



The Educational Attainment of
Looked After Children – Local
Authority Pilot Projects: Final
Research Report

The Educational Attainment of Looked After Children - Local Authority Pilot Projects: Final Research Report

**University of Strathclyde
2008**

The views expressed in the report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Scottish Government or any other organisations by which the authors are employed.

The Scottish Government is making this research report available on-line in order to provide access to its contents for those interested in the subject. The Scottish Government commissioned the research but has not exercised editorial control over the report.

This report is published by Education Analytical Services Division, Scottish Government Education Directorate, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ. If you have any enquiries about these reports please contact the Dissemination Officer on 0131-244-0894.

© Crown Copyright 2008

Limited extracts from the text may be produced provided the source is acknowledged. For more extensive reproduction, please write to, the Chief Researcher at Office of Chief Researcher, 4th Floor West Rear, St Andrew's House, Edinburgh EH1 3DG

**Scottish Government Social Research
2008**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Acknowledgements	1
2	Executive Summary	2
2.1	Background.....	2
2.2	Research aims and objectives.....	2
2.3	Key Findings	3
3	Introduction	5
3.1	Background.....	5
3.2	Aim and Research Questions	5
3.3	Research Approach	6
3.4	Report Structure	7
4	The Education of Looked After Children & Young People	8
4.1	Introduction	8
4.2	The Legal Context	8
4.3	The Policy Context.....	9
4.4	Previous Research	11
4.5	Summary.....	16
5	The Pilot Projects	17
5.1	Introduction	17
5.2	Characteristics of the pilots.....	17
5.3	Successes, difficulties and sustainability.....	23
5.4	Summary.....	25
6	Impact of the Pilots: Qualitative Research	26
6.1	Introduction and methodology	26
6.2	Perspectives of the professionals.....	28
6.3	Perspectives of the young people and their parents or carers	42
6.4	Conclusions	48
7	Impact of the Pilots – Quantitative Research	50
7.1	Introduction	50
7.2	Methodology	50
7.3	Data collection issues	51
7.4	Description of the study population	53
7.5	The impact of the pilot projects.....	58

7.6	Conclusions	64
8	Lessons from the Pilots	66
8.1	Introduction	66
8.2	The impact of the pilot projects.....	66
8.3	Organisational aspects	67
8.4	Management and staffing	68
8.5	Communication	68
8.6	Summary.....	69
9	Conclusions	71
9.2	The key findings.....	71
9.3	Concluding comments	73
	References	75
	APPENDIX 1. Summary of pilot project strands.....	79
	APPENDIX 2. Summaries of the 18 pilot projects	83
Appendix 2.1.	Aberdeen City.....	83
Appendix 2.2.	Dumfries and Galloway	86
Appendix 2.3.	Dundee City.....	88
Appendix 2.4.	East Ayrshire	89
Appendix 2.5.	East Lothian	91
Appendix 2.6.	Edinburgh City	93
Appendix 2.7.	Falkirk	96
Appendix 2.8.	Fife.....	98
Appendix 2.9.	Glasgow City	101
Appendix 2.10.	Highland	103
Appendix 2.11.	Midlothian	106
Appendix 2.12.	North Ayrshire	108
Appendix 2.13.	Renfrewshire	111
Appendix 2.14.	South Ayrshire	114
Appendix 2.15.	South Lanarkshire	116
Appendix 2.16.	Stirling.....	118
Appendix 2.17.	West Dunbartonshire.....	120
Appendix 2.18.	West Lothian	122
	APPENDIX 3. Pilots related to five intervention types	126
	APPENDIX 4. Additional data tables.....	127

Index of Tables

Table 1: Fieldwork interviews by pilot authority and category of interviewee	26
Table 2: Age and stage of participants for each pilot in matched data set	54
Table 3: Care category of participants in each pilot	55
Table 4: Attendance and exclusion	59
Table 5: Number of times excluded	59
Table 6: Tariff points for National Qualifications	62
Table 7: Reported level of involvement in pilot project activities	63
Table 8: Scores on scales of the SDQ	127
Table 9: Proportions in each category of need by SDQ scale	127
Table 10: Harter: Do the difficulties interfere with your everyday life?	127
Table 11: Mean scores on scales of Harter by gender	128
Table 12: Attendance and exclusion by gender 2006-07	128
Table 13: Attendance and exclusions in 2005-06 and 2006-07	128
Table 14: Exclusion rates for nine pilot authorities	129
Table 15: 5-14 National Assessment Data: Reading, Writing and Mathematics	129
Table 16: 5-15 National Assessment Levels at ages 5-8	130
Table 17: 5-14 National Assessment Levels at ages 9-10	130
Table 18: 5-14 National Assessment Levels at ages 11-12	130
Table 19: 5-14 National Assessment Levels at ages 13-14	131
Table 20: 5-14 National Assessment data, Scotland 2003	131
Table 21: Changes in mean attainment levels in 5-14 National Assessments ..	131
Table 22: Factors correlating with attainment in Standard Grade and National Qualifications	132
Table 23: Characteristics of 109 young people: Tariff scores	132
Table 24: Factors correlating with attainment in Standard Grade and National Qualifications - multiple regression model	133

1 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1.1.1 This report has been authored by Graham Connelly, Joan Forrest, Judy Furnivall, Lindsay Siebelt, Iain Smith and Liz Seagraves, with contributions by Colleen Clinton, Lynne Hunter, Jane McKay and Summer Kenesson, all of the Faculty of Education or of the Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care (SIRCC) in the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, Scotland.

1.1.2 Additional assistance was given by Andy Kendrick and Elaine Kirkland of the University of Strathclyde and by Joyce Connelly.

1.1.3 The authors acknowledge the co-operation of the co-ordinators of the 18 pilot projects, and many professionals, young people, parents and carers who spoke to us so willingly about their experiences.

1.1.4 Responsibility for the final report, and its inevitable imperfections, rests with the authors, but it has benefited immeasurably from considerable encouragement, comments and suggestions provided by the following Scottish Government advisers: Marie-Amélie Viatte, Viv Boyle, Sam Coope, Shirley Laing and Graham McCann.

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 Background

2.1.1 The research described in this report was commissioned by the Education Analytical Services Division of the Scottish Government, on behalf of the Care and Justice Division. The broader context relates to the significant degree of concern about low achievement in education by looked after children and young people in Scotland who are, as a consequence, less likely than other young people to be engaged in education, employment or training by age 21.

2.1.2 The research, conducted between September 2006 and June 2008, involved reviewing pilot projects funded by the Scottish Government in 18 of Scotland's 32 local authorities. Seven of the projects began in summer 2005, whilst the remainder began one year later. A further two pilot projects were subsequently funded.

2.1.3 The policy context is outlined in *Looked after children & young people: We can and must do better*, a report structured around five themes - working together, becoming effective lifelong learners, developing into successful and responsible adults, being emotionally and physically healthy, feeling safe and nurtured in a home setting - and outlining a prospectus for development through 19 key actions (Scottish Executive, 2007). Most recently, HMIE has published the report, *Count us in: Improving the education of our looked after children*, based on visits conducted in 15 local authorities, Careers Scotland and four voluntary sector agencies (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools, 2008).

2.1.4 In October 2004, the Minister for Education and Young People announced funding of £6 million to support a programme of pilots across local authorities designed to improve the educational attainment of looked after children. By summer 2005, seven local authorities (East Ayrshire, Highland, Midlothian, North Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire, Stirling and Glasgow) had been successful in their bids for funding and began pilot initiatives. One year later, a further 11 pilot projects began. These were: Aberdeen City, Dundee, Dumfries and Galloway, East Lothian, Edinburgh, Falkirk, Fife, Renfrewshire, South Ayrshire, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian. All the projects were funded for two years. A further two projects, in Inverclyde and North Lanarkshire, were funded for one year only but were not included in the research as they began later.

2.2 Research aims and objectives

2.2.1 The aim of the research was to identify interventions that appeared to make the most difference in terms of both the educational experience and outcomes of the looked after children and young people participating in the local authority pilot projects. Data on attendance, exclusions and attainment were collected for a population of more than 600 children and young people. The research also analysed qualitative data, based on interviews with project co-ordinators, professionals, children and young people, and their parents and carers.

2.2.2 Six research questions guided the study:

-
1. What were the characteristics of the pilot projects, including their aims, participants and staffing?
 2. What was the impact of the pilot projects in relation to quantitative data, including school attendance, exclusion and measures of attainment?
 3. What was the impact of the pilot projects according to the perceptions of the young people and their families, and those of the professionals who worked with them directly?
 4. Did the projects meet their objectives? If not, or not entirely, what difficulties were encountered and how were these addressed by the pilot projects' teams?
 5. What enabling factors of success can be identified?
 6. What lessons can be learned from the projects? How should this be reflected in guidance materials for practitioners?

2.3 Key Findings

Lessons regarding the implementation process

2.3.1 The overall programme of very different pilot projects was very ambitious. There is evidence that many looked after young people derived significant benefit from their involvement in the projects. The programme included several examples of imaginative and innovative practice. The short timescale involved, however, combined with difficulties in recruiting suitable staff, caused organisational problems. It is likely that with a longer timescale more sustainable and transferable outcomes could have been achieved.

2.3.2 Previous research has shown that collecting robust data about the outcomes of looked after children and young people is problematic, and this finding was confirmed in the research with the pilot projects. The data tracking systems of many of the pilot local authorities were of variable quality, but the research process itself appears to have been helpful to the pilot authorities in relation to identifying weaknesses in tracking looked after children and young people and therefore in considering solutions.

Impact of the pilots

2.3.3 In terms of impact, the most important theme emerging from the interviews with the practitioners was a general desire to increase achievement, while providing support for young people, their parents and carers and schools. Practitioners also emphasised the importance of stability and a sense of normality for looked after children and young people, as the basis of achievement in education.

2.3.4 There was a general worry expressed within the pilots about the realistic sustainability of the interventions once the pilot funding had ended. Nevertheless, some of the local authorities had plans to mainstream entire pilots and in others the experience of the pilots will influence future policy and practice.

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

2.3.6 Attendance at school improved among the pilot participants, in all age groups, findings which were statistically significant among 9-10 year olds and those over 15. The instances of exclusion and the number of days excluded reduced significantly amongst those young people over 15.

2.3.7 About 40% of the young people participating in the pilots advanced by one 5-14 National Assessment level, much better than the average progress reported for all looked after children and similar to advances made by non-looked after children nationally. Again, this finding was statistically significant.

2.3.8 Younger looked after children who had high levels of involvement in the pilots appeared to have made appreciably more progress in one year than the others, measured by 5-14 National Assessments in reading and writing. This is encouraging because it also suggests that providing targeted additional support can raise attainment.

2.3.9 The research identified effects related to the involvement of the young people in the pilots, but the data available did not allow us to attribute these effects to particular activities. It is likely that, in line with previous research findings, high engagement with study-related, cultural and sport activities in general is more important than the actual nature of the activity. Local authorities and voluntary agencies should therefore be encouraged to make provision of a range of activities capable of engaging looked after children and young people.

Key factors of success

2.3.10 Individualising the approach (keeping the child at the centre), being flexible, including involving the young person to choose the focus of learning, and providing a breadth of learning opportunities appear to be important strategies for effective work aimed at improving the achievements of looked after children and young people.

2.3.11 The research highlighted the importance of staff engaged in supporting the achievement of looked after children and young people having appropriate values and attitudes. This included believing in the fundamental worth of a young person, having high expectations and being flexible in their approaches.

