibility for young people aged over 12 has been seconded part-time to the Connexions Service to undertake Personal Adviser training and enhance inter-agency working.
School governors

“Governors have little knowledge of looked after children. They focus on ‘majority’ issues and league tables.”

(Local authority)

“The ideas of corporate parenting need to be built into the role of school governors.”

(Local authority)

5.17 School governors are responsible for ensuring their schools are not neglecting the welfare and educational needs of children in care in their schools and can play a major role in determining policy on exclusions and (where they are the Admissions Authority) on admissions. Governors should receive regular reports on the general progress of the children in care that attend their school. Some local authorities, including Manchester and Tameside, have created ‘designated governors’ to represent children in care. Others run training sessions for governors, although these are not always well attended.

Beyond compulsory school age

5.18 Initiatives such as designated teachers only apply to school-aged children. There are no national equivalents to support young people in care or care leavers in further and higher education (FHE), although some local authorities have worked with FHE institutions to raise awareness of young people’s needs and ensure that they receive appropriate support.

5.19 Young people who have struggled in school often respond positively to a college environment but may need additional support since they are also likely to be adjusting to independent living for the first time. Connexions and Leaving Care advisers have an important role in helping young people make a successful transition into further education or training.

5.20 The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has a duty to secure a suitable range of education and training provision for 16–19-year-olds. Since April 2003, local LSCs have had additional funding and freedom to increase the variety of post-16 learning and are working with Connexions to develop flexible routes into learning.

Support for further education: Brighton

The City College offers additional support through Connexions Personal Advisers (PAs). Potential college students are identified through an exchange of information with schools and colleges during year 11. The PAs take responsibility for the care leavers before they arrive at college. They keep in touch during the summer holidays and ensure the young people are organised for college. Once at college, care leavers receive further practical and emotional support, such as help with travel costs or the opportunity to discuss any concerns in confidence.
CHAPTER SIX: DEVELOPMENTAL AND EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT IN CARE SETTINGS

- Effective support at home for learning and development is important for all children, including children in care.
- Carers and social workers who support education effectively have high expectations, a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities, information about education, and the skills to support development and learning. They value activities that improve self-esteem, self-confidence and motivation, and listen to the children in their care.
- Children need access to certain resources to support their learning. These include books and a quiet place to work and opportunities to pursue interests and hobbies outside school.
- Older teenagers require practical support to continue in education, including financial and housing support.

The importance of development and educational support

6.1 Parents and carers play an extremely important role in children’s education. Lack of commitment to education by parents and carers is a major factor leading to low achievement in school, criminal activity, drug and alcohol misuse, and teenage pregnancy. Parental or carer support is critical for young children’s development and early education.

6.2 Key components of effective educational support include:

- prioritising education and having high expectations for children;
- having a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities;
- having the information and skills to support development and learning;
- listening to children and advocating for them; and
- having the resources to support learning (books, toys, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) equipment and opportunities to participate in out-of-school activities).

6.3 Some young people will have additional support needs:

- support at home is particularly important in the early years. This can include reading to children, playing games, taking children to playgroup or nursery and encouraging friendships with their peer group;
- older teenagers need practical support in basic requirements for living;
- young people who have English as an additional language – including young asylum seekers – may need intensive language support;
• young parents need help with childcare to enable them to continue attending school or college;

• disabled children and those with particular special educational needs (SEN) may need support specific to their disability or other need, such as access to talking books or tools to help them communicate; and

• unaccompanied asylum-seeker children may need help to locate family members or make contact with other members of their community.

National Minimum Standards

The National Minimum Standards (NMS) state that fostering services must give priority to helping foster carers meet a child’s educational needs, clarify carers’ role in relation to contact with the child’s school, and ensure that carers support education. Children’s homes must ensure that children have access to and use age-appropriate educational facilities, and maintain links with schools. Older teenagers should be helped with arrangements for education, employment or training.

What happens now?

“My foster carer has helped me a lot e.g. she has made me confident in my schoolwork”

(11-year-old female, foster care)

“It’s awful – we know we’re letting the young people down. We know they should be revising or whatever – but if we don’t let them come on the trips the other kids just riot until we give in.”

(Residential care worker)

6.4 The NMS are in the early stages of implementation. Currently the level of support for education provided in care settings varies across the country and within local authorities. Although some carers provide excellent support and encouragement for education, elsewhere they may not know how best to help, or not have enough time to work with individual children. In a minority of cases, carers do not see supporting education as part of their job.

Effective support for education in a children’s home

Claire has lived in a children’s home for two years. Staff working there think education is important and have high aspirations for all children in the home. Claire normally attends school every day. On one occasion when she was excluded, the staff set her lessons and she was expected to wear her school uniform during school hours. She is expected to do her homework each night, with one hour per night set aside as a quiet time. Staff are available to offer one-to-one help as needed. Claire participates in a variety of activities outside school including Guides and the local swimming club.
Roles and responsibilities

“Supporting the learning and schooling of the children in their care is not always seen as part of the foster carer’s job – not by the foster carer, nor by senior members of the care team.”

(Voluntary organisation)

“I wanted my mum to get involved but the foster carers took over. They had all the school letters, but they never went to anything at my school. They only went to their own children’s occasions.”

(13-year-old female, living with parents)

6.5 Roles and responsibilities of carers and social workers differ between local authorities. There is often confusion about where carers’ responsibilities end and those of social workers begin. This is particularly common where formal processes are involved, for example in finding the child a school place, or appealing admissions or exclusions decisions.

Unclear roles and responsibilities

Stuart went to live with Carole, a foster carer, in his final year at primary school. Carole’s social worker told her that she needed to find a secondary school place for Stuart, so Carole arranged for him to attend the same school as the other children in her care. A week before term started, Stuart’s own social worker arrived with his new school uniform – for a completely different school. Although Carole’s social worker thought finding a school place was the carer’s responsibility, Stuart’s social worker thought it was social services’ responsibility. She insisted that he went to the school she had chosen, as she had already paid for the uniform. Stuart was upset, as he had been looking forward to attending the original school.

Information and skills

“Many of our carers have grown up children – they care about education, but the system has changed so much since their kids were at school, they just get lost when people start talking about ‘SATs’ and ‘year 10’.”

(Social worker)

6.6 Carers need information about children’s development and co-ordinated support from different agencies (including health, education and social services) in order to promote education most effectively. The health visitor has a particularly important role to ensure that carers of pre-school children are aware of local services (including those provided by the voluntary or community sector).

6.7 The education system has changed significantly in recent years. Unless carers have school-age children of their own, they may not understand how the system works now. Even where carers have school-age children, they may lack knowledge of the particular needs of children in care, for example, the SEN process.
Youth work and out-of-school activities

“In general, children in foster care are more likely [than those in children’s homes] to be involved in extra-curricular activities, often because of the practical difficulties that face homes in terms of maintaining staffing cover etc.”

(Local authority)

“I would like] more after school clubs in a building that is accessible to me, where I can use the equipment and be understood.”

(16-year-old male, foster care)

6.8 Children’s learning is not confined to the classroom and ‘formal’ education activities. Extensive research suggests that youth work and out-of-school activities can make a significant contribution to children’s wider learning and development67.

6.9 Around three-quarters of children and young people responding to the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) questionnaire had access to after school activities and clubs, and about two-thirds of those – around half of all respondents – used them68. Those in foster care (including friends and family care) had the highest level of access to these activities, whereas children in residential homes or living with their parents had poorer levels of access.

6.10 Reasons why children do not access out-of-school activities include:

- children who are not in school or not engaged with school might not want, or be able, to attend activities organised by or linked to the school;
- children in residential homes can develop a ‘group mentality’, not wishing to miss out on anything happening at home by participating in activities away from the home;
- difficulties obtaining parental consent;
- lack of transport;
- the cost of activities; and
- language difficulties (particularly for unaccompanied asylum-seeker children).

6.11 To encourage greater participation, some local authorities have developed specific projects for children in care, using Quality Protects (QP) funding or in co-operation with local charities, youth groups and voluntary organisations.
Out-of-school activities

- KANDU Arts for Sustainable Development, Wiltshire: multi-media arts projects including theatre, dance and music, which explore the life issues of young people. KANDU run week-long projects during school holidays and have a theatre group that meets once a week that is currently attended by children in care from Wiltshire.

- Q Arts, Derby: exploring ‘positive issues’ (self-image, identity, ambition, etc), with art work being shown in a public gallery.

- Several local authorities (including Brighton and Hove, Knowsley and Sunderland) have discount cards which give children in care free or reduced price access to local leisure services.

Theatre Cap-a-pie: Co. Durham

Cap-a-pie is a theatre group of professional artists working across the North East with young people who are disengaged from education. It has had success in re-engaging young people in learning through drama and the arts, offering opportunities to develop confidence and social skills. Young people also have the opportunity to participate in curriculum-based learning, with some (including children in care) returning to mainstream schooling with renewed confidence. Cap-a-pie now offers a GNVQ on performing arts.

It works with a wide range of other organisations, including schools, NHS trusts and the police and social services departments. In partnership with Sure Start Wear Valley, it ran a scheme for pre-school children to improve their speech and language through drama. Cap-a-pie receives funding from a number of organisations including the Government’s Creative Partnerships programme, local authorities and businesses.

Materials to support learning

6.12 Children should have appropriate facilities to do homework (which might include the provision of books, computers and a quiet place to work), as well as being given help with homework if they wish. Many local authorities have provided ICT equipment, books and other educational materials as part of the QP programme.

Resources to support learning – QP ICT initiative

Children and young people increasingly have access to computers and other information technology to help them with their schoolwork and to develop new skills. The Government believes that children in care should not be denied these opportunities, and in July 2001, it announced a new £20 million scheme to increase access to information technology for children in and leaving care. Funding was available over two financial years and the money was distributed as part of QP. Councils were encouraged to be as innovative as possible in providing access to new technology for children and young people. Each council was given a minimum allocation of £10,000.
6.13 The Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) visited around 15 children’s homes as part of the project, and found significant variation in resource levels. A minority of homes were well equipped with age-appropriate (and clearly well used) books, toys and ICT equipment. More had few or inappropriate facilities. Staff in these homes generally showed less encouragement and support for learning, with the children who were out of school at the time of the visit not engaged in educational activities.

6.14 Of the children who responded to the SEU consultation, 91 per cent had a quiet place to work, 71 per cent had access to a computer where they lived, and 75 per cent of those used it (a third of them to do homework). This represents significant progress since the mid 1990s, when The Who Cares? Trust found that lack of basic facilities was a major barrier to educational progress among children in care69.

Access to libraries: Blackburn

The scheme aims to make library membership as straightforward as possible for children who may be moving around a lot. The special ‘Right to Read’ ticket is given to short-term foster carers, for use by any child living in their household. It enables young people to borrow materials from local libraries and to access the ICT facilities. Individual library tickets are still encouraged where possible, with Right to Read tickets provided as an additional resource.

Listening to children and advocacy

“States Parties should assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.”

(Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child)

6.15 Listening to children can act as an important safeguard against abuse, and should be an integral part of planning and reviews both for individual children and wider council policies. Children should be consulted on their education and wider development needs. Proper consultation can raise self-esteem, generate ideas to support education and boost participation rates.

6.16 Local authorities are increasingly seeking children and young people’s views on their services, although participation rates tend to be lower among children with disabilities or younger children. Children and young people are often involved in the design of such consultations70.

6.17 Children can need advocates to support their education, for example in exclusion appeals. Anecdotal evidence suggests that advocacy services often focus on care planning and placement issues, with less attention paid to education. The Government produced National Standards for the Provision of Children’s Advocacy Services to clarify the role of advocates70.

Mentoring

6.18 Mentoring offers young people the chance to discuss in confidence their current and future objectives. The availability and type of mentoring schemes varies across the country. Some offer general support to all vulnerable children, aiming to boost self-esteem and participation rates, and raise educational attainment. Others offer a particular type of support or are aimed at certain groups of children and young people (such as learning mentors or behaviour mentors).
Practical support for older teenagers

“Once I paid for my travel and lunch, I was left with less than if I just stayed in bed.”

(Female care leaver)

“I am 16 and in a life skills unit at a special school. I don’t think that I am learning ‘real’ life skills. I need more one-to-one support and more experience outside school.”

(16-year-old male, foster care)

6.19 As a result of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, many local authorities have developed specialist leaving care teams, although some have bought in services from the voluntary sector. The Act will help standardise the level and quality of services, but it will take time to implement, and services remain variable at present.

6.20 Improved financial support for young people such as Education Maintenance Allowances can encourage care leavers to participate in learning. Many leaving care services also offer financial support to young people in education or training, such as travel cards, top-up money or vouchers. However, where this is not provided, it can be a crucial factor in care leavers being unable to continue their courses. Examples of initiatives to provide additional support for care leavers in education include:

- qualified teachers to offer additional support for literacy and numeracy;
- computer rooms, or the loan of a laptop for young people at university; and
- award ceremonies to celebrate young people’s achievements.

6.21 Help with accommodation is extremely important. Maintaining a young person’s flat while they are away at university, or guaranteeing their place on the housing list, are ways in which authorities can ensure young people are not dissuaded from applying for university.

6.22 Leaving care services also support young people to move into employment through work experience schemes, either within the local authority or using their contacts with local employers. Increasingly, leaving care services are working with Connexions to provide co-ordinated services for young people. Some areas have developed strong local partnerships with Connexions Personal Advisers seconded to leaving care services, elsewhere partnerships and working protocols are still being established.
**Support in employment: Bolton**

Bolton provides six-month work experience placements for young people in care aged 16 and over. A dedicated worker spends time matching young people with suitable placements and provides participants with practical support throughout. Each participant is also allocated a workplace mentor to provide day-to-day guidance as required. Training, support and assistance is also provided to line managers and work mentors involved in the scheme so that they have a good understanding of care leavers’ needs.

As well as providing young people with an opportunity to earn money, gain confidence and valuable experience, the project has helped to develop a wider awareness of corporate parenting in the council’s directorates.

**Support for higher education: Ealing**

As part of its Leaving Care programme, Ealing provides a range of services to encourage young people to go to university. A specialist teacher in post-16 education offers advice on courses, interview preparation and help with Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) application forms at the YESS (Youth, Education and Social Services) drop in centre. Life skills, including budgeting and healthy eating, are also provided. At university, young people are provided with financial support of up to £5,000 per annum to cover subsistence and accommodation costs. In total, 9 per cent of care leavers are at university compared to a national average of 1 per cent.
CHAPTER SEVEN: EMOTIONAL, MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

- Educational outcomes can be strongly influenced by a child’s health. Schools play an important role in promoting health and emotional wellbeing for children, especially those who are socially and economically disadvantaged.

- Children in care have relatively high levels of health needs:
  - they face more challenges to their emotional wellbeing, as a result of frequent moves, high levels of bullying, and separation from their families;
  - many have experienced trauma, and often they do not live in an environment that supports their recovery;
  - many have recognised mental health problems; and
  - they are more likely to become teenage parents, or to use drugs.

- Frequent placement moves can cause difficulties in meeting health needs. New guidance aims to tackle some of these problems.

- Young people’s access to routine health assessments, dental checks and immunisations is improving, but a significant minority are missing out.

The impact of health needs on education

“Every time children move to another area, they go on the bottom of the waiting list.”
(Designated nurse for children in care)

7.1 Educational outcomes are strongly influenced by a child’s health, and the impact is more pronounced for those at risk71. Schools play an important role in promoting health and emotional wellbeing for children, especially those who are socially and economically disadvantaged72. Attending school provides opportunities to boost a child’s health through raising self-confidence and self-esteem, improving participation in sports and providing health education.

7.2 Children in care can have a variety of emotional, mental and physical health needs. Barriers to addressing these include:

- frequent placement moves mean that children’s health needs are not always properly identified and harder to assess and treat, particularly if they need to rejoin waiting lists each time they move;

- medical records do not always get transferred quickly enough after a placement move, resulting in the necessary provision not being in place; and

- joint working between social services, education and health professionals is variable across the country.
Emotional wellbeing

“If I was a lot happier about other things in my life I would be able to work at school and concentrate on my course work.”

(15-year-old female, foster care)

7.3 All children can face challenges to their emotional wellbeing, but children in care are more vulnerable to many of these than their peers. In particular, they may be more likely to experience the following:

- **bullying** – as the victim or the perpetrator;
- **disruption** – caused by frequent care or school moves; and
- **trauma** – from pre-care experiences and separation from their families.

7.4 Specific groups of children in care face particular difficulties:

- ethnic minority children can be subject to racism. Those placed with carers from a different ethnic background can have difficulties developing a positive sense of their own racial identity;
- unaccompanied asylum-seeking children can have experienced persecution and even torture in their home country, as well as dangerous and traumatic journeys to the UK and the loss of family members; and
- some children with disabilities can find it hard to make friends of their own age as they can need high levels of adult support and supervision.
The Multi-Agency Support Team (MAST) provides therapeutic support to individual children and runs projects in schools on anger management, self-esteem and the transition to secondary school. The team works closely with other agencies as necessary, particularly where children are already receiving support from other organisations. In 2001, around 20 per cent of their cases involved children in care.

MAST was set up at the request of schools in the East Leeds area, who also part-fund the service. Staff are mainly drawn from education and social services, with specialist skills such as drama therapy or in-depth knowledge of special educational needs.

### Bullying

*“People keep asking questions and saying that I have no mother.”*

(16-year-old male, foster care)

7.5 Bullying can have a profound impact on emotional and mental health, leading to depression, self-harming or attempted suicide. ChildLine takes calls from over 20,000 children and young people about bullying every year. It operates a dedicated number for children living away from home. Of the children responding to the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) consultation, six out of 10 said they had been bullied, compared to one in six of all children; eight out of 10 said they told someone about it, although in a third of cases this failed to stop the bullying. Children with disabilities are more vulnerable to bullying, particularly in a mainstream school.

### Tackling bullying: South Gloucestershire

South Gloucestershire has developed an anti-bullying policy specifically for children in care which sets out the respective rights and responsibilities of young people, carers, social workers and schools in preventing and dealing with bullying. Local schools are encouraged to develop anti-bullying strategies that are accessible to children in care, such as befriending and peer mediation schemes. In partnership with the local health trust, social services have trained carers and social workers on conflict management techniques to help them boost children’s self-esteem and create a positive home environment, both of which are recognised as important factors in preventing children from being bullied or becoming bullies.

### Disruption

7.6 Chapter three describes the instability experienced by many children in care. The difficulty of having to live in a new home with different rules and expectations, sometimes in a new area, and sometimes involving a new school, can be the cause of significant stress for young people.

### Trauma

*“I want teachers to be a little more understanding of why I may be feeling sad or angry.”*

(15-year-old female, foster care)

7.7 Most children in care have experienced some kind of trauma. Just under half have been abused or neglected before coming into care, and most have been separated from their families. Children in care are much less likely than other children to have a safe and supportive environment in which to recover from their experiences.
7.8 The consequences of unresolved trauma can be extremely significant, both for education and for other aspects of life, in particular the ability to form friendships and other close relationships\(^{80}\). Traumatised children can be unable to focus on learning, and can exhibit erratic or violent behaviours that are difficult for non-specialists to handle.

**Running away**

7.9 The SEU’s report *Young Runaways* found that young people in care were more likely to run away than their peers\(^ {81}\). Although many had run away prior to entering care, certain factors within the care system were found to increase the risk, such as being separated from their families, the increased incident of bullying, or a culture of running away which exists in some children’s homes.

### Supporting children with severely challenging behaviour: Sunderland

Health, education and social services in Sunderland work together to meet the needs of children in care with severe learning disabilities or behavioural difficulties. In one case, a child with severe learning disabilities and autism presented such a challenge that a specialist out of authority placement was being considered. The Health Trust funded a specialist qualified nurse to work with his carers and teachers to improve consistency in managing his behaviour across home and school. Following a detailed assessment, the nurse provided clinical support, behavioural advice and on-the-job training to help staff understand and respond effectively to his behaviour. The multi-agency package of support was successful, with positive developments in many areas including him being integrated back into mainstream school.

**Mental health**

7.10 A recent survey found that 45 per cent of children in care aged five to 17 have mental disorders, over four times higher than for all children\(^ {82}\). Levels of mental disorders are higher among boys, older children, and those living in residential care. Children with mental disorders are nearly twice as likely as children without disorders to have marked difficulties with reading, spelling and/or maths, and more likely to be three or more years behind their peers in class. They are also twice as likely as children without a mental disorder to have a statement of special educational needs\(^ {83}\).

7.11 Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are overstretched throughout the country, with waiting times of up to 12–18 months in some places. In addition, children might be incorrectly referred, either because of a shortage of more appropriate services, or because of a lack of understanding about what CAMHS provides.

7.12 Children with mental health problems are more likely to have frequent placement moves that can in turn make it more difficult to access CAMHS. Mental health treatment is far more effective when children are in a stable environment.

7.13 The Government is committed to improving CAMHS. It has set a Public Service Agreement target to **improve life chances of adults and children with mental health problems through year on year improvements in access to crisis and CAMHS services and reduce the mortality rate from suicide and undetermined injury by at least 20 per cent by 2010**\(^ {84}\). CAMHS will receive an additional £250 million over the three years from 2003–04 to 2005–06. Standards and milestones in the improvement of the service will be set out in the Children’s National Service Framework\(^ {85}\).
7.14 Not all mental health problems need clinical support. In some cases, a change to care arrangements or renewed access to a favourite activity can have a more immediate effect on a young person’s wellbeing. School and wider educational activities can also be a factor in promoting mental health. Children and young people gain a sense of achievement through learning, and school provides opportunities for friendships.

**Dedicated mental health services for children in care: Dorset**

Dorset Connections is a multi-agency service, set up with funding from Dorset Health Authority, social services and a grant from the Department of Health to work exclusively with children in care aged four to 17. Referrals are assessed quickly with initial assessments made within 14 days, although urgent referrals can be seen within 24 hours. An intervention package is developed within seven days of assessment. The service aims to meet the needs of children who are experiencing poor mental health, who have experienced abuse or trauma and those at risk of placement breakdown.

Outcomes:

- carers reported significant improvements in pro-social behaviour among young people involved in the project;
- 53 per cent of young people referred had behaviour difficulties which were putting their education at risk. On leaving the project this had declined to 21 per cent; and
- at referral, 31 per cent of young people were truanting. This reduced to 11 per cent while involved in the project.

**Physical health**

7.15 Quality Protects (QP) includes an objective for local authorities to improve health outcomes for children in care. Three performance indicators measure the percentages of children in care for one year or more who had routine immunisations up to date and had had annual dental checks and health assessments. Although performance varies across local authorities, over 70 per cent of children had had the required checks or immunisations. The indicators have shown a steady improvement since the introduction of QP.

7.16 Physical health can affect school attendance and participation in education. For example, children with disabilities can find it difficult to adjust to the longer school day or the volume of work when making the transition from special into mainstream school. If children are moving from place to place, underlying problems such as poor vision or hearing can take longer to pick up, which can impact on their ability to learn in school. Anecdotal evidence suggests that children in care can have limited access to sporting activities and outdoor play facilities, which in turn has a detrimental effect on their physical and mental health.

7.17 Speech and language development needs are also often undetected, which can have an impact on both home and school life. Even where the problem is identified, the lack of appropriate provision can inhibit access to education and result in longer-term behavioural problems. A recent survey found that 14 per cent of children in care had speech or language problems.
Sexual health

7.18 Young people in care are two and a half times more likely than their peers to become teenage parents. Many miss out on sex education and contraceptive and advice services, for two main reasons:

- social workers and carers do not feel confident about discussing sex and relationships, and do not provide the same support on these issues as many parents would; and
- frequent school changes and time out of school can mean that young people in care often miss out on sex education at school. Girls who are not in school are at relatively greater risk of becoming pregnant.

7.19 The Teenage Pregnancy Unit (TPU) is encouraging local authorities to promote good sexual health among children in care by:

- implementing clear policies to ensure young people in care have access to sex and relationships education;
- providing training for social workers and carers on talking to young people about sex and relationships; and
- implementing TPU guidance which makes clear that social workers should refer a young person in care to contraceptive services if they have any reason to think that he or she may be about to become sexually active.

Substance misuse

7.20 The most frequently reported illicit drug used by young people is cannabis, although there is little difference in the use of this drug amongst young people in care and their peers. However, there is some evidence that young people in care are more likely to use class A drugs, particularly at age 16 and over. Those living in residential care are more likely to use substances than those in foster care, although this could be because they tend to be older.

7.21 Missed schooling can mean that young people in care do not receive advice and information about substance misuse and the risks associated with drug taking. Young people who are out of school and not supervised during the day are at greater risk of associating with older drug users. The updated National Drug Strategy 2002 encourages Drug Action Teams to focus on the most vulnerable children in their communities. Frontline social care and education staff need to be able to recognise substance misuse issues as part of a broader framework of young people’s needs, rather than solely as an issue for specialist substance misuse services.

7.22 Young people in care who have substance misuse problems must be identified early so that this does not have a negative outcome on their education. The Government has funded guidance for local authorities on the implementation of local drugs and alcohol policies. This includes advice on assessment and referrals, confidentiality, and examples of good practice. Guidance on identifying young people’s substance related needs has also been produced.
CHAPTER EIGHT: UNDERLYING PROBLEMS

8.1 The issues set out in this report will be familiar to those working with children in care. The Government initiatives described in chapter two address many of these problems directly, and there are plenty of examples of action by local authorities and others to tackle them. Yet still these problems persist, to a greater or lesser extent, across the country. Progress in tackling them has been slower than anticipated because of underlying factors that make change difficult. The themes identified here are also addressed by the Children’s Green Paper.

Capacity

8.2 There are two dimensions to the capacity problem:

- a shortage of people, including children and families social workers, foster carers and residential care workers; and

- a lack of appropriate skills to support education.

People

8.3 Many local authorities have serious problems recruiting and retaining good quality social care staff:

- the national vacancy rate for children and families social workers is 11 per cent. In London, it is 20 per cent and can be as high as 50 per cent in some boroughs. The national turnover rate is 13 per cent;

- nearly three-quarters of local authorities report difficulties recruiting and retaining social workers;

- there is an estimated shortage of over 6,000 foster carers in England, with a shortage of over 1,000 carers in London; and
staff vacancy rates in children’s homes are 10 per cent nationally and 18 per cent in London. The national turnover rate is 15 per cent.

8.4 By comparison, national vacancy rates for the police and teachers are 2.6 per cent and 1.2 per cent respectively. A third of local authorities report difficulties recruiting and retaining teachers.

Vacancies in public services

8.5 Recruitment and retention difficulties are particularly acute in social care:

- high vacancy rates increase the pressure on staff workloads. This is a particular concern for social workers;
- social care has a poor public image;
- pay is a particular problem for staff in children’s homes and for foster carers;
- many staff receive low levels of support and management supervision;
- low morale and job satisfaction within the sector; and
- heavy workloads, poor morale and the stressful nature of the job contribute to high levels of absenteeism.

8.6 Faced with these shortages, some local authorities are employing unqualified assistant social workers to carry out tasks, including contact with children, that have traditionally been the role of a qualified social worker. In some cases, this forms part of a structured training programme to promote and develop staff to become future social workers. The Government is funding pilot schemes to develop the role of assistant social workers. However, there are also examples of unskilled or inexperienced staff being left with little supervision.
8.7 Many local authorities, particularly in London, employ agency staff to cover vacant social worker posts. Evidence from the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) visits to areas with high numbers of agency staff showed that they can create ill-feeling among permanent staff because they can be more highly paid but seen as lacking commitment to the job.

8.8 The SEU visits also found that heavy workloads mean that social workers often only have time to focus on the core of their work – ensuring children’s safety – and not other issues such as health and education. Social workers might only have time to react to immediate problems, rather than supporting children proactively. Chapter three noted the impact on placement planning.

8.9 Heavy workloads and time pressures can also make partnership working with other agencies more difficult, as it takes a sustained investment of time to build good working relationships. It also affects education planning, with social workers lacking the time to find children a school place, work with teachers to identify educational needs, or appeal admissions or exclusions decisions.

8.10 Local authorities spent over £13 million on recruitment and retention campaigns between April and September 2001. Many are introducing new initiatives to support social workers, such as increased administrative support, and more and better trained support staff.

8.11 The Government is currently running a recruitment campaign for social care workers which aims to increase the number of applicants to social work courses by 5000 over three years. In its first year, applications rose by 6.5 per cent. From September 2003, undergraduate students who are not being supported by an employer will be eligible for a £3,000 bursary plus tuition fees. The Government has introduced a Human Resources Development Strategy grant for local authorities, £9.5 million in 2003–04 rising to a provisional £63 million in 2005–06. This aims to tackle problems of recruitment and retention, and to improve the quality of workforce planning and human resources management across the social care workforce in the statutory, private and voluntary sectors.