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

2.3.13 Flexibility, trusting relationships between project staff and young people that continued over time, and activities that encouraged the development of resilience in young people, were most successful. These were particularly important at key transition points in the school careers of children and young people.

3 INTRODUCTION

3.1 Background

3.1.1 The research described in this report was commissioned by the Information and Analytical Services Division of the Scottish Government, on behalf of the Care and Justice Division. The policy context for the research is a significant degree of concern about low achievement in education by looked after children and young people in Scotland who are, as a consequence, less likely than other young people to be engaged in education, employment or training by age 21.

3.1.2 The research, conducted between September 2006 and June 2008, involved reviewing pilot projects in 18 of Scotland's 32 local authorities. The projects were funded by the previous Scottish Executive (now known as The Scottish Government), following an application process where key criteria had to be met in order for a proposal to be accepted. Seven of the projects began in summer 2005 (East Ayrshire, Highland, Midlothian, North Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire, Stirling and Glasgow) One year later, a further 11 pilot projects began (Aberdeen City, Dundee, Dumfries and Galloway, East Lothian, Edinburgh, Falkirk, Fife, Renfrewshire, South Ayrshire, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian). A further two pilot projects were subsequently funded by the Scottish Government (Inverclyde and North Lanarkshire), but were not included in the study outlined in this report as they began after the research had been commissioned.

3.2 Aim and Research Questions

3.2.1 The broad aim of the research was to identify interventions that appeared to make the most differences in terms of both the educational experience and the educational outcomes of the looked after children and young people participating in the pilot projects. More specifically the research involved the following activities.

- *Describing the pilot activity in relation to common themes, such as type of intervention, category of looked after child, aspect of the problem, focus of the activity etc.*
- *Evaluating the process of implementing the pilot initiatives.*
- *Assessing the impact of the initiatives on engagement with education and learning, school attendance, attainments, attitudes to learning, self-esteem and ambition.*
- *Drawing lessons from the pilots on what works.*
- *Developing guidance for practitioners, based on the experience of the pilots. The guidance will be published separately and will be available on the Scottish Government website.*

3.2.2 The research had limitations in terms of providing detailed accounts of the pilot activity. For reasons of practicality and resources the fieldwork could only sample the sheer range and depth of engagement between practitioners and the

children and young people. In any case, each pilot project is committed to providing a detailed local evaluation report. There were also limitations in relation to making comparisons and seeking to identify common themes and consistent messages, because the pilots differed so much in scale, aims and running time. We have addressed these limitations by liaising closely with project co-ordinators, by providing clear guidance in relation to our qualitative and quantitative data collection and also by grouping interventions into five broad types.

3.2.3 Six more specific research questions guided the study and these are listed below:

1. What were the characteristics of the pilot projects, including their aims, participants and staffing?
2. What was the impact of the pilot projects in relation to quantitative data, including school attendance, exclusion and measures of attainment?
3. What was the impact of the pilot projects according to the perceptions of the young people and their families, and those of the professionals who worked with them directly?
4. Did the projects meet their objectives? If not, or not entirely, what difficulties were encountered and how were these addressed by the pilot projects' teams?
5. What enabling factors of success can be identified?
6. What lessons can be learned from the projects? How should this be reflected in guidance materials for practitioners?

3.3 Research Approach

3.3.1 The research was divided into four phases. The first phase, between September and December 2006 involved interviewing the co-ordinators of all the pilots, preparing a narrative description of the intentions and approaches of each project and creating summary tables describing the range of activities employed. The second phase, between January and April 2007, involved collecting 'baseline' quantitative data for children and young people participating in all pilot projects in relation to their attendance at school, exclusions from school and attainment in National Assessments in the core skills of reading, writing and mathematics. The third phase (which overlapped with the final phase during the latter part of 2007 and early 2008) involved carrying out fieldwork interviews with professionals and young people who had participated in 15 of the 18 pilots. In this phase we also collected from all the pilots follow-up quantitative data on attendance, exclusions and attainment. The final phase, between February and June 2008, involved conducting follow-up interviews with pilot co-ordinators, data analysis and report-writing¹.

3.3.2 More specific information about the methodologies used in relation to the quantitative and qualitative data collection is provided in later chapters within this report.

¹ Note: It was not possible to carry out this final interview for the Glasgow pilot, due to sickness absence of key staff.

3.3.3 Ethical approval was granted by the University of Strathclyde's Ethics Committee, following scrutiny of the research methodology, fieldwork plan, and the information sheets and consent forms for interviewees. Scottish Government officials wrote formally to the Chief Executives of each of the pilot authorities with information about the research and requesting that co-operation should be afforded to the research team.

3.4 Report Structure

3.4.1 The main body of the report is divided into six chapters. Chapter 4, which follows, summarises the legal and policy contexts and provides a brief account of relevant previous research. Chapter 5 introduces the 18 pilot projects and highlights the key messages arising from their experiences. Chapter 6 reports on the themes emerging from the qualitative analysis; it summarises the impact of the projects, based on interviews with practitioners, young people and parents or carers. Chapter 7 provides an account of the analysis of quantitative data related to attendance, exclusion and attainment. Chapter 8 discusses the lessons for practitioners resulting from the pilot experience and Chapter 9 contains our conclusions.

3.4.2 Each chapter follows a consistent internal structure, beginning with an introduction providing a summary of the chapter's contents, and ending with a conclusion or summary of the main points.

3.4.3 The report also includes four appendices providing more details about the pilot projects and additional data tables.

4 THE EDUCATION OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 This chapter of the report outlines the legal and policy contexts, and also provides a brief summary of relevant previous research in relation to the education of looked after children and young people.

4.2 The Legal Context

4.2.1 The principal source of law governing the circumstances which may lead to the State intervening in the life of a child or young person is the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. The Act introduced into Scots law the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, including the need for decisions about young people to focus on what is best for them and the importance of considering their own views.

4.2.2 The 1995 Act adopted the term 'looked after' rather than the traditional expression 'in care' which was thought to have become pejorative and stigmatising. However, the older term continues in common currency and may be preferred by some young people and carers, perhaps precisely because it has no direct legal standing. The term 'looked after' is sometimes confusing for professionals, such as teachers, who are unfamiliar with its legal meaning and may confuse it with a value judgement made about a child's welfare or home circumstances. An extended form of the term, 'looked after by the local authority' emphasises what has become widely known as the 'corporate parent' responsibilities attaching to a wide range of departments within local government and to the professionals working in them.

4.2.3 A child or young person can become looked after on a voluntary basis, where the family is unable to provide care. More usually², becoming looked after is as a result of compulsory measures of supervision or a court order (McRae, 2006). Compulsory measures may be judged to be appropriate in circumstances where there has been neglect or abuse by the parents, or the behaviour of the child – e.g. being involved in offences or not attending school - has caused concern.

4.2.4 Most children and young people who are looked after in Scotland will fall into one of two main categories. A child or young person can be looked after 'at home', where he or she is subject to a Supervision Requirement with no condition of residence through the Children's Hearings system³. Under this requirement, the child or young person continues to live in their normal place of residence, typically the family home, while receiving additional support. A child or young person can also be looked after 'away from home' (i.e. away from their normal place of residence), where a Supervision Requirement with a condition of residence has been made through the Children's Hearings system, where accommodation is provided under Section 25 of the 1995 Act (voluntary agreement), or where a

² In 2006-07, 9% of children became looked after under CSA 1995 Section 25 (voluntary) provisions. See: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/204913/0054519.pdf>

³ Further information about the Children's Hearings system is available online at: <http://www.childrens-hearings.co.uk/>

Parental Responsibility Order is made under Section 86. In these circumstances, the child or young person is cared for away from their normal place of residence, e.g. in a foster care placement, residential children's unit, residential school, secure unit or in a kinship care placement. Kinship care placements have become more numerous as relatives, often grandparents, have stepped in when parents have been prevented from caring for their children through mental illness, addiction to drugs or alcoholism. During the course of the research, the Scottish Government announced arrangements of financial support for kinship carers to be paid by local authorities⁴.

4.2.5 The 'at home' and 'away from home' categories accounted for 43% and 57%, respectively, of the 14,060 children who were looked after by local authorities in Scotland on 31 March 2007⁵.

4.3 The Policy Context

4.3.1 Several policy issues are relevant to the broader context within which the pilot projects and the related research are set. First, there is now much greater emphasis on both children's rights and on listening to young people as a result of the ratification within the UK in 1991 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. In practical terms, this has led to the adoption of the general principle of consulting young people being reflected in, for example, the inspection of education and care services and more specifically in the appointment of an independent Commissioner for Children and Young People, reporting directly to the Scottish Parliament⁶.

4.3.2 Secondly, a national programme known as Getting It Right For Every Child⁷, which began with consultation on proposals for reviewing the Children's Hearings system in 2004, is leading to significant reforms of children's services generally. The reforms are centred on better collaboration between agencies and professionals, and the removal of barriers to accessing services. The concerns about the need for better collaboration to ensure that children at risk do not become lost in the system are paralleled by greater awareness of the importance of interconnections in the support structures for children and young people. There is also a body of research showing that looked after children and young people are vulnerable to poor mental and physical health (Cocker & Scott, 2006). Poor health, added to the effects of instability, impacts greatly on well-being generally and success in education in particular (Scott & Hill, 2006).

4.3.3 Thirdly, there has been a more particular focus on the educational experience of looked after children and young people, and also on their post-school and post-care outcomes. Reference to the educational policy context is broadly located within one of five priorities for education in Scotland which aims 'to promote equality and help every pupil benefit from education' (Scottish Statutory Instrument, 2000). The general principle of equality of access to education is confirmed in

⁴ For briefing paper, see: <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/research/briefings-08/SB08-03.pdf>

⁵ For more details, see: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/11/27100107/0>

⁶ The web site of the Commissioner is at: <http://www.sccyp.org.uk/>

⁷ GIRFEC publications: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/childrenservices/girfec/publications/Q/editmode/on/forceupdate/on>

National Care Standards⁸, entitlements framed within the aegis of the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001, and in the Regulations and Guidance to the Children (Scotland) Act 1995:

Children who are looked after should have the same opportunities as all other children for education, including further and higher education, and access to other opportunities for development. They should also, where necessary, receive additional help, encouragement and support to address special needs or compensate for previous deprivation or disadvantage (Scottish Office, 1997) p.14.

4.3.4 There have also been concerns about the poor outcomes in terms of education and employment for adults with a looked after background. These concerns have led to closer scrutiny of preparation for leaving care and aftercare support. This group of young adults is known to be disproportionately represented in the 13% of 21 year-olds reported as not being engaged in education, training or employment and for whom the Government has signalled particular focus through the More Choices, More Chances initiative (Scottish Executive, 2006) and in the Skills Strategy for Scotland (Scottish Government, 2007). The experiences of young people leaving care have also been the subject of a critical report by the Children's Commissioner which makes 23 recommendations for improvement (Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People, 2008).

4.3.5 The policy context in relation to the educational experience of looked after children and young people in Scotland has a history of about 10 years, beginning with the commissioning of a detailed review of research (Borland, Pearson, Hill, & Bloomfield, 1998) which in turn helped to inform a highly influential inspection report of provisions for children looked after away from home (Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools and Social Work Services Inspectorate, 2001). These publications prefaced a period of considerable activity aimed at raising awareness among professionals, notably as a result of the formation of networks concerned with the education and the health of looked after children, the development of materials to support the education of professionals and the publication of self-evaluation indicators for auditing the support arrangements for looked after children and young people in schools and care settings (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools, 2003).