Skills

“I gave a lecture to final year social work students about the importance of education. In most cases their reaction was ‘oh yeah, I suppose they do go to school’.”

(Local authority education co-ordinator for children in care)

8.12 Current initial training for social workers contains little, if any, information about the education of children in care. The Post Qualifying award in Child Care includes optional modules on education. As from September 2003, there is a new three-year social work degree, based on National Occupational Standards for Social Work. This includes training on human growth and development, and should include children’s educational needs.

8.13 Initial teacher training does not cover the needs of children in care or other vulnerable children. Since the care population is small and thinly spread, many teachers have little or no experience of working with children in care, and may not understand the impact of being in care on a child.

8.14 Training for foster carers or residential care workers does not necessarily include education. The National Minimum Standards for Children’s Homes require that by 2005, 80 per cent of staff in each home should have completed National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People, which includes optional modules on education. At present, just over a quarter of non-managerial staff in children’s homes hold a relevant qualification. Fostering services must provide foundation training for foster carers (which does not necessarily include education), but there is no minimum requirement for NVQ training. The Government is introducing a National Training Strategy grant to increase the level of NVQ qualifications in the workforce (£24 million in 2003–04, rising to a provisional £95 million in 2005–06).
8.15 As a result of the joint Guidance, most local authorities have introduced training on the education of children in care, usually for social workers and designated teachers. Some also offer training courses for carers, but usually on a voluntary basis, and often with low take-up.

8.16 The lack of emphasis and training on education has encouraged social workers and carers to focus on children’s care and safety, but not their wider development. Although education should be a major part of children’s lives, it is not always recognised as important for children in care.

Management and leadership

“…the greatest failure rests with the managers and senior members of the authorities whose task it was to ensure that services for children, like Victoria, were properly financed, staffed, and able to deliver good quality support to children and families.”

(Lord Laming, Victoria Climbié Inquiry)

8.17 Quality Protects (QP) and the Public Service Agreement target have raised the profile of the education of children in care among senior management. However, too many managers and directors in social services spend their time reacting to crises, rather than planning strategically for the future direction of the service. There are three particular problems in this area:

- **strong and sustained leadership.** In some local authorities, councillors and senior staff are playing a key role in driving up standards for children in care. However, given the lack of clear accountability for improving outcomes, where there is a lack of senior level commitment to those outcomes, they can be given a lower priority and allowed to drift;

- **willingness to take practical action where services are poor.** Despite recognising the problems children face, many staff feel powerless to improve things. This can translate into a lack of ambition for children. Individual problems, such as a child being out of school, can be seen as minor even though they have a major impact on the child; and

- **the gap between management and the frontline.** National initiatives can lead to greater awareness and enthusiasm among managers but have little impact on frontline staff. This might be because managers lack the time or skills to communicate properly to staff, or because staff do not have the capacity or are unwilling to act on these messages. This can mean that although local policies exist to improve children’s education, they are not being implemented effectively on the ground. Equally, many frontline staff say their expertise is undervalued by managers who do not take their views on board in key decisions.

8.18 Since 1999, the Government has funded a Top Managers’ Development Programme (£500,000 per year). Topss England are leading a fundamental review of the social care National Training Strategy as it relates to leadership and management development.
Although overall funding has increased in real terms in recent years – including through the five-year QP grant of £885 million – some local authorities are struggling to deliver an adequate service with the resources they currently have available. The Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Social Services reported an overspend compared to the Standard Spending Assessment of up to 9 per cent for children’s services in 2001–02. Chapter nine describes the increased funding for children’s social services announced by the Government as part of the Spending Review 2002.

As noted above and in chapter three, heavy workloads can contribute to poor planning at a strategic level and for individual children. This in turn leads to poor use of resources when placements break down, or when only very expensive places are available in an emergency.

Many local authorities have only recently developed management information systems, and data can be unreliable. This makes it more difficult to use past levels of demand to estimate future placement needs. As a result, placement commissioning is often done on a case by case basis, rather than as part of an overall strategic plan. This makes it harder to obtain value for money.

Funding shortages can impact on education and learning in a number of ways:

- children might be placed in an inappropriate care placement that is more likely to break down;
- there is a critical shortage of therapeutic and support services;
- local authorities have to prioritise between services for children in care, and services for those in need but not in care. This can lead to a lack of early intervention, with local authorities unable to get involved until situations reach crisis point; and
- local authorities are unable to respond to severe recruitment problems by increasing pay for social workers and carers.

As a result of QP and the introduction of corporate parenting, many local authorities have placed greater emphasis on trying to join services up in recent years, particularly between social services, education and health. However, there is still a widespread lack of joint working, especially on the frontline.

Two common barriers to effective joint working are:

- **social workers and teachers can lack understanding of each others’ roles and responsibilities**, and feel that their own role is misunderstood and undervalued. They can have unrealistic expectations of what the others could or should be doing, and feel frustrated when these expectations are not met; and
- **different working patterns**, teachers are at their busiest during school hours, whereas social workers and carers need the time after school to be with young people. The timing of review meetings can cause particular problems. They are often held during school time, which makes it much more difficult for teachers to attend and means that the child has to miss school.
Lack of joint working causes problems for children in care:

- children ‘fall between the cracks’ of services, either because their needs are not properly identified, or because everyone assumes that someone else will take responsibility for meeting their needs. This is a particular problem for children placed outside the local authority area;

- decisions about funding services which cross departmental lines can be particularly contentious resulting in the child missing out or receiving a reduced level of service; or

- no one individual has accountability for the educational services, support or outcomes for individual children.

Some local authorities, such as Hertfordshire or Brighton and Hove, have attempted to tackle these problems by integrating the management of education and children’s social services within the authority. Others have taken steps to address joint funding problems in particular. For example, Warrington has developed an agreement within the authority about who will fund children’s transport costs rather than arguing each case individually.

The Government has announced 35 pilot Children’s Trusts to explore new models of closer cooperation between children’s service providers. Children’s Trusts will enable local partners including the local authority and health services to work together to plan, commission, finance and deliver services for children.

Attitudes

“People (especially the teachers) expect you to do badly in exams because of your problems. But I did well in GCSEs and everyone was surprised and were saying ‘I didn’t expect you to get such good grades because of your problems’. People put you down but you do get praised when you do well.”

(16-year-old female, secure unit)

“When I told my social worker that I wanted to do A levels, she told me to go out and get a job.”

(Female care leaver)

Children in care who do well usually have a parent or carer who values education and sees it as a route to a better life. Some carers and social workers have high expectations for children in their care, but others argue that children have been so damaged by their past experiences that they are unable to learn.
Negative attitudes can have a significant impact on the education of children in care:

- children might be unable to find a school place if the school assumes that the child will be a low achiever or a trouble maker;

- adults’ low expectations, and the lack of positive reinforcement and encouragement, can be damaging to the child’s self-esteem and ultimately lead to the child believing that they cannot achieve; and

- low expectations might also mean that children are not entered for exams, or that finding the child a school place is not a priority.

Encouragingly, nearly three-quarters of children in the SEU consultation thought that teachers treated them the same, and had the same expectations of them as of their peers\textsuperscript{103}. However, this is not consistent with other research, which suggests that expectations of children in care are low\textsuperscript{104}.

**Literacy project: The Who Cares? Trust and National Literacy Association**

The two voluntary bodies ran a literacy project in conjunction with a large local authority. Social workers and teachers were asked to refer children aged between eight and 13 with literacy problems to the project. As the first stage, the children – most of whom were in long-term stable foster care – were assessed by an Educational Psychologist (EP). Of 66 children referred, the EP found that 19 actually had reading ages at or above the expected level; two 11-year-olds had reading ages of 16, one 10-year-old had a reading age of 15, and another of 17. Their apparent literacy problems had, in many cases, stemmed from boredom at being set unchallenging work.

The local authority recognised that in many cases teachers and social workers had artificially low expectations of children’s abilities, and is now taking steps to address these expectations.

**Bureaucracy**

The significant quantity of legislation and guidance around both care and education means that professionals struggle to keep up with the volume and complexity in their own field, let alone develop a sound understanding of other fields. This issue was highlighted in Lord Laming’s report into the death of Victoria Climbié. As a result of the report, the Government has simplified and reissued the guidance on safeguarding children, and is streamlining the guidance on the Children Act 1989.
CHAPTER NINE: CENTRAL GOVERNMENT ACTION

The Government will take action in eight areas to build on Quality Protects and other initiatives to improve outcomes for children in care:

- improving management and leadership;
- supporting the frontline more effectively;
- providing resources to support the education of children in care;
- improving understanding of care, and attitudes towards those in care;
- refining the framework of legislation and guidance;
- ensuring that national standards take full account of the priority Government places on education for children in care;
- prioritising children in care in current and future policy development; and
- making better use of information and research.

Management and leadership

9.1 Chapter eight noted problems in the lack of clear accountability for improving outcomes for children in care. Improving accountability is a key aspect of the consultation proposals set out in the Children’s Green Paper.

9.2 In the Children’s Green Paper the Government is consulting on legislation to:

- create the post of a Director of Children’s Services responsible for local authority education and children’s social services;
- create a lead council member for children; and
- introduce a duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of children in care.

9.3 The Children’s Green Paper also sets out plans to legislate for the appointment of a Children’s Commissioner to speak for all children but especially the disadvantaged. The Commissioner’s role would therefore include looking strategically at policies relating to children in care.

9.4 In addition to these consultation proposals the Government will consider how best to increase awareness within local authorities on issues of accountability for the education of children in care. This will include issuing new joint Department for Education and Skills and Local Government Information Unit guidance in October 2003. This guidance will reinforce corporate parent responsibilities. Councillors will be urged to ask key questions about the safety, education, health and housing needs of those that are in their care. They will also need to be aware of support that is being provided to care leavers, and what is happening to make sure they do not get into trouble.
Supporting the frontline

9.5 Almost everyone working with children in care is employed locally, either for local authorities or independent providers. Even so, central government and national organisations such as the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), Teacher Training Agency (TTA), Topss England and General Social Care Council (GSCC) can help with support, advice and guidance for frontline workers and operational managers. The Government will:

(i) work with local providers to prepare a short ‘key roles’ document setting out suggested roles and responsibilities for social workers and carers to support the education of children in care. This will include, for example, responsibility for finding a school place, attendance at parents’ evenings, and who should advocate for the child with the school on day-to-day matters. The document will retain sufficient flexibility for it to be adapted for local need;

(ii) include training on child development and the impacts of post-traumatic stress in the ‘common core training’ being developed by the Government for all those working with children. Further details are included in the Children’s Green Paper;

(iii) work with the TTA to produce best practice training materials for publication and information for their website, to ensure that teachers are aware of how the care system operates and the particular needs of children in care; and

(iv) consider extending the remit and life of the Education Protects network of regional advisers to support implementation of this report.

Resources

9.6 The Children’s Services Grant that accompanied Quality Protects (QP) will be mainstreamed into local authority budgets from 2004. The Spending Review 2002 announced that funding for social services would increase by 6 per cent a year in real terms for three years from 2003–04. As a result of the Choice Protects review, £113 million over three years is ring-fenced for improving placement choice, with a requirement in 2003–04 that resources are spent on expanding and strengthening fostering services. Among other things, funding can be used to provide specialist services to support foster carers in developing the educational attainment of children and maintain them in their schools. The grant can also be used to develop innovative placement schemes.

9.7 The Choice Protects review will also help deliver greater efficiency in the way money is spent, by tackling the problems of poor planning that lead authorities to purchase expensive care placements on a case-by-case basis, often without due attention to a child’s educational needs.

9.8 Spending on education and skills is also set to rise by an average of 6 per cent each year in real terms over the next three years. As part of this, the Vulnerable Children’s Grant, £252 million over three years, will support local education authority initiatives to raise the educational attainment of children in care and other groups of vulnerable children.

9.9 Under proposals announced by the Government in 2003, every child will be given a Child Trust Fund involving an initial endowment of £250, rising to £500 for children in the poorest third of families including children in care. The Government will consider what more needs to be done to ensure that children in care do not miss out on the benefits Child Trust Funds will provide.
Attitudes and understanding

9.10 To improve awareness of children’s needs, and help raise expectations for children in care, the Government will:

(i) work with local authorities and other providers, as well as voluntary groups and national organisations such as SCIE, to consider how best to promote understanding and positive images of care; and

(ii) develop a communication strategy for councillors and senior level managers to highlight the vital role they play in improving educational outcomes for children in care, and support them to develop a vision for local care services.

9.11 To raise awareness among practitioners, the Social Exclusion Unit has published a practice guide that summarises the key problems raised in this report, and gives examples of local authority good practice to tackle these issues. The Government and the Local Government Association have sponsored research from the National Foundation for Educational Research on achievement at Key Stage 4, and have produced a good practice toolkit to help local authorities to raise attainment.

Legislation and guidance

9.12 The framework of legislation and guidance support local efforts to improve educational outcomes for children in care. The project has found that the existing framework is generally supportive. However there are a number of issues that the Government will address.

9.13 Chapter three noted that placement choice is currently driven by short-term demands and availability. Choice Protects is looking at ways of ensuring that children’s needs can play a central role in placement planning and commissioning. In the longer term, and subject to further consultation, the Government will issue guidance to ensure that:

(i) care placements that require a change of school will only be allowed in specified circumstances, for example at parents’, children’s or carers’ request;

(ii) the use of out of authority placements will be restricted to cases where it is clearly in the child’s best interests, such as in the circumstances described in Appendix A or in exceptional circumstances; and

(iii) children needing complex services who cannot be placed within the local authority must be found a specialist placement within the same region except in specified circumstances.

9.14 Many local authorities have criticised the Education (Areas to which Pupils and Students Belong) Regulations 1996 (the Belonging Regulations) for being over complex and providing a disincentive to recognise children’s needs. There is much confusion about how they should operate. The Government will consult on how best to clarify the Belonging Regulations as they apply to children in care and will provide guidance on the financial responsibilities for children in care with special educational needs statements who are placed outside the home authority.

9.15 The Government has amended the School Admissions Code of Practice so that admission authorities should give children in care top priority in their oversubscription criteria to ensure they are quickly placed in a school that can meet their needs.
9.16 In addition, the Government believes that school governing bodies can play a greater role in ensuring that the needs of children in care are met in their schools. To facilitate this, the Government will:

(i) provide guidance on the questions governors could raise with schools about the education of children in care and other vulnerable children. The Government will also raise awareness through influencing training materials for school governors, and highlighting the needs of children in care and other vulnerable children in information and publications aimed at school governors, including GovernorNet; and

(ii) make explicit the right of foster carers and residential care workers to stand in parent governor elections. The definition of a parent in the School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2003 is sufficiently wide to enable foster carers and residential care workers to stand in parent governor elections.

9.17 Chapter ten makes a number of recommendations for local action to improve the effectiveness of Personal Education Plans (PEPs). The Government will also reform the guidance on PEPs so that:

(i) planning the transition to primary, secondary or middle school (or equivalent), and to sixth form or further education college, should be the main item on the agenda at the Care Plan and PEP review meetings prior to application forms being completed. It should be a standing item on the agenda for Care Plan and PEP reviews for all children in the two years prior to the transfer date; and

(ii) the learning and development needs of pre-school children in care are identified and planned. Pre-school children will be expected to have a PEP. This should focus on good quality play opportunities, early learning and access to appropriate nursery or other provision – rather than formal educational goals.

9.18 To provide children with positive and relevant learning experiences and help the transition from school to work, Enterprise Advisers will be funded over the next two years to work alongside head teachers in 1,000 secondary schools in disadvantaged areas. Their role will be to encourage enterprise practice among teachers and pupils, and to help develop the skills and aptitude for enterprise and finance. As part of their role, they will help schools to enable vulnerable groups, including children in care, to take advantage of and benefit from this type of learning in their schools.

9.19 Independent Reviewing Officers will have an important role in supporting children's education by ensuring that PEPs are completed with input from all relevant individuals, that appropriate targets are set and progress is being made, and that necessary support is being provided. They will also be responsible for reviewing the inclusion of out-of-school activities in Care Plans, and check that these Plans are put into effect.

9.20 The Government will work with Connexions, Universities UK, the Association of Colleges, and the Learning and Skills Council to encourage young people in care to remain in or re-enter education or training. This could include taster courses and summer schools giving an introduction to post-16 education, and tailored access courses to help those with aptitude but few or no formal qualifications to progress to further or higher education.

9.21 In developing the Education Maintenance Allowance scheme prior to national roll-out in 2004, the Government will reflect the needs of vulnerable young people as a whole, including children in care and care leavers. The Government will also examine the position of vulnerable groups as part of its review of the overall system of financial support for 16–19-year-olds, reporting in spring 2004.
Standards and training

9.22 The National Minimum Standards for fostering services and children’s homes already place emphasis on promoting the education of children in care. The Government will amend the Standards to:

(i) make explicit the need **for children’s homes to have effective strategies in place for tackling poor school attendance**; and

(ii) in the longer term, set a target for the **minimum proportion of foster carers to be trained in a relevant qualification**. The Government will consult on appropriate qualifications and the target level with key stakeholders.

9.23 In addition to these measures, the Children’s Green Paper is consulting on radical and imaginative ways of encouraging people to become foster carers and ensuring they are valued and recognised.

9.24 In order to remain on the register of the GSCC, all social care workers will need to show evidence of continuing professional development (CPD). The GSCC has yet to publish its criteria for re-registration or its CPD strategy. The Government believes that in order to remain on the GSCC register, social care workers working with children and families should be expected to show up-to-date knowledge and understanding of children’s educational needs, child development, and evaluation and analysis skills. This could either be through gaining formal qualifications such as the Post Qualifying award in Child Care, or through structured learning.

9.25 The Children’s Green Paper sets out proposals for transforming the children’s workforce including social care workers. This includes reviewing rewards and incentives, a high profile recruitment campaign, more flexible routes into the workforce, common occupational standards and training for the children’s workforce as a whole.

Policy development

9.26 It is important that the needs of children in care and their carers are taken into account in all future Government policy that affects them. In particular, the Government will:

(i) recognise explicitly the needs of children in care and their carers in national initiatives for **pre-school children**;

(ii) ensure the specific needs of children in care are recognised in any recommendations made to Lottery funding distributors, following the **review of children’s play** and the report to be published in 2003;

(iii) ensure that the needs of at risk groups, including children in care, are reflected in the priorities set for the new Young People’s Fund, which will use Lottery good cause money to fund projects that promote youth inclusion, particularly by providing facilities and activities both after school and in holiday periods; and

(iv) recognise children in care as a high risk group in the next revision of the **anti-bullying guidance** for schools produced by the Department for Education and Skills, and take appropriate action to make sure that initiatives on bullying are sensitive to the needs of children in care.
Information and research

9.27 Information on educational outcomes for children in care has improved substantially since QP was introduced. However, there are still some significant gaps in our knowledge. The Government will:

(i) ensure that guidance on the circumstances in which data can be shared between education and social services departments takes account of the needs of children in care;

(ii) over the longer term, harmonise the timetable and requirements for Government data collection, so that only one set of data is collected on the education of children in care;

(iii) use data from the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) and other relevant information to improve our understanding of outcomes for young people who have ever spent time in care, and review relevant policies in light of this analysis. Over time, this and other data collected by the Government, could form the basis of longitudinal research into children’s educational needs;

(iv) use PLASC data and other relevant information to improve understanding of outcomes for young people from ethnic minority backgrounds and children with disabilities, and review relevant policies accordingly;

(v) monitor access to and take-up of pre-school provision for children in care; and

(vi) carry out further research into the extent and nature of children in care’s involvement in out-of-school activities, and barriers to improving access.
CHAPTER TEN:
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL ACTION

To deliver better outcomes for all children in care local authorities, schools and independent care providers need to build on their progress so far in six areas:

- planning;
- prioritising children in care in local government policies;
- support for children in care;
- advocating for children in care;
- training and support for social workers, carers and teachers; and
- better use of data to inform service improvements.

Planning

10.1 Chapter three emphasised the importance of better strategic planning to deliver greater placement choice and value for money – this is being considered in detail by the Choice Protects review. More effective planning by local authorities would include:

(i) using the new Integrated Children’s System, which is currently being piloted to **improve the use of management information to assess likely future placement needs**. This includes the need for future provision for particular groups of children such as ethnic minority or disabled children;

(ii) developing **regional and local placement forums** to plan for and meet the requirements of all children in care, including those in need of specialist services. These should increase partnership working and encourage better placement matching. Forums should be based on the model provided by the National Partnership in Placement Forum, which was announced as part of the Choice Protects review; and

(iii) over the longer term, developing the use of **managed vacancies** so that children can return to a previous carer if a move home proves unsuccessful.

10.2 Better planning to meet the needs of individual children will help to improve stability and increase the opportunity to ensure that children’s educational needs are met. In particular:

(i) planning for care (and, if necessary, education) placements should start sooner, with social workers developing **contingency plans before the child is taken into care** in cases where findings from the assessment indicate that there is a strong chance that a child will enter care; and

(ii) where children are placed outside the authority because of a lack of appropriate places, managers should take particular care to ensure that initial and subsequent reviews are carried out on time, and that visits and other means of keeping in touch are used regularly to check that the child’s needs, including educational needs, are being met.
Personal Education Plans

10.3 Joint working is essential for effective planning for a child’s education. Meetings to develop and review a child’s Care Plan or Personal Education Plan (PEP) should include the child, his or her parents and all relevant professionals, including the social worker, designated teacher or other teacher, carer, and anyone providing individual support.

10.4 As set out in chapter nine, each pre-school child will be expected to have a PEP focusing on good quality play opportunities, early learning and access to appropriate nursery or other provision. Where children are attending nursery or other pre-school provision, social workers will need to liaise with a named contact over completion of the PEP.

10.5 Local authorities should build on best practice in the use of PEPs by:

(i) setting an **individual educational target** for each child. Existing target-setting mechanisms – for example those used routinely by a child’s school – should be used wherever possible. Where these are not available, targets should be set as part of the PEP process. Local authorities should ensure that targets are appropriate, and in particular that they are sufficiently challenging, backed up by Ofsted inspecting a selection of PEPs;

(ii) including in the PEP any Individual Education Plan, statement of special educational needs (SEN), and any reviews of the statement for children with SEN;

(iii) using the PEP review to **plan school transitions**. Local authorities will be expected to identify at what time of year the main transfer meeting will need to take place. To ensure smooth transfer to a new school, local authorities should consider inviting the designated teacher from the new school to PEP reviews. The PEP should specify any additional support necessary to achieve a successful transition and how it would be funded, including transitions to out of authority provision. Children should be consulted about what would help all of these transitions;

(iv) **consulting children about their preferred out-of-school activities**, and recording their views in the PEP, alongside agreed action and funding to meet the child’s needs. Children in care should have access to, and be encouraged to make use of, a full range of out of school activities. These could include both activities run specifically for children in care and those open more widely, including those provided by statutory and voluntary youth services;

(v) ensuring that where a child with a history of poor attendance, which should be recorded in the PEP, has to change school, and there is more than one local school, **the schools’ records in tackling truancy and promoting inclusion are taken into account** in deciding on the most appropriate school placement; and

(vi) using the Foundation Stage Profile (FSP) to inform the development of PEPs for young children in care (see also paragraph 10.30).
Prioritising children in care

Nurseries, schools and colleges

10.6 Local Education Authorities (LEAs) have a duty to ensure that all children receive an appropriate education, including those who are in care. Children in care can easily ‘slip through the net’, it is therefore important that LEAs place high priority on their education. This should include:

(i) identifying a designated early years co-ordinator specifically to liaise between social workers, carers, and pre-school providers;

(ii) using the Vulnerable Children’s Grant, or other funding streams, to provide bursaries for children in care to facilitate school admissions; and

(iii) considering whether alternative types of provision would be more appropriate in meeting the child’s individual care, welfare and educational needs, such as a placement in a maintained or independent boarding school.

10.7 In accordance with the new School Admissions Code of Practice, admissions forums should agree protocols for allocating school places to vulnerable children, including children in care, who need to change school outside the normal admissions round. This must take account of the requirement for local authorities to find a suitable school place for children in care within 20 days. In addition, admissions forums should aim to secure the agreement of schools to exceed their roll by one or two pupils to accommodate children in care.

10.8 Schools should review the workload of designated teachers to ensure that they have sufficient time and training to carry out their task effectively.

10.9 Governing bodies should be informed about the number and overall attainment levels of children in care in their schools, with designated teachers giving an annual update on progress. Local authorities, in their role as corporate parents, could also expect LEA governors to act as ‘designated governors’ in schools and nursery schools to champion and promote the needs of children in care and monitor educational outcomes. This should not detract from other governors, who might otherwise be well placed to support children in care, from taking on this role.

10.10 Further education colleges should each have a designated member of staff to advocate on behalf of young people in care or care leavers who attend the college. It will be for the young person to decide whether to tell staff about his or her care status – they will not automatically be told which students are or were in care.

Corporately

10.11 Local authorities have a corporate responsibility to prioritise the needs of children in care. In particular they should:

(i) ensure that children and carers are kept up to date with the range of out-of-school activities available, and that the particular needs of children in care are addressed in youth service development plans and other plans for out of school activities. This includes facilitating access for children to attend such activities, such as leisure passes or help with transport. Local authorities should work with Connexions partnerships on facilities for teenagers;

(ii) ensure that carers are fully aware of, and encouraged to access, local services for pre-school children; and
(iii) consider offering young people in care work placements and possibly full-time employment. In such cases, local authorities would need to ensure that expenses for young people attending work experience are covered.

Mental health

10.12 The Emerging Findings of the National Service Framework for Children noted that multi-agency partnerships within Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) were essential to provide services to groups of children most in need, including children in care. Building on the experience of the CAMHS Innovations Projects and other successful initiatives, local authorities and Primary Care Trusts should consider ways in which access to mental health services for children in care can be improved, having taken account of their joint assessment of the overall mental health needs of local children.

Support for children in care

10.13 In accordance with current best practice, local authorities should ensure that every child in care has access to appropriate and up-to-date books, toys and Information and Communication Technology equipment to promote education and wider development.

10.14 Building on the experience of successful voluntary sector initiatives and the new Behaviour and Education Support Teams model, local authorities developing school-based therapeutic services should ensure they are accessible to children in care.

10.15 Local authorities should always endeavour to find children a school place, preferably in a local mainstream school. However, if a child does not have a school place, local authorities must make immediate alternative arrangements to provide full-time education. This should follow the National Curriculum, or, if the Curriculum does not apply to a particular child, should be appropriate to his or her educational needs.

10.16 Children who have missed substantial periods of school, who speak English as an additional language, or who have fallen behind in their education for other reasons, need to be given additional support to catch up. This should be recorded in the child’s PEP, with measurable action points and agreement on any necessary funding.

10.17 As noted in paragraph 9.10, in the long term, the number and use of out of authority placements will be restricted. In the short term, local authorities should ensure that all children in care have equal access and support wherever they are placed over issues such as school admissions and planning, as set out in the joint Guidance.

10.18 Local authorities and other providers could also employ qualified teachers to offer additional educational support outside the classroom. For example, the teachers could visit children’s homes one evening a week, or provide additional tuition for children in foster care in years 10 and 11.

10.19 The corporate sector and volunteers for business also have a role to play in helping children in care develop self confidence, raise aspirations and increase their skills and knowledge of the world of work. Business in the Community (BITC) is therefore looking to engage with businesses to raise awareness of the issues faced by children in care, and considering how best to increase their involvement in BITC initiatives.
10.20 Leaving care services need to work with local further and higher education institutions, the local LSC and Connexions partnerships to raise awareness of the specific needs of care leavers, including offering training to staff on the needs and experiences of young people in care.

10.21 Leaving care services should work in partnership with Connexions to establish links with, and provide support to local employers to develop a variety of employment or work experience placements for young people in care. These could include Modern Apprenticeships or other packages including mentoring and training.

Advocacy and appeals

10.22 Carers of children in care who are excluded from school or Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) have the same right to challenge the exclusion as parents of other children. In all cases where a child is excluded from a school or PRU, his or her social worker should refer to the Department for Education and Skills’ guidance Improving Behaviour and Attendance: Guidance on Exclusion from Schools and Pupil Referral Units, consult the Advisory Centre for Education (ACE) exclusions helpline, and discuss with the child and carer whether they wish to challenge the decision. The presumption should be that where a child or his or her carer or social worker believes the exclusion is unfair or disproportionate the decision should be challenged. In all cases, the child’s views and the final decision should be recorded. As part of their training on education, exclusion procedures and remedies should be explained to carers and social workers so that any exclusion, including ‘unofficial’ exclusions, can be challenged.

10.23 All local authorities must have a policy of appealing negative decisions on admissions, unless the child does not wish to pursue the case. Carers and social workers will be expected to challenge cases where procedures are not correctly followed.