4.3.6 Current policy is outlined in *Looked after children & young people: We can and must do better*⁹, a report structured around five themes - working together, becoming effective lifelong learners, developing into successful and responsible adults, being emotionally and physically healthy, feeling safe and nurtured in a home setting - and outlining a prospectus for development through 19 key actions (Scottish Executive, 2007). Most recently, HMIE has published the report, *Count us in: Improving the education of our looked after children*, based on visits conducted in 15 local authorities, Careers Scotland and four voluntary sector agencies (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools, 2008). An appendix to the report highlights nine 'signposts for improvement': corporate parenting; partnerships; strategic planning and review; assessing and meeting needs; education placements and curriculum flexibility; participation and advocacy; transitions; home-school links; training and development.

⁸ National Care Standards: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Health/care/17652/9328>

⁹ One of the actions specified the development of a web site to provide information, facilitate the transfer of knowledge about good practice and to act as a forum for practitioners. The web site is now active at: <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/lookedafterchildren/index.asp>.

4.4 Previous Research

4.4.1 Concerns about low achievement in education by children and young people in care were first brought to attention following research in England in the mid-1980s (Jackson, 1987). During the past 20 years there has been a growing literature emanating from many countries about the education of looked after children and young people (Cashmore, Paxman, & Townsend, 2007). This literature could be categorised into three broad themes: first, studies of attainment and other measures of educational outcome; secondly, research into tracking and the extent to which agencies can provide accurate data; and, thirdly, research about the quality of the educational environment in care settings, the attitudes and understandings of professionals and the support arrangements for looked after children and young people to help them progress in education.

Attainment

4.4.2 Low achievement in education by looked after children was first identified as a matter of concern in England more than 30 years ago in the National Child Development Study (Essen, Lambert, & Head, 1976). It became a consistent finding in the early studies which examined the educational experiences of children in or leaving care (Jackson, 1994), and has been reinforced by numerous research findings over the subsequent years (Jackson & McParlin, 2006).

4.4.3 An important early study of attainment compared 49 children aged 8-14 in foster families with a control group of 58 children whose families had received help from social workers (Heath, Colton, & Aldgate, 1989). The research design involved measuring attainment three times at yearly intervals, using standard instruments such as the NFER Basic Mathematics Test. The results of the first round of testing confirmed findings from previous research of the low attainment by looked after children. There were no significant differences found between the attainments of the foster care children and those in the control group, although the foster children performed better overall on tests of reading and vocabulary. There were significant differences between the groups on material conditions, carers' occupations and education, and the level of carers' involvement in their foster children's education and leisure time activities. The foster care children lived in family circumstances more closely resembling those where there had been no involvement with social services and which were likely to have been stable for some time. Nevertheless their educational attainment was more similar to children from disadvantaged homes. The authors noted the apparent predictive importance, therefore, of the children's pre-care history.

4.4.4 Another study around this time compared the attainment of groups of children who had experienced separation at different ages and for different reasons (Osborn & St. Claire, 1987). The research confirmed the low performance of children in care and concluded that this was mainly due to their deprived backgrounds. It has been known for a long time that looked after children tend to come from low income families and therefore poverty is clearly an important contributory factor in explaining low attainment (Bebbington & Miles, 1989). However, the Osborne and St. Claire study found that children who had been adopted scored above average on behavioural and cognitive measures, despite coming from backgrounds similar to those of the children remaining in care, and the

researchers concluded that the advantage of living in child-centred adoptive families had compensated for their earlier disadvantage.

4.4.5 An important question for researchers has concerned whether a stable care setting could lead to better school attainment. In one frequently cited study, researchers found a significant positive relationship between reading, maths and vocabulary scores, and care plans and length of placement. Thus, a planned, long-term care placement appeared to help raise attainment (Aldgate, Colton, Ghate, & Heath, 1992). However, the research found no direct relationship between the number of placements - another common measure of continuity - and test scores. The researchers monitored the progress over two years of the children in the study population and found attainment to be unrelated to the amount of contact with birth parents. Children who returned home during the study appeared to improve their attainment, compared with those remaining in foster care, while moves to residential care produced declines in performance, although this particular effect was not statistically significant. Children who entered care because of suspected child abuse or neglect had lower attainment than those who were admitted for other reasons, supporting a view that pre-care experiences should be regarded as important in determining adjustment to schooling.

4.4.6 A particularly alarming statistic which has been widely quoted, though it is based on limited data, relates to the very low proportion (one percent) of care leavers who enter higher education (Fletcher-Campbell, 1997). It is possible that further education is a significantly more important opportunity, though unfortunately there appears so far to be no published research in this area.

4.4.7 A study which included a sub-group of 38 adults from care backgrounds in England who were 'high achievers' used as a comparison a group matched in terms of background but whose attainment was more typical of those with care backgrounds (Jackson & Martin, 1998). Virtually all the high achievers had 'A' Level or higher education qualifications, while 86% of the 'low achievers' had no qualifications and the rest had three or fewer GCSEs. The two groups differed on a range of measures. The high achievers had lower scores on the General Health Questionnaire, indicating better mental health. They also had significantly higher scores on life satisfaction and were more likely to be internally motivated and therefore were inclined to a view that they could make a difference by their own actions in their circumstances. They were also more likely to have learned to read early and to have been encouraged to progress to higher education by a significant adult.

4.4.8 The research findings about attainment have been generally confirmed by the annual Children Looked After Statistics (CLAS) report published by the Scottish Government¹⁰ which uses two proxies for attainment: the proportion of young people ages 16 and over ceasing to be looked after who have attained a minimum of one Level 3 qualification; and the proportion who have gained qualifications at this basic level in both English and mathematics. In 2006-07, 52% of looked after children were reported to have gained at least the minimum of one qualification. However, this marked an improvement of 10% on the figure for 2003-04. The statistics also distinguish between those young people leaving care who were looked after away from home (60% gained at least one Level 3 qualification) and those looked after at

¹⁰ See: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/11/27100107/0>

home (45% gained at least one Level 3 qualification). The low attainment of looked after young people is striking when compared with the 90% of all young people in the 16/17 age group who attain at least five Level 3 qualifications. In 1999 the Government set the criterion measure of all care leavers having Level 3 qualifications in both English and mathematics as part of a broader set of social justice targets to be met by 2012. In 2006-07, only 34% of looked after young people attained the target level.

4.4.9 Who Cares? Scotland conducted a small-scale survey, summarised in the report *A different class?*, which showed that 44% of a population of 88 young people aged 15-18 looked after away from home had achieved some Standard Grades: an average of four against the national average of seven (Boyce, 2003). A higher proportion of those living in foster care compared to those in residential care achieved some Standard Grades (67% as against 29%). This finding, and those of other studies, might be taken to support a view of foster care as providing a superior educational environment than residential care. There have certainly been criticisms of residential care in this respect (Berridge & Brodie, 1998), though it would be wise to be cautious because of the difficulties in disengaging the complex factors involved.

4.4.10 It is important to end this section by acknowledging that while the portrayal of the truly awful contrast between the attainment of looked after young people and those who are not looked after serves to challenge politicians and professionals, there is also a danger of reinforcing unhelpful stereotypes (Hare & Bullock, 2006). Also, while there is a need to be clear about the attainments of looked after children so efforts to make improvements can be monitored, it is nevertheless necessary to be cautious in interpreting the findings. Virtually all the attainment data relate to care leavers and therefore cannot take account of either the influence of carers on adolescents, or of the effects of alternative opportunities afforded through adult further and community education.

4.4.11 Three different sources of evidence should be considered in support of a more cautious view. First, there is the evidence of the improvement in the mean level of attainment, even if the measures represent modest levels of achievement, together with the statistics showing higher attainment among young people looked after away from home. Secondly, being successful in life depends on the underpinning conditions for well-being and relationships being present in everyday life (Bardy, 2008). This is the message arising from the *Celebrating Success* study, based on interviews with adults with a care background who had by their own account been successful in life in a variety of ways. The study summarised the conditions which appeared to facilitate success: having people in your life who care about you; experiencing stability; being given high expectations; receiving encouragement and support; and being able to participate and achieve (Happer, McCreadie, & Aldgate, 2006). Thirdly, there is now a growing literature which emphasises the value of participation in sporting, cultural and leisure activities in developing resilience and promoting social, emotional and intellectual development (Gilligan, 2007).

Tracking and data

4.4.12 Several studies have indicated that record-keeping by local authorities and the transfer of information between agencies about looked after children have been

unsatisfactory, particularly in relation to school attainment and educational support requirements. One study involved the examination of the school files of 59 Year 11 (15-16 year old) looked after children in one English local authority and concluded that there was simply a lack of data, meaning that the agencies were unable to identify clearly the children for whom they were responsible (Jacklin, Robinson, & Torrance, 2006). In a case study of a 'learning community' (comprising a secondary school and its related primary schools and pre-school centres), researchers found that the precise looked after status was unknown by schools for 30 of the 49 pupils identified. The schools were mainly clear about which pupils were looked after away from home but there was confusion about the looked after at home category (Connelly, Siebelt, & Furnivall, 2008).

4.4.13 Poor data management and information exchange were highlighted among a long list of 'persistent problems' identified by NFER researchers (Fletcher-Campbell, 1998). The authors of the *Learning With Care* report (HMI (Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools) and SWSI (Social Work Services Inspectorate), 2001), highlighted a general failure to assess educational progress and needs at the point at which a child or young person became looked after. Describing the omissions, they wrote:

It was unusual for any form of assessment to have been carried out on the 50 population children at the time they became looked after. It was even more unusual to find an assessment which addressed educational needs. Where educational progress was described it was often inaccurate (ibid., p.14).

4.4.14 Evidence of omissions in care planning were revealed in a report commissioned by the Scottish Executive's Social Work Services Inspectorate (Vincent, 2004). An audit questionnaire was administered by 29 of Scotland's 32 local authorities in relation to the *Looking After Children* materials - sets of forms designed to guide information gathering, assessment, planning and review of the needs of looked after young people. In total, the files of 430 children and young people looked after away from home were audited. The 'Essential Core Record and Placement Agreement' form holds all the personal information about the child, including education, medical and contact details. The auditors found that educational information was fully completed in over 66% of cases and nearly completed in a further 12% of cases. The 'Essential Background Record' should provide more comprehensive information about the child, but the audit showed that educational information was fully completed in only 37% of cases, nearly completed in a further 17% of cases, only partially or minimally completed in 21% of cases and not completed at all in 23% of cases. Further analysis by the researchers highlighted problems in sharing information between social work and education agencies and, in some cases, they found evidence that agreed protocols for exchanging information within authorities had not been implemented.

4.4.15 Vincent's audit also showed that although most files had a completed 'Care Plan' - which should summarise the results of assessments and list the outcomes expected from care - and that plans were generally good, a quarter of looked after children's files did not contain a care plan. The 'Day-to-Day Placement Arrangements Record' summarises how a young person's needs should be best met within a particular placement, e.g. foster care or residential care. While there is a view among some professionals that this record is not always appropriate, e.g. in long-term foster care placements, the extent to which the form was completed varied (71% in the case of children living with prospective adopters and 58% of those fostered or in residential care) and it was also less likely to be completed

where children and young people had been accommodated for a longer period. Where forms had been completed, education details were fully complete in just over 66% of cases and information about social and leisure activities had been entered in just over 50% of cases, and had not been entered at all in more than a quarter of cases.

4.4.16 A study in three Scottish local authorities, found that inter-agency planning meetings tended to focus on the details of the lives of individual pupils and of their families, rather than considering how the institutional processes of the school might be contributing to problems (Stead, Lloyd, & Kendrick, 2004).