10.24 Children must be consulted about matters relating to their education provision and their views acted upon. When consulting with children and young people about future service provision, local authorities must ensure that the views of groups of children who are less able to express their views (such as children with disabilities or English as an additional language, or young children) are fully taken into account.

10.25 Advocacy services for children in care should ensure that education issues are included within the scope of their work. Local authorities who sub-contract their advocacy services should make clear that this is an expected part of their role.

Training and support for social workers, carers and teachers

10.26 Local authorities should provide training for the different groups of staff who need to know about the educational needs of children in care. Ideally, training should be offered on a multi-agency basis, with sessions open to teachers, social workers, carers and other professionals with an interest in children’s education. Joint training not only helps raise awareness, but also facilitates networking between different professions. Children and young people who are or have been in care should be involved in delivering the training wherever possible.
In addition, certain groups of staff have specific training needs. These include:

- designated teachers, who may not previously have come into contact with children in care, and need to understand what their specific responsibilities are;

- carers, who should all be trained on the education system as part of their initial training. Similar training should be provided for all existing carers; and

- social workers, who should be trained to evaluate and analyse children’s needs when developing placement plans, and on the need for forward planning.

The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services identified the need for foster carers to provide support for children’s learning. As part of the initial assessment process, foster carers should be assessed on their ability to support a child’s education. Local authorities should ensure that the role of foster carers in supporting education is covered in pre-approval training.

Local authorities should consider **work-shadowing opportunities** between education and social care workers to improve understanding of respective roles and responsibilities.

**Information**

Local authorities should monitor the number of children changing school each year as a result of entering or leaving care, or a change in care placement, and take necessary action to minimise such changes.

From 2003, children will be assessed using the FSP at the end of Year One (age six). This cannot be used as the basis for a quantitative indicator. However, FSP data should be made available to local authorities to help them monitor and improve the quality of services for pre-school children in care. Local authorities should monitor the accessibility and take-up of pre-school provision for children in care.

Local authorities should collect information on the proportion of children who met their individual educational targets, and use this information to inform the development of services at the individual and strategic level. There will not, at this stage, be a requirement to report the results to the Government.

Where local authorities are developing or implementing new IT systems, they should actively seek to harmonise and simplify data collection as part of that process.
CHAPTER ELEVEN: MEASURING SUCCESS

- The Government will work with key inspectorates to ensure that the recommendations in this report are implemented effectively.

- Our long-term policy objective is to ensure that every child in care is able to fulfil their potential. To that end, the Government has set a new Public Service Agreement (PSA) target, to substantially narrow the gap between the educational attainment and participation of children in care and that of their peers by 2006.

- The existing indicators on educational outcomes for children in care should be retained. The Government will work with the inspectorates to develop new indicators covering attainment at each Key Stage, basic skills, and engagement in higher education.

- The 2004 Spending Review should consider whether to introduce additional targets and indicators, including the option of a ‘value added’ target.

- Progress will be overseen by Cabinet Committees and a new national advisory group on children in care.

Inspection

11.1 At present, four key inspectorates are involved in monitoring the education of children in care:

- Ofsted, which assesses the performance of schools and local education authorities, and registers early years settings;

- the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI), which assesses the performance of local authority social services departments and some children’s homes;

- the National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) which inspects independent foster agencies and individual children’s homes against National Minimum Standards; and

- the Audit Commission which works with Ofsted and the SSI to assess the performance of local authorities.

11.2 From April 2004, the SSI, the social care parts of the NCSC and the joint review work of the Audit Commission will be merged (subject to the legislative timetable) to form the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI).

11.3 Inspection criteria are derived from relevant legislation, including the Children Act 1989, the Care Standards Act 2000 and the Education Act 2002. Statutory guidance also influences inspections, and inspectorates take into account recent developments and good practice demonstrated elsewhere.

11.4 Government will work with the inspectorates to ensure that inspections reflect the high priority we place on the education of children in care. To this end, we will support the development of joint inspections where appropriate, including joint inspections by SSI and Ofsted on the education of children in care.
The Children’s Green Paper proposals include consultation on new arrangements for a single inspection framework for children’s services. We will ensure the education of children in care is a central part of the implementation of the Children’s Green Paper including any reform of the inspection process and how we judge success.

In particular, Ofsted will ensure that:

(i) Schools and colleges receive formal recognition in inspection reports for good work enabling access to, and supporting the education of, children in care. In school, this might include assessing:

- the effectiveness of the designated teacher, who should have adequate training and non-teaching time to perform the role;
- anti-bullying policies, which should clearly recognise the increased vulnerability of children in care to bullying, and evidence that those policies are put into practice by all within the school; and
- the effectiveness of support provided to children in care, in particular those with special educational needs, disabilities, English as an additional language, or who suffered disruption to their schooling in the past.

In colleges, this might include assessing:

- joint working with Leaving Care services and Connexions Partnerships;
- the effectiveness of support provided through this joint working to children in care and care leavers including learning support and how colleges enable signposting of advice on issues such as housing, budgeting and financial support; and
- the attainments of care leavers on completion of their college course.

Ofsted will also continue to report on how well Connexions Partnerships are contributing through joint working to cross-government targets relating to particular young people, including young people in or leaving care, and on activities to support this.

(ii) Local authorities have in place effective mechanisms to monitor, and address any weaknesses in:

- the quantity and quality of Personal Education Plans (PEP), including whether individual targets are appropriate and sufficiently challenging and the effectiveness of joint working in drawing up the Plan; and
- the support that older teenagers receive to remain in education beyond compulsory school age.

The Government will work with the SSI and NCSC to:

(i) revise the SSI criteria for assessing what constitutes a good service for children in care, drawing on this report and other sources of good practice advice;

(ii) ensure that the changes to the National Minimum Standards described in chapter nine are fully and effectively implemented by all care providers;

(iii) monitor and report on local authorities’ performance in implementing the provisions of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, and ensuring that young people in further and higher
education and training are receiving their entitlements, particularly in relation to personal
support, accommodation and financial support. This will include:

● assessing the quality of support and advice provided to young people in and leaving care to
enable them to choose further and higher education options that enable them to achieve
their aspirations and reach their potential; and

● an assessment of how authorities are meeting their housing needs (through, for example,
provision of supported vacation accommodation in their home community, maintenance
of home tenancy and guaranteed places on housing lists of qualifying young people who
have moved away to university).

(iv) monitor the steps local authorities are taking to improve placement commissioning, and
ensure they comply with any new guidance on the use of out of authority placements, regional
co-operation on specialist placements, and the presumption against care placement moves
that require a change of school; and

(v) work with the children’s rights director to ensure that the views of children and their parents
are taken into account when determining the welfare of children in care settings.

Targets

11.8 The Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) was given a remit to review the existing Department of Health PSA
target for the education of children in care. This is in addition to the existing PSA target to
improve the level of education, training and employment outcomes for care leavers
aged 19, so that levels for this group are at least 75 per cent of those achieved by all
young people in the same area; and to narrow the gap between the proportions of
children in care and their peers who are cautioned or convicted.

11.9 The new target applies only to children who have been in care for one year or more, so that
the care system has time to influence attainment. The attainment of children who spend a shorter
time in care is of course important – separate recommendations on improving understanding of
outcomes for this group are described in chapter nine. The target has been developed to reflect
the following key principles:

● the policy intention of substantially narrowing the gap between the educational attainment
of children in care and the national average; and

● incentivising action to support attainment by all children in care, including younger
children, those who are able and have the potential to achieve at a high level, and those with
difficulties who would never reach a target based solely on achieving good GCSEs.

11.10 The new target is to substantially narrow the gap between the educational attainment
and participation of children in care and that of their peers by 2006.

11.11 This target will have been achieved if, by 2006:

● outcomes for 11-year-olds in English and Maths are at least 60 per cent as good as those of
their peers;

● the proportion who become disengaged from education is reduced, so that no more than
10 per cent reach school leaving age without having sat a GCSE equivalent exam; and
● the proportion of those aged 16 who get qualifications equivalent to five GCSEs graded A*–C has risen on average by 4 percentage points each year since 2002; and in all authorities at least 15 per cent of young people in care achieve this level of qualifications.

The technical note to support this target is in Appendix B.

11.12 At the moment, young people’s attainment is measured when they leave care, which could be at age 16, 17 or 18. That means that those who do well, and stay in care for A levels or further education courses, do not have their exams counted until up to two years later. In future, results of all pupils in year 11 will be counted, regardless of whether they leave care straight away or stay on. The Government recognises that many young people return to education and sit exams beyond age 16 – their achievements will be measured in the target for engagement in education, training or employment at age 19.

Spending Review 2004

11.13 The Government recognises the importance of the concept of ‘added value’ in education, and Chapter ten recommends that each child in care should be set a personalised achievement target, to be recorded in the PEP. The Government considered a range of options for the development of an aggregate level value-added target, but does not believe that it currently has sufficient evidence to set such a target.

11.14 Baseline data, and the experience of using value-added measures in education more generally, will have improved by the time of the Spending Review 2004. As part of that Review, the Government will consider whether a national level value-added target for children in care is appropriate.

11.15 The Government is extremely concerned at the proportion of young people currently leaving care without basic literacy and numeracy skills. The Government will be developing an indicator to track the proportion leaving care without these skills. As part of the Spending Review 2004, the Government will consider whether to introduce a basic skills target for care leavers, to be set at or near the level of the national average.

Indicators

11.16 The Government believes that the existing indicators relating to education should be maintained. They are:

● the percentage of young people leaving care aged 16 or over with at least one GCSE at grade A*–G or a GNVQ;

● the percentage of children who had been looked after continuously for at least 12 months and were of school age, who missed a total of at least 25 days of schooling for any reason during the previous school year; and

● the percentage of those young people who were looked after on 1 April in their 17th year (aged 16), who were engaged in education, training or employment at the age of 19.

11.17 The Government will also work with the inspectorates and local authorities to ensure that indicators are in place in the three target areas, and to develop indicators in four new areas:

● proportion of children who have been in care for more than one year who achieve the target level at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3;
● proportion of children who have been in care for more than one year who achieve the higher level at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3;

● proportion of young people who leave care aged 16 or over with basic skills; and

● proportion of young people who were in care aged 16, and who have obtained the equivalent of five or more GCSEs graded A*–C, who were engaged in higher education at the age of 19.

11.18 The Government is also considering:

● an indicator on access to early years provision by young children in care, as part of the review of Social Services Performance Assessment Framework indicators; and

● indicators relating to children with disabilities, as part of the Children’s National Service Framework.

11.19 As well as recording the proportion of young people in education, employment or training, local authorities are asked as part of their regular data returns, what proportion of their care leavers are in further or higher education, and what proportion are engaged in training or employment. This information will enable local authorities and Government to understand in more detail whether the Children (Leaving Care) Act is facilitating greater educational progress at 16 plus.

Pupil Level Annual School Census

11.20 Chapter nine recommends that Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) data is analysed to improve our understanding of outcomes for children from different ethnic groups. Once three years of PLASC data have been received, an indicator or indicators specifically relating to outcomes for particular ethnic groups should be considered if significant discrepancies in attainment are identified.

11.21 Chapter nine also recommends that PLASC data is analysed to improve our understanding of outcomes for those who have ever spent time in care. Indicators on the performance of those young people who have ever been in care should be considered once sufficient data is available.

Monitoring implementation

11.22 The Department for Education and Skills working with the SEU will establish a project group to ensure effective implementation of the action in this report. The project team will be supported by a wider cross-government group, including representatives from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the Connexions Service, Sure Start and others. The recommendations set out in Chapter ten will be supported and facilitated through the Education Protects implementation team, the Quality Protects Regional Development Network and special educational needs regional partnerships, and through Departments’ work with intermediary organisations such as the General Social Care Council, Topss England, and the Teacher Training Agency.

11.23 Progress in implementing this report will be overseen in three ways.

● Ministers will be regularly updated on progress. This will include consideration of progress by the Cabinet Committee on Social Exclusion (DA(SER)) and the Ministerial Sub-Committee on the Delivery of Services for Children, Young People and Families (MISC9(D)). The work of these committees will ensure that outcomes for children in care continue to receive a high priority across Government, and will chase progress on the implementation of the action set out in this report. 
● An external advisory group will monitor action on the recommendations, providing information about successes and problems being experienced on the ground. Group membership will be drawn from a wide range of interests, including those representing children in care and care leavers. The remit and reporting arrangements for the group will be decided shortly after publication of this report.

● Local services will be inspected on their progress in implementing the recommendations in this report, as described in paragraphs 11.1–7.
APPENDIX A: THE CARE POPULATION

- At any one time there are around 60,000 children in care. Over the course of a year over 80,000 will spend some time in care.

- 41 per cent of children in care are aged under 10, with one in five (19 per cent) aged under five.

- Boys, children from some minority ethnic groups, disabled children and those from lower socio-economic groups are over-represented in care.

- Most children are in care because they have been abused or neglected, or for family reasons – less than one in 10 is in care because of their own behaviour.

- Two-thirds of children in care live in foster placements. Of the remainder, most live in children’s homes or with their parents.

- One in four children lives outside their home local authority. Out of authority placements can make planning for and supporting children’s education particularly difficult.

How many children are in care?

A.1 The care population is not static at any one time, around 60,000 children will be in care. Over the course of a year, around 80,000 will spend some time in care. Fewer children are entering care each year, but overall figures are rising because children are staying in care for longer.

A.2 The introduction of the Children Act 1989 placed a much stronger emphasis on keeping children with their families. As a result, children are now much more likely to enter care because of crisis, and be in need of more complex services.

How old are they?

A.3 At the end of 2001–02, 41 per cent of children in care were under 10, including 19 per cent who were under five. The average age of children in care has been slowly falling, although there has been a slight increase since 2000.

Who is in care?

A.4 Some groups of children are over represented in the care population:

- boys make up 56 per cent of the care population;

- children from ethnic minority groups accounted for nearly one in five of those in care in 2001/02, but just one in 10 of the general child population; and

- children from lower socio-economic groups and children whose mother spent time in care as a child.
A.5 Three per cent of children entering care during 2001–02 were known to have a disability (not including those in care for an agreed series of short-term placements). However, this is likely to be an underestimate of the total number of children with disabilities in care, as data is only collected where the disability is the primary reason for the child entering care.

A.6 Unaccompanied asylum-seeker children now represent approximately 6 per cent of all children in care, mainly concentrated in London and the South East.

Safe Case Transfer Pilot Scheme

There are over 7,000 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in the UK. The responsibility for their care has been concentrated mainly in London and the South East region. This has been a considerable challenge to the local authorities affected. A joint local authority/Home Office initiative is developing new arrangements to meet children’s needs better during their stay in the UK. In order to share the support of these vulnerable children across a wider number of local authorities, a national pilot is being undertaken in the Greater Manchester area. Manchester City Council is working in partnership with local authorities in the South East to arrange and plan for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children to transfer safely and with adequate support made ready in the North West.

Ethnic background of children in care at 31 March 2002

For how long are they in care?

A.7 Very few children spend their whole childhood in care – just 4 per cent of those leaving care at any age in 2001–02 had spent 10 or more years in care, whereas 43 per cent were in care for less than six months. Ethnic minority children tend to stay in care for longer than white children. One study found that one in three African–Caribbean children spent five years or more in care compared to just one in 10 white children.
Why do children spend time in care?

“Teachers treat me worse because they think I have done something wrong to be in care.”

(15-year-old female, living with friends/relatives)

A.8 There is a widely held view that children are in care because they have “done something wrong”. Yet fewer than one in 10 is in care because of their own behaviour. The vast majority (80 per cent) enter care because of abuse, neglect, family hardships or other factors relating to their families.

Why do children come into care?

A core principle of the Children Act 1989 is that children should be kept with their families whenever consistent with their wellbeing. Local authorities’ overarching aim, therefore, is to improve the support available to children and families to ensure that more children can be kept safe and have their needs met at home.

In a minority of cases, the local authority is unable to support children at home. Children come into care when they are “suffering or likely to suffer significant harm”, and their welfare cannot be sufficiently safeguarded if they continue to live at home.

Where do they live?

“In the home that I live in we get treated the same, and I know not living with my parents is hard but I see them and that is important to me.”

(Quoted in ‘Make It Happen!’)

A.9 Two-thirds of children in care live in foster care, usually with a family unknown to the child. One in six fostered children is cared for by someone they know, such as a relative or family friend. The total cost of foster care, including social worker time and overheads, averages £312 per child per week. Foster carers can work directly for local authorities, or for an independent foster agency. Many local authorities have recruited specialist foster carers to look after children with particular needs, such as teenage parents with children, young people on remand, or children with particularly challenging behaviour.

A.10 Over one in 10, usually in their teens, lives in a children’s home. Children’s homes can be seen as a last resort by social workers because research suggests that children (particularly young children) fare better in a family environment, and they are very expensive, averaging £2,129 per place per week. However, some young people, particularly older teenagers, prefer living in children’s homes as they do not want foster carers to usurp the role of their parents.

A.11 Just over one in 10 children in care lives with their parent(s) while the subject of a care order. In many cases, this forms part of the process of enabling the child to return home after living with carers.

A.12 Six per cent of children in care were adopted in the year ending 31 March 2002. The Government’s objective is to maximise the contribution that adoption can make to providing permanent families for children.

A.13 Two per cent of children in care are in residential schools, often because they are disabled. Children in such schools are more likely to be placed outside of their local authority. Around 450 young people are in local authority secure units, of whom 150 are welfare cases, there for their own protection. This might be because they have a history of running away, or are at risk of significant physical harm.
Out of authority placements

“With the best will in the world, children placed outside the local authority tend to be ‘out of sight, out of mind’.”

(Local authority officer)

A.14 About a quarter of children in care live outside their local authority. The home authority retains responsibility for them and must then liaise with the receiving authority over their care and education. There are several reasons why a child might live outside their local authority, although in many cases it is because of a lack of suitable local foster or residential care.

A.15 The use of out of authority placements varies. Some local authorities, particularly in inner London, have high numbers of children living away because of a lack of available carers in the borough. Others, particularly in rural areas, host a large number of children from outside the area. Some local authorities have particularly high numbers of unaccompanied asylum-seeker children and do not have sufficient placements within their own authority. A lack of specialist provision means that local authorities often place disabled children outside of their local area.

A.16 There are some circumstances in which an out of authority placement can be best for the child, for example, where children:

- need to be outside their home authority for their own protection;
- prefer to be placed outside the local authority, for example to live with a family friend or relative;
- live near to the edge of a local authority area and a placement can be found just over the border;
- require specialist facilities; or
- want to stay with long-term foster carers who move house.

A.17 The Government has recognised the importance of reducing out of authority placements, and a revised indicator that captures this information is being considered as part of the review of Social Services Performance Assessment Framework indicators. Some local authorities are developing regional protocols to improve services for children placed out of the local area, and many authorities are using their Choice Protects grant to reduce the number of out of authority placements.

Specialist foster care: Leeds Task-Centred Scheme

Leeds Task-Centred Scheme is aimed at children normally aged 10 and over with particularly challenging behaviour. Many of the children have emotional and behavioural difficulties and some have learning difficulties. The children are looked after by specially trained foster carers in family settings. Carers receive a full-time wage in return for their additional responsibilities, although as one explained “this is my vocation – you would never do this just for the money”.

Carers receive intensive initial and ongoing training, including training on the education system. They have a strong network, sharing ideas and offering advice and support. They are passionate about the importance of education, and could cite several examples where they had advocated successfully on behalf of a child to obtain a school place or worked closely with schools (sometimes on a daily basis) to prevent a child being excluded.
APPENDIX B:  
TECHNICAL NOTE FOR THE REVISED PUBLIC SERVICE AGREEMENT  
TARGET TO IMPROVE THE LIFE CHANCES OF CHILDREN

9. Improve life chances for children, including by:

- improving the level of education, training and employment outcomes for care leavers aged 19, so that levels for this group are at least 75 per cent of those achieved by all young people in the same area by 2004;

- substantially narrowing the gap between the educational attainment and participation of children in care and that of their peers by 2006;

A looked after child: means a person under the age of 18 who is provided by a local authority, acting in its social services capacity, with accommodation for a continuous period of more than 24 hours, by agreement with the parents or with the child if he is aged 16 or over, or who is the subject of a relevant court order under Part IV of the Children Act 1989. Children looked after under an agreed series of short term placements (respite care) are excluded. ‘Children in care’ are further defined under each of the relevant sections below.

Sources of data: Department of Health statistical returns, Department for Education and Skills PLASC returns and the Labour Force Survey (ONS).

Education, training and employment outcomes:

A ‘care leaver aged 19’ is a young person whose 19th birthday falls in the year ending 31 March of the reporting year ‘t’ who was a looked after child (as defined above) on 1 April ‘t-2’ at the age of 16 and who ceased to be a looked after child before their 19th birthday.

‘Outcomes’ means engaged in education, training or employment.

The proportion of care leavers in education, training or employment is collected through the OC3 return. The proportion of 19-year-olds in the population as a whole in the education, training or employment is collected through the Labour Force Survey.

‘Area’ means local authority area.

The target date is the year ending 31 March 2004 and to maintain that level until 31 March 2006.
Narrowing the gap in educational attainment and participation

The target to narrow substantially the gap in educational attainment and participation of children in care will have been achieved if, by 2006:

- outcomes for 11 year olds in English and Maths are at least 60 per cent as good as those of their peers;
- the proportion who become disengaged from education is reduced, so that no more than 10 per cent reach school leaving age without having sat a GCSE equivalent exam; and
- the proportion of those aged 16 who get qualifications equivalent to five GCSEs graded A*-C has risen on average by 4 percentage points each year since 2002; and in all authorities at least 15 per cent of young people in care achieve this level of qualifications.

For this target, ‘children in care’ means those looked after children, defined as above, who were in care on 30 September and had been continuously looked after for at least a year.

**Target date** – 30 September 2006.

**Sources of data:** The Department of Health OC2 return and DfES data.

**Baseline data** – baseline data for the year ending 30 September 2002 will be available in June 2003.

Outcomes for 11 year olds in English and Maths: **this measures the relative proportions of children in care achieving level 4 in English and Maths at Key Stage 2 (KS2) compared with the proportions of all 11 year olds. It is measured as follows:**

\[
\frac{\left(\% \text{ children in care aged 11 obtaining level 4 in KS2 English} + \% \text{ children in care aged 11 obtaining level 4 in KS2 maths}\right)}{2}
\div
\frac{\left(\% \text{ all children aged 11 obtaining level 4 in KS2 English} + \% \text{ all children aged 11 obtaining level 4 in KS2 Maths}\right)}{2}
\]

**Aged 11:** means those of the appropriate age to have been in year 6 in the school year prior to the 30 September date – ie for 30 September 2006, refers to school year 2005–06.

**School leaving age:** means those who ceased to be of compulsory school age (as defined in section 8(3) of the Education Act 1996) during the year to 30 September.
Aged 16: means those of the appropriate age to have been in year 11 in the school year prior to the 30 September date – ie for 30 September 2006, refers to school year 2005-06.

Sat an exam: means entered for and obtained a result in a GCSE or equivalent qualification.

All authorities – means all councils with social services responsibilities in England where there are at least 10 children in care aged 16 in the relevant year. Children are included in the count for the authority which is looking after them.

Narrowing the gap in cautions and convictions

Cautioned or convicted means convicted or subject to a final warning or reprimand for an offence committed while in care (as defined above).

For this target, ‘children in care’ means those looked after children defined as above who were in care on 30 September, were aged 10 or over and had been looked after continuously for a year.

The baseline year is the year to 30 September 2000. The target date is the year to 30 September 2004 and to maintain that level until 30 September 2006.

This target will be met successfully if the proportion of children in care who were cautioned or convicted in the year to 30 September is reduced by a third, ie from 10.8 per cent to 7.2 per cent. The baseline proportion of children aged 10-17 cautioned or convicted is 3.6 per cent nationally (source: Police Force Area Data). 7.2 percentage points below the 10.8 per cent of children in care cautioned or convicted. Reducing the percentage of children in care cautioned or convicted to 7.2 per cent will result in a narrowing of this gap.

Adoption

The delivery plan for this target will also include plans to implement the Government’s target to improve life chances for children by maximising the contribution adoption can make to providing permanent families for children without compromising on quality, so maintaining current levels of adoptive placement stability. Specifically, by bringing councils’ practice up to the level of the best, by 2004:

- to increase by 40 per cent the number of looked after children who are adopted, and aim to exceed this by achieving, if possible, a 50 per cent increase, up from 2,700 in 1999-2000;
- to increase to 95 per cent the proportion of looked after children placed for adoption within 12 months of the decision that adoption is in the child’s best interests, up from 81 per cent in 2000-01.
The following definitions will apply:

**Number of adoptions:** The number of children ceasing to be looked after during the year ending 31 March 2005 as the result of the granting of an adoption order, as measured by the Department of Health’s AD1\textsuperscript{125} statistical collection.

**Timescales for adoption:** The proportion of children adopted during the year ending 31 March 2005 who were placed for adoption within 12 months of their best interest decision being made, as measured by the Department of Health’s AD1 statistical collection.

**Quality of adoptive placements:** The number of placements for adoption that end during the year ending 31 March 2005 as the result of the making of an adoption order expressed as a percentage of the number of placements for adoption that ceased during that year. The baseline is the year ending 31 March 2000 where 92\% of placements for adoption that ceased did so as the result of the making of an adoption order. The information is collected centrally through the Department of Health’s statistical collection for looked after children (SSDA903).

**Teenage Pregnancy**

**Definition:** The under 18 conception rate is the number of conceptions to under 18 year olds per thousand females aged 15–17. It is calculated on a calendar year basis.

**Base Year:** Calendar Year 1998.

**Target Year:** Calendar year 2010 (data will be published in February 2012).

**Source of Data:** Office of National Statistics Conception Statistics derived from birth registrations, abortion notifications and mid year population estimates. This is a well established, published statistical series.
## APPENDIX C: ACTION PLAN OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Central Government action plan for implementation