The educational environment of care settings

4.4.17 Despite the research evidence of generally poor attainment by looked after children and young people, it is important not to assume that being looked after necessarily equates to poor outcomes. Better awareness of research which has been critical of the lack of attention to education in care settings may well be leading to improvements (Jackson, 2007). For example, researchers interviewed, on two separate occasions 18 months apart, 56 young people aged 12-19 in three English local authorities involved in a Taking Care of Education project. Perceptions of educational progress were reported to be significantly higher at follow-up interview and an increased proportion of the young people reported that being looked after had had a positive impact upon their education (Harker, Dobel-Ober, Akhurst, Berridge, & Sinclair, 2003).

4.4.18 A study in one rural local authority in England found evidence of the use of personal education plans helping to raise the profile of the educational needs of looked after children (Hayden, 2005). Within the context of a residential care setting, researchers examined four aspects of 'engagement' (behaviour, relationships, participation and motivation), three factors of attainment (literacy and numeracy, public examinations, and post-16 education and training) and seven aspects of educational processes (inculcating children with a sense of value for education, establishing expectations of children, an incremental re-integration programme, preparing children, supporting children, supporting educational placements and developing a learning culture) (Gallagher, Brannan, Jones, & Westwood, 2004). The authors concluded that residential care can influence education positively. They found that the key factors included giving children a sense of the value of education, clear and consistent messages about expectations in relation to education, a well-structured re-integration programme, providing support for children and staff when children are in school, and developing a learning culture within the home.

4.4.19 Despite the evidence that giving attention to the intellectual development of looked after children and young people can lead to improvement in expectations of achievement and better attainment, significant concerns about the quality of the care environment have been reported as a result of reviews conducted by the Care Commission and the education and social work inspection agencies in Scotland (Elsley, 2008). During financial year 2006-07 the Scottish Government provided a grant of £5m to local authorities and voluntary sector agencies aimed at improving the physical environment and educationally rich environment of residential units and schools (Scottish Government, 2008). The government has indicated that improving attainment of looked after children continues to be a priority; funding will not be ring-

fenced in future and has been rolled up within the overall financial settlement agreed with local authorities.

4.4.20 Finally, virtually all the published research about the education of looked after children has been concerned with those living 'away from home', typically in foster care and residential settings. Government statistics indicating that looked after children living 'at home' have the poorest attainment and that this group appears, so far, to be resistant to efforts to make improvements, suggest a need for more work in policy and practice terms and for further research in this area.

4.5 Summary

4.5.1 A child or young person can be looked after at home or away from home. The policy context includes: the implications of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; the implementation of Getting it Right for Every Child; The Regulation of Care Act 2001 and National Care Standards; More Choices, More Chances; and the recommendations in *Looked after children & young people: We can and must do better*.

4.5.2 The canon of research includes studies of attainment, research into tracking and the extent to which agencies can provide accurate data, and research about the quality of the educational environment in care settings. The research in relation to education confirms the significant disadvantages suffered by looked after children and young people but has been useful in identifying both systemic weaknesses and also directions for improvements in policy and practice.

4.5.3 Current Scottish Government policy is outlined in the report, *Looked after children & young people: We can and must do better* (Scottish Executive, 2007) and indications for improving practice are provided in the Inspectorate report *Count us in: Improving the education of our looked after children* (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools, 2008).

5 THE PILOT PROJECTS

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 This chapter provides descriptions of the pilot projects and their aims, and outlines how they progressed. The chapter also highlights successes and difficulties and considers the issue of sustainability. The main data sources for the chapter were the projects' own progress reports to Scottish Government and interviews conducted with project co-ordinators. The data presented in this chapter relate to Research Question 1: What were the characteristics of the pilot projects, including their aims, participants and staffing? Research Question 4: Did the projects meet their objectives? If not, or not entirely, what difficulties were encountered and how were these addressed by the pilot projects' teams? and Research Question 5: What enabling factors of success can be identified?

5.1.2 In October 2004, the Minister for Education and Young People announced funding of £6m to support a programme of pilots across local authorities designed to improve the educational attainment of looked after children.

5.1.3 Pilot projects were subsequently approved for funding in a total of 20 of Scotland's 32 local authorities. The projects were funded by the previous Scottish Executive (now known as The Scottish Government), following an application process where key criteria had to be met in order for a proposal to be accepted. Seven of the projects began in summer 2005 (East Ayrshire, Highland, Midlothian, North Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire, Stirling and Glasgow) One year later, a further 11 pilot projects began (Aberdeen City, Dundee, Dumfries and Galloway, East Lothian, Edinburgh, Falkirk, Fife, Renfrewshire, South Ayrshire, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian). A further two pilot projects were subsequently funded by the Scottish Government (Inverclyde and North Lanarkshire), but were not included in the study outlined in this report as they began after the research had been commissioned.

5.2 Characteristics of the pilots

5.2.1 An overview of all the pilot projects is provided in tabular form in Appendix 1. The second column of the table summarises the projects envisaged in the proposals for funding. Fourteen of the 18 pilot projects had more than one strand and these are also detailed in the second column. The third column notes where there were any significant changes to a project, compared with the original proposal. Changes of this order were made in four of the pilots: in three cases a single strand did not progress and in the fourth a strand was significantly modified. Clearly, as these were pilot projects, some aspects of individual projects, or strands may not have progressed entirely as originally planned.

5.2.2 More detailed accounts of each of the 18 pilot projects are provided in Appendix 2. These are based on interviews with project co-ordinators conducted in November 2006 and again in spring 2008, and also on reports provided by projects to Scottish Government officials. The accounts indicate what, in the views of the project co-ordinators, had worked well, as well as aspects which had worked less well. All the projects are due to provide internal evaluation reports to the Scottish

Government within six months of the end of the pilot programme. Final evaluation reports for two projects were available to the research team by the time this research report was being completed.

5.2.3 An early analysis of the pilot project aims suggested that they could be characterised by five forms of intervention, as listed below. A table in Appendix 3 shows the distribution of intervention types across the 18 pilot projects.

- Provision of direct support. Most of the pilots involved elements of direct work with children and young people, such as extra tutoring in school or at home, full-time off-site education, work placements, and activities aimed at developing social skills and educational competence. Many of the projects used funding to employ specialist teachers and/or home-school link workers.
- Personal education planning. Nine of the projects involved developing or improving the arrangements for conducting educational needs assessments and monitoring progress of individual children and young people.
- Support for children at transition points in the education system. Nine of the projects involved providing extra support for transitions (i.e. between pre-school provision and primary school, between primary school and secondary school, and between school and further education), known to be particular stressors for looked after children and young people.
- Developing staff and parent/carer capacity. Thirteen of the projects involved elements of staff training (e.g. using Learning with Care training materials) or particular support for parents/carers (e.g. helping to develop confidence in supporting children in education).
- Using information technology/computer-based approaches. Four of the projects involved access to computers or made use of specific software packages.

Provision of direct support

5.2.4 Virtually all of the pilots planned some element of direct educational support work with looked after children and young people. Typically this involved provision of additional teaching support for looked after children/young people, notably in maths and English. Some of the pilots had a particular literacy focus, for example, Aberdeen's postal book scheme and East Lothian's 'reading fair', both of which appear to have in their different ways been successful in encouraging interest in reading. South Lanarkshire's pilot also included a significant literacy element, through the 'storytelling' project conducted in collaboration with the voluntary organisation Children 1st¹¹. Two storytelling trainers worked with link teachers and volunteer literacy co-ordinators in children's houses. The aim was to promote reading among children and young people in residential care. By telling stories in a way that catered to the learning and behavioural needs of the group, the storytellers were able to engage with the young people and promote learning in a way that was informal and fun.

¹¹ This project has been evaluated separately by SIRCC. At the time of writing, the final report was not published. For more information contact irene.c.stevens@strath.ac.uk

I think the young people have learned they don't need to read a book - because a lot of them do have issues with reading skills - to understand a story. So a lot of the kids that maybe have behavioural difficulties. The thing that I find works with them is going into the unit and to start off the lesson I'll start with a wee story, but I'll tell it like, 'guess what happened to me today?', or I'll start with a book which is quite picture orientated and I'll read. That seems to be enough that it brings them down to a level where they know how the lesson's going to work and they'll let me do some phonics work with them (Link Teacher)

5.2.5 The storytelling was supplemented with related activities: discussions; arts and crafts activities; outings related to literacy; book clubs, for which the young people selected books from the local library; book reviewing, where young people wrote about their thoughts on stories and recommended books to others; magazine subscriptions for the children's houses; newsletters circulated within the houses; and the 'Book a book' campaign, which saw one young person selecting, on behalf of the other children and young people in the unit (after consultation about everyone's interests) new books for the house. Events were also organised for all of the children and young people involved in the programme to come together and share their experiences and celebrate what they had taken part in and learned.

5.2.6 One worker said she would tell stories anytime the young people were bored and that inspiration for the stories came from thinking about the young people's backgrounds. Part of the success of the initiative was that: 'storytelling is really healing, it's really therapeutic ...a very warm, caring time to spend with the children'.

5.2.7 Many other examples of interesting approaches to direct support were evident in the pilot projects. Highland's project managers used some of their funding to support nine young people on a Kumon¹² maths and English programme, apparently with very encouraging outcomes.

5.2.8 Some authorities, including Glasgow and Highland, used funding to support payments for tutors to give extra coaching in secondary school subjects. A number of the pilots used funding to support sporting or cultural activities, e.g. Dundee, Highland and Renfrewshire, finding direct benefits to young people in respect of confidence and general wellbeing. Renfrewshire's internal evaluation report¹³ includes an account of two focus groups held with young people who had taken part in educational and cultural trips. The young people had enjoyed being involved in the planning of trips, they were able to identify educational and cultural benefits, including increased understanding of school coursework and a general appreciation of different cultures, and they felt that relationships with staff members and with one another had improved as a result of spending time away from the units.

5.2.9 Two projects, Renfrewshire and West Lothian, formed nurture groups targeted at younger looked after children. Renfrewshire provided additional individualised support to pre-school and primary 1 children in order to develop their core skills. School staff involved also benefited from the project, according to the co-ordinator, by having the opportunity to share knowledge and strategies. Project leaders in West Lothian said that the early intervention focus promoted by their nurture groups helped young children to approach school in a more positive way, and enhanced relationships between parents and school staff. North Ayrshire

¹² See Kumon website for more information: <http://www.kumon.co.uk/>

¹³ Bryson & Dick (2008) Educational Psychology Service, Renfrewshire: <http://www.refrewshire.gov.uk/edpsych>

employed workplace mentors to support looked after young people who were undertaking a half-day, weekly work experience placement. Edinburgh used learning assistants to provide direct support in the classroom for individual pupils. Stirling consulted secondary school-aged pupils on what mix of individual/group, and academic/outdoor activities in their school timetables would help them to succeed educationally. They gave the young people additional support after school and during holiday periods.

5.2.10 West Dunbartonshire's project offered direct support to young people approaching Standard Grade examinations by giving additional tutoring in subjects where assistance was needed.

Many of [the young people] were completely disengaged with school, so it was about making going in for exams a reality, through the support, through getting them back in the [school] door. (Project Co-ordinator)

5.2.11 The project workers were able to support the young people to present for their exams, which would not otherwise have been the case for several of them. Some young people were said as a consequence to have achieved better than had been expected. One young person involved in the pilot said that although he had aspirations to do a 5th year in school his behaviour meant that the school had discouraged him from staying on. Involvement in the project, helping him to work on negative behaviours and focus on academic achievement, had allowed him to stay on at school and work towards his plans to become a fire fighter.