All action is for DfES, unless otherwise stated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Ref.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Management and leadership</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Through the Children’s Green Paper consult on:</td>
<td>9.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>● creating a post of Director of Children’s Services responsible for</td>
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<td>local education and social services in local authorities;</td>
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<td>● creating a lead council member for children; and</td>
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<td>● introducing a duty on local authorities to promote the education</td>
<td></td>
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<td>of children in care.</td>
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<td>2. Legislate for the appointment of Children’s Commissioner and for</td>
<td>9.3</td>
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<td>the role to include considering policies relating to children in</td>
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<td>care.</td>
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<td>3. Issue new joint Department for Education and Skills and Local</td>
<td>9.4</td>
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<td>Government Information Unit guidance to reinforce ‘corporate</td>
<td></td>
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<td>parenting’.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Supporting frontline</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Produce a &quot;key roles&quot; document for social workers and carers.</td>
<td>9.5(i)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Ensure those working with children are trained on child development.</td>
<td>9.5(ii)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Work with Teacher Training Agency to produce best practice training</td>
<td>9.5(iii)</td>
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<td>materials for teachers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Consider extending the remit and life of Education Protects.</td>
<td>9.5(iv)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Attitudes and understanding</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Work with local authorities and other providers to develop a</td>
<td>9.10(i)</td>
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<td>communications strategy for promoting positive images of care.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Develop a strategy to communicate to councillors and senior</td>
<td>9.10(ii)</td>
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<td>managers their vital role in improving educational outcomes for</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>children in care.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Legislation and guidance</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Ensure care placements that require a change of school will only</td>
<td>9.13(i)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>be allowed in specified circumstances.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Save in exceptional circumstances, out of authority placements</td>
<td>9.13(ii)</td>
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<tr>
<td>will be restricted to cases where it is clearly in the child’s best</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>interest.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Ensure that children needing complex services are found a</td>
<td>9.13(iii)</td>
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<tr>
<td>specialist placement within the same region except in specified</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>circumstances.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Clarify the Belongings Regulations insofar as they apply to</td>
<td>9.14</td>
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<tr>
<td>children in care.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Provide guidance on the questions school governors could raise</td>
<td>9.16(i)</td>
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<tr>
<td>with schools about the education of children in care.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Make explicit the right of foster carers and residential care</td>
<td>9.16(ii)</td>
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<tr>
<td>workers to stand in parent governor elections.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Action</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. Ensure that planning for school transition has high priority at the Care Plan and Personal Education Plans (PEPs) review meetings.</td>
<td>9.17(i)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Improved planning of early learning and development needs for pre-school children.</td>
<td>9.17(ii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Help transition from school to work through Enterprise Advisers by enabling children in care to benefit from enterprise learning if available in their school.</td>
<td>9.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Independent Reviewing Officers will have a responsibility to support children’s education.</td>
<td>9.19</td>
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<tr>
<td>20. Encourage young people in care to stay in education or training after the age of 16, including through taster courses and summer schools.</td>
<td>9.20</td>
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<tr>
<td>21. Reflect the needs of care leavers in Education Maintenance Allowances.</td>
<td>9.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standards and training</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>22. Amend the National Minimum Standards to increase the emphasis on promoting education for children in care.</td>
<td>9.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Through the Children’s Green Paper, consult on ways to encourage people to become foster carers.</td>
<td>9.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Social care workers to show evidence of continuous professional development on children’s education and development.</td>
<td>9.24</td>
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<tr>
<td>25. Through the Children’s Green Paper, consult on transforming the children’s workforce including social workers.</td>
<td>9.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policy Development</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>26. Take children in care into account in future policies including policies on pre-school children, children’s play, the Young People’s Fund and in anti-bullying guidance.</td>
<td>9.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Information and research</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>27. Ensure guidance on sharing data between education and social services departments takes into account the education of children in care.</td>
<td>9.27(i)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Harmonise Government data collections.</td>
<td>9.27(ii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Improve the information available about the educational outcomes of children in care.</td>
<td>9.27 (iii-vi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inspection</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>30. Through the Children’s Green Paper consult on arrangements for a single inspection framework.</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Ensure Ofsted inspections prioritise the education of children in care in schools and colleges (Ofsted).</td>
<td>11.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>32. Work with SSI and NCSC to ensure their inspections prioritise the education of children in care.</td>
<td>11.7</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Spending Review 2004</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>33. Consider developing a national level value added target and a basic skills target as part of Spending Review 2004.</td>
<td>11.13–11.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicators</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>34. Develop indicators on Key Stage results, basic skills, and young people with good GCSE results who are engaged in education at 19.</td>
<td>11.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Consider developing indicators on early years education and children with disabilities.</td>
<td>11.18</td>
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</table>
### Government Recommendations for Local Action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Planning</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Use the Integrated Children’s System to improve the use of management information to assess likely future placement needs.</td>
<td>10.1(i)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Develop regional and local placement forums to plan for and meet the requirements of all children in care.</td>
<td>10.1(ii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Develop the use of managed vacancies over the longer term.</td>
<td>10.1(iii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Develop contingency plans before a child is taken into care.</td>
<td>10.2(i)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Ensure that initial and subsequent review cases more frequently when children are placed outside the authority.</td>
<td>10.2(ii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. More effective PEPs:</td>
<td>10.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>● For pre-school children, social workers should liaise with a named contact at their nursery over completion of the PEP.</td>
<td>10.5(i)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Set an individual educational target for each child, ensuring that targets are appropriate, and sufficiently challenging.</td>
<td>10.5(ii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Include in the PEP any Individual Education Plan, statement of special educational needs (SEN), and any reviews of the SEN statement.</td>
<td>10.5(iii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Review of PEPs used to plan school transitions, and should specify any additional support needed for a successful transition.</td>
<td>10.5(iv)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Consult young people about their preferred out of school activities, and record their views in the PEP alongside agreed action and funding.</td>
<td>10.5(v)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Where a child with a history of poor attendance changes school, local schools’ records in tackling truancy should be taken into account.</td>
<td>10.5(vi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Use the Foundation Stage Profile to inform pre-school PEPs.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<p>| Prioritising children in care                                        |       |
|                                                                      | 10.6(i) |
| 7. Consider identifying a designated early years co-ordinator to liaise between social workers, carers and pre-school providers. |       |
| 8. Consider using the Vulnerable Children’s Grant, or other funding streams, to provide bursaries for children in care. | 10.6(ii) |
| 9. Consider whether alternative types of provision would be more appropriate in meeting the child’s individual needs. | 10.6(iii) |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Action</th>
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<tr>
<td>10. School admissions forums should aim to secure the agreement of schools to exceed their roll by one or two to accommodate children in care.</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Schools should review the workload of designated teachers.</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Governing Bodies should have an annual update on children's progress.</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. LEA governors to act as ‘designated governors’ in schools and nurseries</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Further education colleges should have a designated member of staff to advocate on behalf of young people in care or care leavers in their college.</td>
<td>10.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. The particular needs of children in care should be addressed in youth service development plans and other plans for out-of-school activities.</td>
<td>10.11(i)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Ensure that carers are fully aware of, and encouraged to access, local services for pre-school children.</td>
<td>10.11(ii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Consider offering young people in care work placements.</td>
<td>10.11(iii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Local authorities and health authorities to work together to introduce dedicated access routes to mental health services for children in care.</td>
<td>10.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support for children in care</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>19. Ensure that every child in care has access to appropriate and up-to-date books, toys and ICT equipment.</td>
<td>10.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Local authorities developing school based therapeutic services should ensure they are accessible to children in care.</td>
<td>10.14</td>
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<tr>
<td>21. If a child does not have a school place, local authorities should make immediate alternative arrangements to provide full time education.</td>
<td>10.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Those who fall behind need to be given additional support to catch-up, which should be recorded in their PEP.</td>
<td>10.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. All children in care should have equal access and support wherever they are placed.</td>
<td>10.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Consider employing qualified teachers to offer additional educational support outside the classroom.</td>
<td>10.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Business in the Community to engage businesses on raising awareness of the needs of children in care and increase involvement in their initiatives.</td>
<td>10.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Leaving care services need to work with local further and higher education institutions, the local LSC and Connexions partnerships to raise awareness of the specific needs of care leavers.</td>
<td>10.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Develop a variety of employment or work experience placements for young people in care.</td>
<td>10.21</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Advocacy and appeals</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Exclusion procedures should be explained to carers and social workers, and unfair exclusions appealed as appropriate.</td>
<td>10.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. All local authorities must have a policy of appealing negative decisions on admissions, unless the child does not wish to appeal.</td>
<td>10.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Children must be consulted about their education, and their views acted upon.</td>
<td>10.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Advocacy services for children in care should ensure that education issues are included within the scope of their work.</td>
<td>10.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Ref.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Training and support for social workers, carers and teachers</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Multi-agency training, to involve children and young people who</td>
<td>10.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>are or have been in care.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Specific training for different groups of staff such as</td>
<td>10.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>designated teachers, carers and social workers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. As part of their initial assessment, foster carers should be</td>
<td>10.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assessed on their ability to support a child’s education.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Consider work shadowing between education and social care</td>
<td>10.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>workers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Information</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. Monitor the number of children in care changing school as a</td>
<td>10.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>result of a change in care placement.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. Use Foundation Stage Profile data to monitor and improve the</td>
<td>10.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quality of services for pre-school children in care.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. Collect information on individual educational targets and use</td>
<td>10.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>this to inform the development of services.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Harmonise and simplify data collection systems within local</td>
<td>10.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>authorities as appropriate.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND CONTACT DETAILS

Unless otherwise stated, all quotes in this report are taken from the written consultations, the area studies or visits undertaken by members of the project team.

Area studies

As part of its research, the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) conducted area studies in five local authorities: Brighton and Hove, Dorset, London Borough of Greenwich, Herefordshire, and Leeds. This involved meetings with a variety of key people who worked with children in care, and included meetings with children and young people. We are very grateful for the time and help they gave us, and for their openness and honesty in answering our questions.

Brighton and Hove
Local authority staff from social services and education departments
Education: Cardinal Newman Catholic School, Mary Magdalene RC Primary School, West Hove Infant and Junior School, East Brighton College of Media Arts, Alternative Centre for Education (ACE)
Care: Cornerstone Care Home, Tudor House Care Home, Foster carers network meeting
Other services: Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, Sure Start, Youth Offending Team

Dorset
Local authority staff from social services and education departments
Education: Penwithen School, Royal Manor Arts College, Thomas Hardy School, Westhaven Junior School, Dorchester Learning Centre
Care: Chirkerell Road Satellite Care Home, Gloucester Road Care Home, Maumbury House
Other services: TIDES Youth Project, Youth Offending Group

London Borough of Greenwich
Local authority staff from social services and education departments
Education: Kidbrooke Secondary School, Mulgrave Primary School, Plumstead Manor Secondary School
Care: Erwood Children’s Residential Unit, Broadwalk Children’s Resource Centre
Other services: Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services/Plumstead Child Guidance Unit, Connexions, Jumoke Family Resource Centre, Kinara Family Centre, Teenage Pregnancy Re-integration Officer, Youth Offending Team, Looked After Children’s Nurse

Herefordshire
Local authority staff from social services and education departments
Education: Blackmarston Special School, Brookfield School, John Kyrele High School, Kings Caple Primary School, Kingstone High School, Trinity Primary School, Whitecross High School, Aconbury Pupil Referral Unit, St David’s Pupil Referral Unit
Other services: Youth Counselling Service, Herefordshire Connexions Service, Hollybush Family Centre, Hollybush Room, NCH Family Breakdown Intervention Project, Rogers Cross
Leeds
Local authority staff from social services and education departments
Education: Hillside Primary School, Merlyn Rees High School, Middleton Primary School, Prince Henry Grammar School, Pupil Referral Unit
Care: Inglewood Care Home, Martin House, Moor Road Care Home
Other services: Children’s Rights Service, Multi-Agency Support Team

Visits
In addition to the area studies, the SEU visited a number of local authorities and organisations across the country. We are grateful for their help with the project.

Bolton Social Services
London Borough of Brent Education and Social Services, and Salusbury Primary School
Cambridgeshire County Council
Chartwell House and Downham Lodge, Cambridgeshire
Children’s Legal Centre, Essex University
The Coach House School, Worcestershire
Derbyshire County Council Chief Executive Officer and Local Education Authority Adviser
East Lincolnshire Leaving Care Team
George Green Secondary School, Isle of Dogs
London Borough of Hackney Social Services
Hampshire Social Services
London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham Social Services
Hawthorns Adolescence Unit, Cambridge
Herts Care Limited
Jacques Hall Foundation, Essex
London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Social Services
Kent Social Services
Knowsley Council
Midland Foster Care Associates
Milton Keynes Children’s Service Department and Sir Frank Markham Community School
Portsmouth Social Services
Residential Outreach Support and Therapy to Adolescents (Rosta) Project, CAMHS Innovation Fund, Liverpool
Knowsley Education Department
Shaftesbury Homes and Arethusa, London
Somerset County Council
Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
Stockton upon Tees Social Services
Sunderland Looked after children team
YESS Drop in centre, Ealing
Organisations
A Voice for the Child in Care
Association of Directors of Social Services
Associate Parliamentary Group on Children and Young People in Care
Barnardo’s
Book Trust Organisation
British Agency of Adoption & Fostering
British Association of Social Workers
Business in the Community
Care Leavers Association
Catholic Education Service
CBI (Confederation of British Industry)
Children’s Society
Centre for Children and Family Research, University of Loughborough
Education Extra
Foster Carers Association
Fostering Network
Greater London Authority
National Association of Head Teachers
Inclusive Education
Local Government Association (LGA)
NASUWT
National Children’s Bureau (NCB)
National Literacy Association
National Teaching and Advisory Service
National Union of Teachers
NCH Action for Children
National Foundation for Educational Research
National Care Standards Commission
Prince’s Trust
Salvation Army
SCOPE
Society of Education Officers
Thomas Coram Research Institute
University of Leicester
University of Southampton
Weston Spirit
The Who Cares? Trust
Young Minds
# Contact details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
<th>Email/Website address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Educational progress of children in care: Coventry</td>
<td>Dr Ray Evans (Strategic Manager)</td>
<td>0247 6832985</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Ray.evans@coventry.gov.uk">Ray.evans@coventry.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Corporate parenting: Bolton</td>
<td>Lynne Jones (Assistant Director)</td>
<td>01204 337 203</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Lynnejones@bolton.gov.uk">Lynnejones@bolton.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Listening to children: Hampshire</td>
<td>Howard Firth (Service Manager)</td>
<td>01962 845738</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Connexions &amp; Leaving Care team: Cornwall &amp; Devon</td>
<td>Shaun Newman</td>
<td>01566 777672 ext 216</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Shaun.newman@connexions-cd.org.uk">Shaun.newman@connexions-cd.org.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Training frontline workers: Manchester</td>
<td>Simon Locke</td>
<td>0161 226 6722</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sure Start: Brighton &amp; Hove</td>
<td>Dot Fell (Health Visitor)</td>
<td>01273 320900</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Effective advocacy: Shaftesbury Homes &amp; Arethusa</td>
<td>Chris Carey (Director of Social Work)</td>
<td>0208 875 1555</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tackling exclusion and truancy: Dorset</td>
<td>Graeme Sawyer (Behaviour Support Co-ordinator)</td>
<td>Behaviour Support Co-ordinator, Royal Manor Arts College, Portland, Dorset</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>University summer school: Southampton</td>
<td>Professor Ann Wheal</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Aw5@socsci.soton.ac.uk">Aw5@socsci.soton.ac.uk</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Higher Education taster courses: Coventry</td>
<td>Ray Evans</td>
<td>0247 6832985</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Ray.evans@coventry.gov.uk">Ray.evans@coventry.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Early years PEP: Somerset</td>
<td>Tim Evans</td>
<td>01935 476130</td>
<td><a href="mailto:TDEvans@somerset.gov.uk">TDEvans@somerset.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bursaries for children in care: Leeds</td>
<td>Gary Walker or Neil Borrowdale (Quality Protects Co-ordinator)</td>
<td>0113 395 1175</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bursaries for children in care: Dorset</td>
<td>Chris Longridge (Education Co-ordinator)</td>
<td>01305 224958</td>
<td><a href="mailto:c.f.longridge@dorsetcc.gov.uk">c.f.longridge@dorsetcc.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Reviewing the effectiveness of Personal Education Plans: Harrow</td>
<td>Gerry Dermody (Project Director Harrow Gatsby Project)</td>
<td>020 8728 8836</td>
<td><a href="mailto:gerry.dermody@harrow.gov.uk">gerry.dermody@harrow.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Designated teachers: Sunderland</td>
<td>John Arthurs</td>
<td>0191 219 3517</td>
<td><a href="mailto:John.Arthurs@edcom.sunderland.gov.uk">John.Arthurs@edcom.sunderland.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>Email/Website address</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Education liaison &amp; support service: Herefordshire</td>
<td>Annie Bushby (Team Leader)</td>
<td>01273 667788</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Abushby@herefordshire.gov.uk">Abushby@herefordshire.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Support for Further Education: Brighton</td>
<td>Loveday Pope</td>
<td>01208 921 2775</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Martin.leete@greenwich.gov.uk">Martin.leete@greenwich.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Developing Carers’ Skills: Greenwich</td>
<td>Martin Leete (Manager)</td>
<td>0208 921 2791</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Jackie.burton@greenwich.gov.uk">Jackie.burton@greenwich.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jackie Burton (Senior Practitioner)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Out-of-School activities: Kandu Q-Arts</td>
<td>Ed Deedigan (Director)</td>
<td>07970 919 129</td>
<td><a href="http://www.kandu-arts.com">www.kandu-arts.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Theatre Cap-a-pie: Durham</td>
<td>Gordon Poad (Artistic Director)</td>
<td>01207 571177</td>
<td><a href="http://www.Cap-a-pie.org">www.Cap-a-pie.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Access to libraries: Blackburn</td>
<td>Jean Gabbatt (Literacy Development &amp; Resources Manager)</td>
<td>01254 587 937</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Jean.gabbatt@blackburn.gov.uk">Jean.gabbatt@blackburn.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Prince’s Trust Leaving Care Initiative</td>
<td></td>
<td>0800 842 842</td>
<td><a href="http://www.princes-trust.org.uk">www.princes-trust.org.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Support for higher education: Ealing</td>
<td>Linda Thompson (Education Co-ordinator)</td>
<td>0208 825 7791</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Support in Employment: Bolton</td>
<td>Lynne Jones</td>
<td>01204 337 203</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Therapeutic support: Leeds</td>
<td>Gary Walker or Neil Borrowdale</td>
<td>0113 395 1175</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tackling bullying: South Gloucestershire</td>
<td>Nigel Shipley (Partnership Office)</td>
<td>01454 865939</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Nigel.shipley@southglos.gov.uk">Nigel.shipley@southglos.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Supporting children with disabilities and severely challenging behaviour: Sunderland</td>
<td>Steve Fletcher (Divisional Manager, Children with disabilities)</td>
<td>0191 553 5879</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Steve.fletcher@ssd.sunderland.gov.uk">Steve.fletcher@ssd.sunderland.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Dedicated mental health services for children in care: Dorset</td>
<td>Katrina Gall (Senior Practitioner)</td>
<td>01305 762810</td>
<td>CAMHS, 48 Lynch Lane, Weymouth, DT4 9DN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A</td>
<td>Specialist foster care: Leeds Task Scheme</td>
<td>Gary Walker or Neil Borrowdale</td>
<td>0113 395 1175</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX E:
NOTES

1. Department of Health, *Outcome Indicators for Looked after Children: Twelve months to 30 September 2002, England* (London, DH, 2003a). ‘GCSE level’ includes GNVQs and other equivalent qualifications. Comparisons with national figures should be made with caution as DH data looks at young people leaving care who may be 16, 17 or 18 years old, whereas DfES data only covers children in year 11 during the 2000/01 school year.

2. These children are classed as ‘looked after’ under the Children Act, but are not included in DH statistics and analysis about the educational attainment of children in care.


4. The introduction of the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) in 2003 will enable authorities to identify whether ethnic minority children in care have different attainment patterns to their white peers, and to take steps to provide additional support to any groups identified as needing it.

5. Department of Health, op. cit., 2003a. Data refers to children who have been continuously in care for at least 12 months. In comparing performance at each Key Stage, it is important to bear in mind that children move in and out of care, and that the data are not therefore comparing the performance over time of the same children. Information on fixed-term exclusions is not collected.

6. The figures for care leavers only refers to those who were in care at the age of 17, as at 1 April 1999. Data on care leavers comes from Department of Health, *Care Leavers, year ending 31 March 2002, England* (London, DH, 2003). Data on all children and young people comes from the Department of Health website *Labour Force Survey* at www.doh.gov.uk/stats/forms.htm#oc3


8. Ibid.

9. Department of Health, op. cit., 2003a. 1.2 per cent of those who had been in care for at least one year had been excluded compared to 0.1 per cent of all children in England in the 2001 school year. If children who have been in care for less than one year are included, the factor rises to 20 times (based on figures from local authorities’ Quality Protects year three Management Action Plans).


11. Ibid.


14. S Jackson and S Ajayi, *By Degrees – from Care to University. Care Leavers in Higher Education – what progress has been made in implementing the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000?* (Forthcoming)


17. Data has been analysed for all children who were in care for both relevant sets of SATS tests. The figures quoted do not distinguish between those who have been in care continuously between the two points, and those who have moved in and out of care. Because of the short time series, the children tracked between ages seven and 11 are different children to those tracked between ages 11 and 14, who are in turn different to those tracked between ages 14 and 16.


S. Cheesbrough, op. cit. 2002 – note no comparable figures for fathers available.


Estimated to be between £43.2 million and £60.5 million per cohort of care leavers per annum – ie approx £50 million in year one, £100 million in year two, £150 million in year three.

Following reorganisation within Government, the Sure Start, Early Years and Childcare Units were combined in one new unit which is jointly located in DfES and DWP. The respective work programmes of the different units have been drawn together under the one heading, ‘Sure Start’, with previous Sure Start projects now known as ‘Sure Start local programmes’.


The Government announced in April 2002 that the NCSC would be replaced by two separate organisations: the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI), which will also encompass the current Social Services Inspectorate (SSI); and the Commission for Health Audit and Inspection.


This applies to children who have been continuously in care for one year or more.

The target related to all children in care, of whom 37 per cent got one or more GCSEs in 2001. Note that the figures given in Chapter One refer to those who had been in care for one year or longer – 50 per cent of this group achieved one or more GCSEs in 2001.


In 1994, the average was just over one and a half placements for each spell in care; in 2002 the average was nearly three placements per spell in care. DH, op. cit. 2003b.


Information for case studies involving children came from local authority visits and meetings with children and young people. All are based on real individuals, but the names and any other identifying details have been changed.

44 Other reasons for placement changes included the foster carer needing a break/respite, time limited placements, or the death of a carer/closure of unit.
45 The factors contributing to placement breakdown are summarised in S Jackson and N Thomas, op cit., 1999. The importance of supporting carers was highlighted in I Sinclair, I Gibbs and K Wilson, *Supporting Foster Placements* (University of York, 2000).
48 Department of Health, *Children’s Homes at 31 March 2000, England*, (London, DH, 2001). The total capacity of all homes was 9,164 places in 2000, compared to 10,869 in 1997 – a decrease of 16 per cent. Of this, the number of available places in local authority maintained or controlled homes fell from 7,062 to 5,608 (a 21 per cent fall), whereas the number of places in private homes rose from 1,635 to 1,709 (an increase of 5 per cent).
50 More information about Choice Protects can be found at www.doh.gov.uk/choiceprotects/index.htm
51 All four-year-olds are now guaranteed a free nursery place. Free nursery places will be available to all three-year-olds from September 2004.
52 52 per cent of respondents aged under 16 were in secondary school and 19 per cent in primary school – a total of 71 per cent. Of the remainder, 09 per cent were in special schools, 3 per cent were in further education or sixth form colleges, and 17 per cent in ‘other’ provision. This is likely to underestimate the proportion in residential special schools who are less likely to have responded to a written consultation. Because these are self-reported, they may not correspond exactly with ‘official’ definitions of school type. A mainstream school is any school that is not a special school or an independent school. Exceptionally, City Technology Colleges, City Colleges for the Technology of the Arts and City Academies all count as mainstream schools as do Pupil Referral Units (London, Department for Education and Skills, *Inclusive Schooling: Children with SEN*, 2001).
53 In July 2000, DfES announced changes to the presentation of performance data to encourage schools to admit children from overseas who have English as an additional language (including unaccompanied asylum-seeking children). Such pupils are not included in performance league tables if they joined an English school for the first time on or after the start of year 5 for primary school tables, or year 10 for secondary school tables (DfES Press Notice 2000/0341, 20 July 2000).
54 Department of Health/Department for Education and Employment, op.cit. 2000, paragraph 10.5.
55 DH, op. cit., 2003a. Also see footnote 9.
57 The Advisory Centre for Education is an independent advice centre for parents, offering information about state education in England and Wales for 5–16-year-olds. More information can be found at www.ace-ed.org.uk The exclusions helpline number is 020 7704 9822.
60 Department of Health, op. cit., 2003a.
63 Education Act 2002, Section 176.
66 Ibid.
68 The figures were 72 per cent and 61 per cent respectively.


77 ChildLine’s helpline for children and young people living away from home is called The Line, and is available Monday to Friday 3.30–9.30pm, and Saturday and Sunday 2.00–8.00pm. The number is 0800 88 44 44. Further information is available at www.childline.org.uk


80 For details see Kate Cairns, *Attachment, trauma and resilience: therapeutic caring for children* (London, British Association for Adoption and Fostering, 2002).

81 Social Exclusion Unit, *Young Runaways* (London, SEU, 2002).


83 Ibid. 37 per cent of children in care who had mental disorders were found to have marked difficulties with reading, spelling and/or Maths, compared to 19 per cent of children in care who did not have mental disorders. 35 per cent of children in care with mental disorders were estimated to be three or more years behind in class (ie compared to all children not just children in care), compared to 17 per cent of those with no disorder. Among children with a mental disorder, 42 per cent had a statement of SEN, compared to 21 per cent of those without.

84 Department of Health – Spending Review 2002 Public Service Agreement. Further details can be found at http://www.doh.gov.uk/psa/psa2002.htm

85 Further details about the Children’s National Service Framework can be found at www.doh.gov.uk/nfs/children.htm


88 Further details about the work of the Teenage Pregnancy Unit can be found at http://www.teenagepregnancyunit.gov.uk/

89 Department of Health (Teenage Pregnancy Unit), *Guidance for Field Social Workers, Residential Social Workers and Foster Carers on Providing Information and Referring Young People to Contraceptive and Sexual Health Services* (London, Teenage Pregnancy Unit, Department of Health, 2001).

90 See, for example, H Melzer et al., *The mental health of young people looked after by local authorities in England* (Norwich, The Stationery Office, 2003), and R Boreham and A Shaw (ed), *Drug use, smoking and drinking among young people in England in 2001* (Norwich, the Stationery Office, 2002).


Social and Health Care Workforce Group, op.cit. 2002.

Staff in children’s homes are often paid around the level of the national minimum wage. Fostering Network estimates that over half of local authorities in England pay foster carers less than the recommended weekly allowance. (Fostering Network press notice, ‘Allowances for fostered children below acceptable minimum’, 3 February 2003).

Agency staff account for around 2 per cent of FTE social worker posts, and are estimated to have cost authorities around £74 million during the six months April to September 2001. Social and Health Care Workforce Group, op. cit. 2002.

Social and Healthcare Workforce Group, Social Services Workforce Analysis 1999 (London, Employers’ Organisation, 2000). 27 per cent of staff below management level hold a relevant qualification, including five per cent who are qualified social workers. Including managers, the proportion of staff with a relevant qualification rises to 37 per cent.


Topss England is an employment-led body. More information about their work can be found at www.topss.org.uk

Local Government Association/Association of Directors of Social Services, Local Authority Social Services Budget Survey (London, LGA Publications, 2002).

Social Exclusion Unit and The Who Cares? Trust, op. cit., 2002. The figures are 73 per cent and 72 per cent respectively.

See, for example, F Fletcher-Campbell, The Education of Children Who are Looked-After (National Foundation for Educational Research, 1997), and R Lee Comfort, “The Experiences of black and ethnic minority children in care”, in ed. S Jackson, Nobody ever told us school mattered: Raising the educational attainment of children in care (London, British Association for Adoption and Fostering, 2001).


Current data collections relate to those in care for more than one year and those who happen to be in care on 31 March in any given year.


Principally the ‘Standards and Criteria’ document used by Inspectors.


The number of children in care on 31 March 2002 was 59,700. DH, op.cit. 2003b.


Ibid.

Ibid.


Children born in 1970 from unskilled manual backgrounds were nearly five times as likely to enter care compared to those from professional backgrounds. S Cheesbrough, The educational attainment of people who have been in care: findings from the 1970 British Cohort Study (www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk, June 2002).

Department of Health, op. cit. 2003b.

Barn, Sinclair and Ferdinand, Acting on Principle – an examination of race and ethnicity in social services provision (London, British Association for Adoption and Fostering, 1997).

44 per cent of children who came into care in 2001–02 did so because of abuse or neglect, 14 per cent because of family dysfunction, 12 per cent because the family was in acute stress, and 10 per cent because of absent parenting. DH, op. cit. 2003b.

Children Act 1989, section 31(2)(a).
121 Department of Health, op.cit. 2002a.
124 M Barry, *A sense of purpose: Care Leavers’ views and experiences of growing up* (Scotland, Save the Children, 2001).
125 AD1 is a statistical return for looked after children who were adopted from care. The return is available at http://www.doh.gov.uk/stats/forms.htm#ad1.
In March 2001, the Prime Minister asked the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) to make recommendations on how best to raise the educational attainment of children in care.

The Unit launched a written consultation exercise in July 2001, seeking views on the factors affecting children's education and good practice at raising attainment. The consultation was sent to agencies, organisations and individuals working, or with a particular interest, in this area. A consultation with children and young people in care was launched in October 2001, in conjunction with The Who Cares? Trust. Children and young people were asked about their school and other educational activities, and particular likes and dislikes. The adult consultation generated responses from 200 individuals and organisations, and just under 2,000 responses were received for the children and young people's consultation. The Children's Society organised consultation events on behalf of the SEU with a small number of children and young people with disabilities.

As part of its research, the Unit studied the work of five local authorities in detail, and spoke to a wide variety of people with an interest in the education of children in care. These included children and young people in care and care leavers, social workers, teachers and head teachers, foster and residential carers, local authority officers in the education and social services departments, educational psychologists, Connexions personal advisers, youth workers and other key professionals. The five authorities were Brighton and Hove, Dorset, Greenwich, Herefordshire and Leeds. Further visits took place to over 20 other local authorities across the country.

The Unit prepared this report in consultation with other relevant government departments, and an advisory forum with representatives from national public and voluntary organisations working with children in care and frontline staff. The SEU met with national and local organisations with an interest in children’s education, visited private and voluntary sector service providers, and commissioned additional research from the Thomas Coram Institute and the London School of Economics. The SEU also looked at international evidence, but found insufficient data on education to draw valid comparisons.

The Unit’s remit covers England only. A version of this report for children and young people, a summary of the main report, and best practice guidance are also available. Further information about the SEU can be found at www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk

Further information

The summary of this report is available in the following languages; Bengali, Gujarati, Cantonese, Hindi, Urdu, and Punjabi, from the address below. Copies of the summary in these languages can also be downloaded from the SEU website: www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk

Braille and audio tape versions of the summary are also available from the address below.

Contact:
Social Exclusion Unit
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
7/G10 Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 3DU
Telephone: 020 7944 8133
Email: seupublications@odpm.gsi.gov.uk