Personal education planning

5.2.12 Half of the pilots used at least some of the funding to support the development of personal education planning for looked after children and young people. For example, Fife's Personal Learning Planning (PLP) process resulted in the production of a resource pack which is authority-specific and aims to help schools understand matters relevant to looked after children and young people, such as interrupted learning and attachment issues. There are plans to make the personal learning packs available in electronic form to increase accessibility, ease of use, and ease with which the plans can be kept up to date. The co-ordinator believes that, evidenced by the co-operation given during the pilot, schools will respond well to this development.

5.2.13 Dumfries and Galloway's project leaders reported that the learning plans resulting from their pilot were successful because they focused on the holistic needs of pupils, taking into consideration that events outside of school can affect learning as much as what happens in school.

5.2.14 North Ayrshire's project was also concerned with personal learning planning in order to help young people become more engaged in their education, more confident and resilient in their learning, and to gain a sense of control over their lives. Young people were helped to consider their goals in life; working towards fulfilling these goals became the main objective of work, with support provided by the project workers.

One of the things that came from young people was that they don't feel that they've got any choices. So they just have these subjects and these teachers, and a lot of

the kids were kicking off, were truanting, or were just deliberately trying to get excluded from certain subjects. So we started off with personal learning planning, engaging them, sitting talking about them...based on their circumstances they track out for themselves what they need to do in terms of vocational experience and qualifications, English and maths...(Project Co-ordinator)

5.2.15 South Ayrshire's 'Taking Time to Talk' project also aimed to improve existing personal education plans in use within the authority. The project workers consulted with young people and staff to develop the plan template, and were pleased with the way the young people interacted with the process.

[Creating] the personal education plans: that went very well because the kids appreciated being so heavily involved in it and they've actually come up with what looks like an extremely good PEP, and that will be taken forward... Involving the young people in decision making, taking on their opinions ...has had a very big impact on the self-esteem of the young people. (Project Co-ordinator)

Support for children at transition points

5.2.16 A number of the projects focused on the support needs of children at key transition points in education. For example, Renfrewshire's nurture group allowed children to be supported from nursery to primary school. North Ayrshire offered support to young people planning to progress to further education, which meant that they had help in overcoming the stresses of adapting to and settling into college work, and they could access help with practical aspects like structuring essays.

5.2.17 Highland supported P7 children in transition to secondary school by giving them additional academic and social support through the 'Goals 4 Us' project which took place at a local football ground. Through the small group programme provided the children were able to re-engage with education, either through out of school provision or by reintegrating with mainstream education.

5.2.18 Edinburgh's project also supported P7 children as they moved to secondary school. The aim was to make the secondary school experience more like that of a typical primary school, where teachers can often respond more quickly and effectively to the needs of children, because they know more about their home situation. The project focused on building better links between school and homes. The schools involved apparently gained a better understanding of the issues affecting looked after children and young people.

The hope was that we could try to reduce the impact of transition on this group of children and one of the things was to try to replicate a primary-type setting, having one person that they could get to know and having, almost, a nurturing sort of role that somebody was to take on. [The learning assistants] were seen as important people in the children's lives. They were a consistent figure and that bit I think worked very well... (Project Co-ordinator)

Developing staff and parent/carer capacity

5.2.19 Most of the pilots planned to have some element of developing capacity for adults and usually this involved raising awareness generally within the local authority. A number of the projects included staff training as part of their pilot.

Dumfries and Galloway held a large multi-agency training event which brought together relevant parties to discuss the needs of looked after children and young people, and was judged to have been very successful by the project leaders.

5.2.20 South Lanarkshire delivered training, based on the *Learning with Care* materials, for residential staff, designated teachers, foster carers and educational psychologists. Residential staff and teachers responded particularly well to the training. Among positive outcomes reported were an increased level of understanding of what it was like for children to be looked after away from home (reported by teachers), and a greater awareness of the expectations schools have of children (reported by residential staff). Residential staff also felt more confident after the training about contacting schools, and relationships between schools and residential workers were said to have improved. A series of training events was held for designated teachers, based on the *Looked After Children and Young People: We Can and Must Do Better* report, and a corporate parent conference, aimed at service managers and voluntary services, examined ideas of corporate responsibility and children's champions.

5.2.21 The Midlothian pilot helped residential staff to feel more confident in encouraging children in relation to schooling. Having a teacher as an immediate colleague was very supportive.

Almost inevitably [the children and young people's] education has been set back in one way or another. While we recognise that we were often unable to address the problem, we did ourselves try in a rudimentary sort of way to be educators, but we aren't trained or qualified to do that role, and certainly we couldn't help them prepare for exams and suchlike, other than like any regular parent could do.... Previously we were treated like caring parents but with a view of 'We are the teachers, we know what the score is, you don't really know what the score is'. But with the [teacher employed through the project] she can cut right across that, they understand her and she understands them, nothing is lost in translation. (Residential Worker)

5.2.22 Some of the projects specifically aimed to support parents and carers. East Lothian extended training to parents and carers, providing support on homework and understanding school systems. West Dunbartonshire worked with the families of the young people.

Whatever happens I tell her [the support worker]. I tell her the truth, and I feel I can tell her the truth and she'll no judge me or anything like that...Having someone like [her] keeps me strong...I know at the end of the day when she comes, it aw comes oot, and I feel a hundred percent better. (Parent)

5.2.23 Many more of the projects found that parents and carers had been supported indirectly as a result of the help given to their children. Highland for example used an individualised package approach to support looked after children at home. In one case it was thought that it would be beneficial to the children of a lone father to be given the opportunity to do fun activities together as a family. As a result they engaged better with learning.

Using information technology/computer-based approaches

5.2.24 Four of the pilots were either specifically related to the use of computer-based facilities or had IT elements as part of a wider project. For example, East Ayrshire's entire project was based around the use of Learning Curve, a web-based software package in which young people could make use of a series of mini-lessons covering different areas of the foundation and general levels of Standard Grade maths and English, and could also potentially access online academic support from teachers.

5.2.25 South Lanarkshire and Highland provided computer access within children's units and training for staff on computer hardware and software use. A notable feature of South Lanarkshire's project was the degree of strategic planning and co-ordination, involving an external consultant's audit, collaboration with the local authority's IT Business Team, identifying an IT co-ordinator in each of the children's houses, and conducting a training audit among residential staff.

The co-ordinators meet four or five times a year. They can also communicate via email. The focus of those meetings is to see what we are doing with what we have got, where we are perhaps a bit concerned, and share those concerns, to share more importantly the solutions to some of those concerns and to think about where we could be going and how we actually tap into the potential that is there within the systems that are in the houses...So young people use them [computers] for school work, they will use them for homework, they will use them for research and projects for school. But they are there for communicating with other folk as well – so they will use them for playing games, they'll use them for sending emails. (Children's House Manager)

The young people complained that they could not download music or use MSN Messenger for communicating with friends. Two young people were part of a small group which prepared a report with recommendations for senior managers. The report explored the advantages to the young people of having access to MSN, potential risks, and possible safeguards which could be employed. There have also been discussions with the company managing the system to explore the use of top-up vouchers enabling young people to download music legally.

5.2.26 North Ayrshire used a software package, Comic Life, and animation as an exciting way of developing both self-esteem and language skills. Each young person began by making an initial personal statement about the way they thought the project would benefit them, and what they thought they would gain from taking part. Every three months they returned to the statement to update it, providing the project leaders with a visual assessment of the young people's progress. These personal statements were in the form of storyboards, to which photos of the young people were added to illustrate their thoughts and statements.

5.3 Successes, difficulties and sustainability

5.3.1 The project co-ordinators of 10 of the 18 projects reported in final interviews that the aims of their pilots had been fully achieved. Eight projects reported having partially achieved the aims, typically because one strand of the project was less successful than the others. In four cases (Aberdeen, Glasgow, Midlothian and West Lothian) one strand had not progressed. The operation of Glasgow's project altered

substantially from the proposal: instead of the project being managed centrally, the funding was devolved to community health partnerships. Also, information about the project was not collated centrally. West Lothian's third strand (a buddy scheme) did not progress but the project revised the original aims and this strand became an issues forum.

5.3.2 All of the project leaders interviewed variously reported positive outcomes resulting from the interventions, including apparent increases in attendance, reduction in exclusions, re-engagement with education or with mainstream education, as well as improvements in softer measures, such as increased confidence. Analysis of fieldwork interviews indicated that involvement in the pilot activities had made an impact, in many ways, on a large number of looked after children and young people, and on their parents and carers.

5.3.3 Raising awareness about looked after children and their needs, as well as providing training, was an important element in many of the projects and this aspect will have made a significant impact among many professionals in the pilot authorities.

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

5.3.5 One of the projects (Fife) had the specific aim of developing improving data systems and the project co-ordinator reported significant improvements in tracking children within and outwith the authority. This positive outcome is important, since many of the projects had more negative experiences in relation to data management.

5.3.6 Half of the projects had trialled some form of personal education planning, reporting generally encouraging results. Edinburgh experienced resistance in some schools to the proposal that all looked after children should have an additional support plan.

5.3.7 Four of the pilots utilised some form of computer technology, with varying degrees of success. Highland and South Lanarkshire reported gaining significant benefits from having children's units networked and allowing looked after children access to the same packages at home as they used in school. Both authorities experienced difficulties in relation to staff confidence and training. East Ayrshire and North Ayrshire made use of specific software packages and although the projects were quite different in scale, both reported benefits to the young people. East Ayrshire reported particular success in using staff mentors, indicating the importance of the teacher-pupil relationship, even where computer-based learning is used.

5.3.8 The difficulties most often reported by the project leaders related to staffing, the most common being problems in recruiting staff quickly at the start of the project, which in a small number of cases impacted on the extent to which the project's aims were fully achieved. In one case a role identified as being important to the project could not be recruited. In other projects staff left during the project. Sometimes staff recruited did not fit in well or did not possess the skills needed to work with the children and young people.

5.3.9 Six of the pilots expected to become permanent provisions (East Ayrshire, Falkirk, Midlothian, North Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire and West Lothian), and a further 12 co-ordinators said their authorities either had plans for at least parts of the pilot to be sustained, or for good practice messages to be disseminated within the local authority (Aberdeen, Dumfries and Galloway, Dundee, East Lothian, Edinburgh, Fife, Glasgow, Highland, Renfrewshire, South Ayrshire, Stirling, West Dunbartonshire).

5.4 Summary

5.4.1 Seven of the 18 projects began in summer 2005 (East Ayrshire, Highland, Midlothian, North Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire, Stirling and Glasgow). One year later, a further 11 pilot projects began (Aberdeen City, Dundee, Dumfries and Galloway, East Lothian, Edinburgh, Falkirk, Fife, Renfrewshire, South Ayrshire, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian).

5.4.2 The pilots were very varied in aims and approach but could be characterised by five different types of intervention: direct support, personal education planning, support at transition points, developing adult capacity and the use of computer technology. A brief account of each project is provided in Appendix 2. All of the projects were required to submit an internal evaluation report to Scottish Government.

5.4.3 Ten of the projects reported that their aims had been entirely achieved. Twelve of the projects expected parts of the pilot to be sustained, or for good practice messages to be disseminated within the local authority.

6 IMPACT OF THE PILOTS: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

6.1 Introduction and methodology

6.1.1 The content of this chapter is based on the analysis of fieldwork interviews conducted during the summer and autumn terms of 2007. The aim of the fieldwork was to answer Research Question 3: What was the impact of the pilot projects according to the perceptions of the young people and their families, and those of the professionals who worked with them directly?

6.1.2 Although the research plan envisaged sampling the pilots to ensure that there was sufficient coverage of different types of activity across a range of settings, efforts were made to include fieldwork visits within as many of the pilot projects as possible. It was possible in the time available to complete interviews with stakeholders in 15 of the 18 pilot projects. The pilots in Dundee and East Lothian were delayed in starting and therefore were not included in fieldwork. It was also not possible to make arrangements to carry out interviews in Glasgow; this is unfortunate, particularly because of this pilot had the largest number of participants.

6.1.3 Interviews were conducted with a total of 111 professionals engaged directly with the young people (e.g. teachers and school managers, support for learning specialists, classroom assistants, social workers, residential unit staff), 51 young people, and 14 parents or foster carers of those young people. Most of the young people interviewed were adolescents; the youngest though was eight years old. In a small number of cases, interviews planned with young people or parents did not go ahead, either because other commitments intervened or because individuals had subsequently decided not to participate. The table below shows the distribution of fieldwork interviews across the pilot projects. The table also indicates that the stakeholder group least well represented in the fieldwork is that of parent/foster carer.

Table 1: Fieldwork interviews by pilot authority and category of interviewee

	Professionals	Parents / Foster Carers	Young People
Aberdeen City	10	-	3
Dumfries & Galloway	6	-	-
East Ayrshire	5	-	2
Edinburgh	7	2	2
Falkirk	7	-	-
Fife	3	2	3
Highland	12	3	10
Midlothian	7	-	5
North Ayrshire	18	2	7
Renfrewshire	2	-	-
South Ayrshire	6	-	6
South Lanarkshire	13	-	3
Stirling	6	1	1
West Dunbartonshire	5	1	1
West Lothian	4	3	8
Total	111	14	51

Fieldwork was not carried out in Dundee, East Lothian and Glasgow

6.1.4 Making the arrangements for the fieldwork visits involved taking advice from project key contacts about which professionals, young people, carers and parents they felt we should and realistically could interview. We also discussed whether individual or focus group interviews would be appropriate, and judgements were usually made taking account of logistical factors (e.g. time available, travel arrangements) and sensitivities (e.g. whether young people would feel more comfortable in a one-to-one or group situation). There was no direct relationship between the number of people interviewed and the size of the actual project, since we were dependent on the practical arrangements that could be made. We tried to conduct interviews or focus groups with all three groups (professionals, parents/carers and young people) in all projects, but in some cases this did not happen (see Table 1). Young people were interviewed on their own or in focus groups; workers were always nearby but could not usually overhear the conversation.

6.1.5 Project contacts were sent information by email, including an outline of the broad interview topics, information sheets for the relevant groups of participants and consent forms. Signed consent forms were collected by researchers on the day of interview, following clarification that the aims of the research were understood by interviewees. Advice was provided by the independent advocacy organisation Who Cares? Scotland, in relation to conducting interviews/focus groups with children and young people.

6.1.6 The interviews and focus groups were structured around four key questions (see below) with variations made, and prompts and probes used for different groups of interviewees, and according to the judgement of the researcher. The content of this chapter is based mostly on the second and third of these questions, while responses to the first question influenced Chapter 4 of this report. The responses to the fourth question have influenced Chapter 7 and also the separately published Guidance for Practitioners.

- *What has the project involved?*
- *Has being involved helped the young people with school?*
- *What has been good or not so good?*
- *Based on the experience of the pilot, what advice might be given to others?*

6.1.7 Research interviews were digitally recorded and the files stored within our Virtual Research Environment, a secure, password-protected server. The files were then transcribed and the transcripts subjected to inductive content analysis (Berg, 2004). The inductive analysis began with the identification of segments of interviews that represent single, recognisable aspects of participants' responses. Selected segments were then given a label summarising the central concept conveyed. These labels, or 'specific themes', became the basic unit of analysis. Ideas that reflect common threads across the interviews were then clustered together to form 'intermediate themes'. This clustering allowed a building process to develop whereby a hierarchy of themes could be constructed, starting with very specific themes and moving towards more general themes.

6.1.8 The remainder of this chapter is structured in two main sections: first, the impact of the pilot activities from the perspectives of the professionals interviewed; and, secondly, the impact perceived by the young people and their parents or carers. Within each of the sections sub-headings are used for convenience to

organise the discussion. These headings are essentially the general themes derived from the key issues emerging from a content analysis of the interviews.

6.2 Perspectives of the professionals

6.2.1 This section is structured using four headings which represent higher order 'general' themes used to group the 'raw data' themes emerging from the coded interviews. These are: engagement with education; perceptions of impact; what makes it work?; and problems or barriers encountered.

Engagement with education

6.2.2 We learned about the aims of specific pilot projects from reading the proposals written in the applications for funding, and in our interviews with co-ordinators, but we also wanted to explore with the adults who were working directly with the children and young people what they understood to be the various purposes behind the programmes they were engaged in.

6.2.3 Unsurprisingly, the most important theme to emerge from the interviews was a general concern to promote education, while providing support for young people, parent and carers and schools. Developing young people's social and emotional qualities was also prominent. These aspects were concerned with young people's direct engagement with education, in both narrow and broader senses, but another theme to emerge related to a desire to enhance the organisational arrangements for supporting looked after children and young people in their education.

6.2.4 Work in promoting education included a broad range of ways in which pilot project staff offered support primarily within mainstream schools. This work was characterised in various ways, depending on the nature of the project. Examples included: provision of educational opportunities; establishing a culture of learning; assisting young people who were struggling with education; providing personalised programmes; reintegrating young people into mainstream schooling after breaks in their education; and supporting transitions between the different stages of education.

...if you are sitting beside them you are keeping them calm and focused on the task in hand, focused on what the teacher is saying, rather than getting involved in any ruckus or anything that is going on around them. I think your presence there helps them because they know who you are and they are able to relate to you. (Learning Assistant – supporting transition to secondary school)

We've established a kind of culture within the house that homework is a priority. It generally gets done. ...Quite often it will get done on the computers and the young folk will type stuff up, then they'll print it off and they'll be able to bring that into school. For some of the older kids that are maybe doing their standard grades, they'll quite readily use the machines to do some research projects. (Residential Unit Manager)

6.2.5 Support work was also directed specifically at strategies leading to improvements in attendance, attainment and achievement. One teacher we interviewed described the aim of a pilot as centring on improving attendance and helping young people to 'stay on task, remain focused'.

We have a boy ... just started second year that doesn't have a great deal of experience of being in a big class. He was at a small primary before he came here. To leave him in a class of 27 with no support – that did happen at the beginning of the year - wasn't successful. Now we have got someone with him all the time to keep him on task ... that transition of being in classes of six to classes of nearly 30. He is now beginning to realise there are certain things you can do in a big class and certain things you can't do in a big class, so that kind of support has been great. (Principal Teacher, Secondary)

6.2.6 In one project, the support work involved regular meetings in school to examine problems and consider solutions.

...what we do is a lot of person-centred planning with the young people and we've been looking at where you are, where you want to get to, what's your current situation. We've done it with them because nobody's taken the time to really sit down and have that discussion with them. Sometimes it's just going in and saying, 'how has your week gone'. We would meet at least once a week...and [at] an agreed time, so not the same period every week. (Educational Link Worker)

6.2.7 Providing direct support for children and young people was described in a variety of ways, such as being a 'constant in the looked after child's life' or 'someone to rely on' or 'provid[ing] support but not in an obvious way'. Having a presence might be sufficient in some situations, while being an advocate would be required in others, as illustrated in the extracts from interviews below. Giving emotional support and boosting confidence, and helping young people to take responsibility and to develop social and life skills, also featured in interviewees' accounts of their work.

Young people can be lacking in confidence if they have been out of school. They feel there is no hope. They've missed so much in school. They've been through trauma. C is there for support. (Outreach Teacher describing the role of a Support Worker)

...they would often tell me things and ask me to fix things for them that they could easily have gone to their guidance teacher for. I remember a young person saying to me that she couldn't see the blackboard very well and I said, 'well have you asked to be moved to the front of the class?' 'No'. 'Why not?' 'Oh, well I don't like to say.' 'Would you like me to?' 'Yes.' So I did. (Educational Link Worker)

6.2.8 Project staff were also involved in providing emotional or practical support for other adults in the young people's lives, such as their carers, families, teachers and residential unit key workers.

6.2.9 A number of the projects were built around, or included, learning opportunities outside the school classroom. Sometimes these were about maintaining a learning habit when not attending school for various reasons, including exclusion, but projects also made use of work experience placements and a range of sporting and extra-curricular activities.

J had been excluded 10 times throughout his three years of secondary schools. There were more in primary school. It's the same things he was having difficulty with. In the classroom he was fine - it was very manageable because they had supports there for him. But at lunch times and break times he was struggling big time with peer interactions and the lack of structure. We can't really go up there every day. So it was how we could provide support. [name of project] are able to step in and support him. (Residential Worker)

We also produced a magazine for all the units. It was a kid's magazine. We helped them collating information and that was all part of our timetable. (Pupil Support Link Worker)

My role's more activity based...taking individuals and reintroducing them to group work, fishing activities, for instance, and horse riding as well. Also physical activities, in terms of football sessions, provided for people that don't have a lot of physical activity and physical exercise. Just to try and make them a bit more healthy and get them to build relationships to try and obviously keep them involved with the project. (Inclusion Support Worker)

6.2.10 Some of the projects included elements which were intended to improve engagement indirectly by having more efficient data management in relation to looked after children and young people. Thus, for some of our interviewees, their roles involved providing accurate and up to date information about young people, tracking placements and progress in education, exposing inconsistent practices, or examining procedures and recommending changes.

The aim is to have more complete data available for each child. These children aren't just children who are a statistic. Behind these statistics there are names, there are people, there are personalities, there are life stories. (Looked After Children Education Co-ordinator)

Perceptions of impact

6.2.11 In the following chapter we discuss impact as indicated by the quantitative data, and here we report on what emerged from the interviews with professionals. The professionals we spoke to were generally enthusiastic about being engaged in something they regarded as important and worthwhile, but were realistic about what they felt could be achieved in a relatively limited project timescale. In short, they were pessimistic about their efforts and those of the young people showing up in any significant way in the hard attainment data but could articulate other, softer, ways in which they felt their project was making an impact.

6.2.12 Our interviewees described impact in a range of terms, including positive educational outcomes, positive psychological outcomes, development of relationships, raising awareness of the needs of and provision for looked after pupils, and in more organisationally-related ways.

6.2.13 In relation to educational outcomes, the most significant areas of impact described were those related to improvements in attendance and prevention of exclusion, improvements in attitudes towards education, and improvements related to attainment.

6.2.14 According to our interviewees, involvement in the pilot activities had a positive impact on attendance in various ways, including the additional support for the children and young people provided by the projects, the expectation of attendance at school (or specialist provision) and greater motivation as a result of involvement in college or work placements.

...They've also continued to come to the project, so their attendance is, has got to be, valuable...They've got a final vision now that some are going to college to do

tasters, or part-time courses. And now they've set themselves some form of career. (Inclusion Support Worker)

There are a lot of young people who really, really want to do well in school. They've got lots of challenges and issues but they really want to be there. Their lives get disrupted. We've had great success but it's different approaches for different people. What's been good I think is identifying the appropriate young people and serving their needs. (Specialist Teacher, Looked After Children)

6.2.15 Prevention of exclusion was, understandably, given the known high rates of exclusion from school of looked after young people, an important feature of many projects involving secondary school-age pupils. The following extract from an interview also highlights the inadequate communication shown to be a feature of the process in many school exclusions involving pupils who are looked after.

...the information was slow in getting round, so a kid could have been excluded for a couple of days before we got to know about it. That's why we set up this system and I think it's a positive system whereby we were working different hours. P and myself were working twelve o'clock till seven o'clock in the evening, whereas V and M were working 9 to 4. The routine we set up was that every morning V and M would phone the units and say, 'what's the state of play, anyone excluded?...If someone had been excluded the day before, the next day we could be in the unit...Because of the difficulties in getting information from schools, we had made up materials for different ages and stages, so that we could very quickly put together basic language and numeracy materials, as well as some wee attractive bits, so that we could be prepared. (Teacher seconded to project)

6.2.16 The difficulty of making a measurable impact with young people whose education has been severely disrupted over many years was described by a teacher working in a specialist base, supporting looked after children in mainstream schools, or as a first step in a staged return to schooling.

There are young people who haven't been in school for up to a year, so it's hard to tell. We can probably say that two or three young people would have been excluded, wouldn't have gone back and wouldn't have sat their Standard Grades without the support of the project. Certainly there is a heightened awareness of education in the Centre as a whole. There is more support for the young people. At the end of two years we hopefully should see attendance up, exclusion down and attainment improving. It is a small number, though, 12 in total. It will be hard to draw conclusions. (Special Project Principal Teacher)

6.2.17 Impact on education was also evidenced through increase in motivation and improved attitudes towards schooling. Our interviewees described the changes they observed in various ways, such as 'buying into education', increased enthusiasm for education, enjoying school work and having better focus or vision. In one project which was centred on the primary school – secondary school transition period, a point where many looked after children experience drift due to the unfamiliarity of the school environment, we were given a case example of good support.

...That girl was the only pupil from that school to come here. They sent a member of staff for the induction - which I thought was fantastic – who sat down with me, told me what buttons to press, how the girl responds to praise. Absolutely brilliant! She has been another one who has benefited hugely from the looked after project because I think again she needs a lot of support, she has a fairly difficult home life, has someone in the classroom who is sitting in with her. She is a fairly bright girl. She is coping fairly well right now. I doubt whether she would have made the

transition as effectively without the support she has received. (Principal Teacher, Secondary School)

6.2.18 Interviewees also described ways in which they felt the attainment of the young people had been influenced positively, including being presented for Standard Grades and other assessments, showing improvements in school work and achieving awards. As the interview extracts below demonstrate, several of the professionals to whom we spoke made the point that skilled teachers can help young people to make significant advances in a relatively short period.

At the point where we picked them up, because of their portfolio work, these kids weren't even going to get presented because the work hadn't been done. Very quickly we got them to the point where presentation was possible. (Education Project Co-ordinator)

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

6.2.19 In one project which had a strong emphasis on educational attainment, the importance of developing a range of useful life skills was also recognised. The specialist support teachers were invited by one of their pupils to eat a meal she had prepared in the children's unit where she lived.

One young person cooked dinner for our team last week, as she is now being taught life skills. Set the table, made dinner. Unit staff supported her. She was as proud as punch to hold her first dinner party. Her life has been turned around. (Specialist Support Teacher)

6.2.20 Across the projects we visited, we heard accounts of a whole range of ways in which looked after children and young people had developed psychologically, directly as a result of engaging with the project activities. Among the most frequently mentioned changes were increase in confidence, increased self-esteem, feeling valued, having a sense of pride in achievements, improved social skills, increased focus and drive, and improved behaviour. Unsurprisingly, development in confidence was often related to extra-curricular opportunities created by schools. We heard of one young person who became involved in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme through his school. This included voluntary experience working with fire-fighters one night per week for 10 weeks. He was filmed in uniform as part of a television news item and this experience had apparently contributed enormously to the young person's developing confidence. In another project, a young person with very low self-esteem began to see himself more positively as a result of participating in a film animation project.

When he first started and went to outdoor education [worker] would take a camera; he didn't want his photo taken, he was really opposed to that. Then [animation project] came along and he decided that his film would be of him doing a trick shot at pool, and he was quite happy to be on film for that. Now if you are out and about with him and taking photos, he's quite happy. So I do think that demonstrates that his feelings about himself have changed. (Service Manager)

6.2.21 Improvements in behaviour were among the most frequently described benefits of engaging with projects. A learning assistant talked about the very close support he provided for a secondary school pupil looked after at home who was attending erratically and whose behaviour in school was giving concern. The main focus had been on improving social skills, and addressing his difficulties in school work had become a longer-term goal.

...having my constant presence he is now used to me...and he is a lot more accepting of it and in terms of his behaviour which was a major issue at the beginning – that has certainly got better. Often if I am not in class with him we have problems still but if I am there his discipline is markedly better, so that I would say measurably has gone up. (Learning Assistant)

6.2.22 The complexity of these psychological challenges is dramatically illustrated in the following case example, which also shows how young people can respond positively to intensive support. The example also illustrates how specialist support professionals need to be skilled in working with colleagues as well as with young people.

One girl had just finished S4. School had broken down, she wasn't attending. Her behaviour was so bad she'd been excluded. Things were in a bad way. Very surly in school, very insolent to teachers, always in fights and arguments. All very negative. She was taken into care. Whenever a young person is taken into care here they get my services the next day. We talk through what they like and their strengths and how I could help them. We got her back to school and I went in three times a week with her. We went to the support base and into classes. The withdrawal is also important, that I'm not always with her. When it comes to exams, we did revision together. She sat her Standard Grades. A lot of work was done with the staff here about appropriate behaviour. Also work with me modelling in school, like saying, 'Excuse me Mr X', because she just used to shout at teachers' backs. The guidance staff noticed her social skills were developing. (Special Project Principal Teacher)

6.2.23 The need for project staff to be able to use skills in diplomacy to advocate on behalf of young people with a history of poor behaviour in school emerged as an important theme. We heard in one of the pilot projects about a girl who was being supported in mainstream school after a history of poor attendance, exclusion and poor behaviour. Despite improved behaviour and gaining merit awards in some subjects, three subject teachers said they did not want her to attend their classes. The support teacher had to work hard to emphasise the positive comments from staff without dismissing reports of continuing behaviour problems.

6.2.24 Another important way in which project staff described positive impact related to improvements evident in interpersonal relationships, typically between young people and significant adults.

Sometimes when people come into schools and they are not having a lot to do with the kids, sort of floating in two periods a week, it's difficult for them to build up a relationship. There is a tendency sometimes to feel sorry for those kids rather than to empathise with them. I don't think that has happened. I think that they have really been able to empathise with this boy and really try to help him. I have been particularly impressed with the fact that they have been willing to try to engage with the mother. I'm not saying it's always been successful. (Depute Head Teacher, Secondary School)

6.2.25 An important feature of the pilot projects involved specialist provision for looked after children and young people, aimed at reintegration to mainstream education, providing structured learning environments, giving interesting or fun opportunities beyond school or work experience placements. The range of provisions was large and varied due to the very different nature of the pilot projects.

[Young person] had mentioned that she would like experience working in child care and W was able to search for a suitable place following some assessment. She was able to sustain the placement. She wasn't able to sustain school. Attendance was very variable. Over the summer holidays the nursery asked her to come back on a voluntary basis, which she agreed to. There have been a lot of changes in her care plan, sometimes very complicated but the girl has managed to maintain and W has continued to engage and the placement continues one year on. (Social Worker)

6.2.26 As well as impacting directly with the young people, many of the professionals to whom we spoke explained that a significant part of their work involved raising awareness of the needs of looked after children and young people, particularly within schools. Our interviewees spoke about providing basic information, raising awareness about the project and explaining their specialist roles. More specific examples of impact in this area included: helping to improve data transfer between education and social work; developing standardised procedures for informing schools when a pupil becomes looked after; provision of accurate and more detailed information about a pupil to aid with the planning process; keeping personal education plans up to date. We also heard of situations where increased awareness led school staff to have a better understanding of the circumstances of pupils who were looked after and as a consequence to 'go the extra mile' on their behalf.

The majority of staff within the secondary schools are doing their absolute best. Sometimes staff have been persuaded by team members not to exclude. Sometimes teachers don't have the insight into young people's lives. Guidance do but rarely share more than they have to... approaching a teacher and discussing home circumstances may help. (Specialist Support Teacher)

6.2.27 Raising awareness with parents, about school generally, about the value of education, and about opportunities offered directly by a project, or more widely, also featured in professionals' accounts of their work. Sometimes what had begun as a simple task of communication or liaison appeared to have resulted in achieving a deeper effect, and we learned about examples of projects 'easing the pressure' on families, parents feeling reassured by contact and even of parents seeking personal support from project staff or being referred for additional help via a project.

6.2.28 Although we have concentrated in this section on positive experiences that staff of projects shared with us, it is important to report that many interviews also featured comments about the difficulties in assessing impact. The practitioners we spoke to were typically working directly with one pupil, or a small number of pupils, and although they were aware of being part of a bigger project they did not always have a clear overview. In some cases, the project had been operational for a relatively short time, while in others we detected pessimism that successes gained would be maintained after the project ended, perhaps because the initial enthusiasm had dissipated or because key staff seconded to the project had returned to their substantive posts.

What makes it work?

6.2.29 During the interviews with professionals, we asked about the kinds of things that helped to achieve the aims of the pilot project, or allowed them to be successful in their part of the project. Despite the many real difficulties encountered, which we describe in the next section of this chapter, we were impressed by the great number of examples of positive experiences provided by the interviewees. The most important themes to emerge were those relating to effective strategies in working with children and young people, effective communication and partnership working, and the qualities and skills of staff.

6.2.30 A range of effective strategies was described by staff working in the pilots, including those related to flexibility and individualisation in approach - 'keeping the young person at the centre' - and the provision of a breadth of learning experiences.

6.2.31 Individualising the intervention approach was described in various ways, including tailoring education to meet individual needs, providing education without ignoring what else is happening in the life of a looked after child or young person, devising specific strategies to deal with attendance or exclusion issues, and making education relevant and meaningful.

For me, it's about engaging young people with education. We work with young people who are disengaged from education [for example] one young man in particular who had struggled to engage in any secondary education at all and who had been through various secondary schools and various support services, private education schools outwith the authority, and managed his last year here. That was an amazing achievement for this young man. (Social Worker)

The structure of the project allows continuity of experience in that it doesn't divorce education from the outside world. For a lot of young people, education is something that is done to them between the hours of nine o' clock and half past three. These young people have so much in their lives. (Depute Head Teacher – Secondary)

6.2.32 Being flexible can mean allowing a young person to choose the focus for learning, making use of unstructured learning opportunities, and varying the approach to take account of an individual's circumstances.

My role was to make sure that the pupil was in classes and giving that support in school. The pupil was really toiling with folio deadlines for standard grades. ... J worked with her in the learning room, and then in school I was taking her out of classes and [she was] writing essay after essay to get the folios done. Being in classes and being taught was just not working. She wouldn't come to school on the deadlines to avoid them. I helped her with study and to come up with a study planner. There were a few times when she opted out and she would come down to chat to me. Sometimes she worked in my office because she didn't want to be in class. It was about flexibility. (Principal Teacher of Guidance - Secondary)

6.2.33 The pilot projects were very different, with different emphases and targeted at different age groups, or a range of age groups. So the learning experiences offered were quite project-specific. Nevertheless, there was a general theme across the pilots about the importance of having a variety of learning experiences, in a range of settings, helping to make education appear meaningful, relevant and fun, particularly because the young people were often seriously disaffected through their previous bad experiences of school. This could mean teaching about life and vocational skills, providing work placement opportunities, ensuring that learning

emphasised achievement and not just attainment, and making use of outdoor education and other sporting or cultural experiences.

[The children's unit] were planning an educational visit...so the children downloaded maps of where they were going and for each place they were going they downloaded bits of information and had a wee guide book... It was using literacy in that real way, to find out information, but also creatively, because they were cutting and pasting and making a book... It wasn't: 'we're doing reading now.' It was doing an activity that [the children] are interested in, that functionally involves getting meaning from text, rather than a formal: 'this is reading'. (Educational Psychologist)

6.2.34 Making it work also involved communicating effectively with different groups of stakeholders: with the young people, with schools, with parents. Our interviewees also spoke about being the link between individuals or groups, using terms like 'mediator', 'buffer', 'bridge', 'key liaison'. Sometimes communication involved helping different agency partners gain a better understanding of each other's role, explaining professional practices or decoding jargon, developing good working relationships, setting up channels of communication or repairing those that had foundered.

...the success would have to be to have raised awareness about the issues of looked after children in the six secondary schools...and I have had feedback from a variety of staff members, including head teachers, to say that...simply by having somebody coming in and asking, you know, to work with the looked after children has had the overall effect and I think that is a positive thing. (Pilot Project Co-ordinator)

6.2.35 Many professionals we interviewed spoke about the importance of developing a repertoire of skills in communicating with children and young people. Having regular discussions with young people, listening to what they have to say, consulting with them, being encouraging and supportive, and offering advocacy were all aspects of communication which emerged in the interviews. Developing expertise in working with parents and carers was an important aspect of the role for some of our interviewees.

The team has direct links with parents or carers of the young people. Regular contact. Phone parents and can also go to homes. No young person would be involved in the project without parental or carer consent. Also they are invited, and always come, to support group meetings. The team are friendly faces. There isn't the same association as a school guidance or social worker. (Specialist Teacher)

6.2.36 An outcome of effective communication is good partnership working, which, unsurprisingly, was highlighted by many interviewees as being a key element in making their project successful. A number of the pilots indeed had strands which were about improving relationships between agencies, developing protocols for joint working and information sharing, and collaborative working.

6.2.37 Professional expertise and credibility was acknowledged to be important. For example, a member of staff with a teaching background might be more readily accepted by teachers in the schools with which a project was in collaboration. However, the qualities most commonly highlighted as important were more personal in nature, such as being sensitive to the circumstances of looked after children and their families, being able to develop good relationships with young people who could be challenging, and providing positive role models. It could be an advantage for a

project to be seen as separate from mainstream school or social work provision, and somehow not being regarded as 'authority figures'. In this interview extract a residential worker indicates that the qualities of the teacher were central to its success.

The principal teacher is a very clear thinking individual. She knows exactly what she wants to do, but she also has the rare ability to be able to get on with the young people and communicate with them in a way that someone wouldn't necessarily have time to do in a mainstream school class setting. I would say without a shadow of a doubt, even at this early stage, that we are seeing quite remarkable results. Youngsters who have profound difficulties attending regular schooling have been able to gain some education... (Assistant Manager, Residential Unit)

Problems or barriers encountered

6.2.38 Our interviewees also provided us with insights into a whole range of problems and barriers which they faced in making provisions for looked after children and young people, and in the operation of the pilot projects. These are grouped according to the following themes: those related to attendance and exclusion; those concerned with attitude to learning; organisational issues; standardised procedures; collaborative working; training; staff dissatisfaction with role or job clarity; sustainability and the limitations of resources.

6.2.39 One key aspect for many of the projects was that of the young people's ability or willingness to attend school or the project. Often, actually achieving that could be seen as a real bonus. Great efforts were made by project workers to encourage and physically achieve attendance.

At the beginning, when I started with him, I had to go and knock at the door and wake him up and he wasn't prepared to come. But after the first month I was giving him a lift, and now by the end of the project, he's coming himself and he can't wait to get out of the house and come and attend the project. (Project Worker)

6.2.40 In another project, the presence of a learning assistant as a 'constant' did make a difference to one young person who had a poor attendance rate.

...seems like he has good times with attendance and poor times; so that fluctuates and that makes it hard to have consistency. But I would say, on the whole, that I think having my constant presence he is now used to me...and he is a lot more accepting of it. (Learning Assistant)

6.2.41 In the same project, it was the persistence of the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) with individual pupils that had an impact on attendance. The time spent by the EWO was fairly intensive: collecting children each morning to take them to school; setting targets and rewards as a means of encouraging more independence; repeatedly calling at the house until there was a response. In one project, attendance was seen as a bonus and a 'double bonus if they actually do any work.'

6.2.42 Exclusion from mainstream school was a feature of the profile of many young people. For project workers, it was a frustration as it was felt that schools had so much to offer.

Some schools can do so much for them. R's school has done so much for R and he needs to get back to school. But some schools want to exclude them at the drop of a hat, for doing something small. Or they are coming home with a warning letter for something that we would see as minimal. (Residential Unit Worker)

6.2.43 Many of the young people found it difficult focusing on learning and a number of the pilot projects provided alternative activities which were deemed successful. For example, outdoor education, fishing and football were seen as motivating, activities that they were not 'pressured in'. However, where there were learning opportunities for core subjects such as mathematics or English, there was more resistance.

You offer the pupils these wonderful things which they are getting, and they will engage in them because they are motivated, they want to do them...But most of them, or the ones I have been involved with, have huge learning difficulties with the core subjects...but the reality is they are not going to progress in life if they do not achieve them...In maths he has huge psychological hang-ups. So what I feel is happening is that they are choosing to come and do the lovely things, the things they really enjoy doing. (Project Teacher)

6.2.44 However, it was not all negative. The support received resulted in one young person gradually gaining confidence in his ability to understand mathematics.

Before, he would never have done that stuff on the board...he said to me one day 'I know there is a pattern in the nine times table'. So I said to him yesterday 'Well, go and write it up for us, and you tell us'. So he did, but that's just chipping away, and we will get there, but it does take time. (Project Worker)

6.2.45 Problematic issues relating to the more organisational aspects of pilot projects also emerged as an important theme. Some projects experienced delays in starting up. These delays related to, in the main, the appointment of key project staff. One local authority had a delay of several months before the project co-ordinator was released from her school resulting in subsequent appointments to the project also being delayed.

...the major obstacle that we faced was time, because by the time I came into post in December, we had quite significant delays of actually getting people started. So we effectively lost the first term of the target group. We didn't actually have the learning assistants in post and in schools until late February, early March... (Project Co-ordinator)

6.2.46 In another pilot, the project team had been unsuccessful in recruiting an educational psychologist and 'had to use current psych (sic) staffing within the authority'. One pilot project staff member in another authority commented on the 'slow intake of pupils' due to the referral system put in place for the project. An interesting observation from a staff member related to recruitment of looked after young people and the perceived limitations placed upon the project.

I know it is about looked after children, so that's fine. But we're finding a big issue with finding, not young people who would benefit from the project; we've plenty of them, but [young people] who actually fulfil the criteria in terms of the looked after children. (Depute Head Teacher)

6.2.47 Problems of recruitment to the projects were described by a number of our interviewees. A project worker talked about 'fighting and having to ask for children...they should be coming flowing in to us.' He felt that the advertising (about the project) was inadequate and that little background information had been provided about the young people, whom he described as 'conscripts' rather than volunteers. His advice for future recruitment to similar projects reflected his frustration.

So, I think if you were going to 'grease the wheels', you would do that by publicising it to educational establishments. Tell the social worker exactly what we're looking for...Publicise that well and have a formal referral system to here. What we have been doing is the exact opposite. We've been phoning head teachers and saying: 'I see you've got a child. Do you think they would fit the project?'

6.2.48 Other delays were often of a more practical, but no less important, nature such as the identification of an individual who would 'sign off' expenses.

We had terrible trouble at the outset deciding who was signing for our badges to be changed, because we needed someone to take responsibility and nobody would do that. Who was going to sign our travel expenses claim forms because someone had to sign it? Nobody for the first two months, although we were running around like blue tailed flies, we didn't get any travel expenses because nobody would sign for them. (Educational Link Worker)

6.2.49 An example of a delay experienced in one project, which appeared to have a negative impact on continued participation, related to the use of a laptop computer for web-based lessons. Although the support from mentors was considered a great success, problems with logging on to the system meant young people were frustrated at times.

One of the girls was making the effort to travel over from college but when she got here, she couldn't get online using the laptop, so she got fed up of that. ... I can't get online to do that. I've been in touch [with IT] a few times to check that I'm doing everything right. Or, if you get logged on, nothing happens on the site. (Teacher)

6.2.50 Changes in data management systems used by local authorities to record details about the young people appeared to cause difficulties in some of the pilot projects. In one pilot, the education staff had to receive training before they could use the social work system and this delayed their access to information. In another pilot, social work and education were using different systems which resulted in inaccuracies.

The data within the education system...is not accurate or up to date. The data within the social work system is not accurate or up to date and it needs manual intervention to pull out that data and cross-check it. (Data Management Officer)

6.2.51 An important theme emerging from a number of the projects related to poor communication. This could result from a lack of understanding about the project's role. One project member recalled initial reticence from schools, indicating this was something that could have been avoided.

Well...it was very much a case of prove yourself. It was, justify your position. You find yourself doing that constantly and prove that you are any kind of value to us and

then if we think you're of any value...and then word would get around to once you had worked with one guidance teacher... (Educational Link Worker)

6.2.52 In another project, two learning assistants shared their experiences of engaging with schools during the project.

...I think the reception to the project from the high school was very difficult which made trying to get things sorted, organised...it was really hard to get something done about it because they all have their hierarchies and people don't like their territories stepped on and that kind of thing and that is something that would need to be tackled. (Learning Assistant 1)

Well, I have gone along to primary schools and they have wondered why I was there and I have had to explain it all to them and I have been turned away a couple of times. As it so happens, I have been told there is photocopying to be done. Sorry, I'm not there to be a photocopier. (Learning Assistant 2)

6.2.53 At times, it seemed as if pilot project workers had to fight to make their role clear to other professionals.

We would need more support from education and social work, and for them to be fully aware of what our roles are. We've battled from day one, really, until today to explain what we're doing, and people just don't know. It needs to be well advertised, it's been a big, big problem. Then people not wanting to speak to us, not realising that we have confidentiality too, we deal in the same manner. (Children's Service Worker)

I am still learning as I go about the whole looked after project thing. It wasn't pitched brilliantly through no fault of our principal teacher of support for learning and I think maybe our management team could have allocated more time to it. Were they made aware of its importance by city or the Executive? (Principal Teacher).

6.2.54 Another example of the need to be explicit in relation to roles was described by a work placement supervisor in one of the pilots who described the lack of clarity about boundaries regarding information sharing as something that caused uncertainty. The supervisor would have liked to have had more information about the young people's background. There was no 'written rule' about sharing information and the supervisor, while valuing the information passed on by the school, felt that it would have been helpful to have more detail.

6.2.55 Also related to lack of understanding was the stereotypical view that some professionals had about looked after children and young people. This point was illustrated by one teacher describing a scenario arising from discussions about using the 'need to know' approach to providing information about pupils who are looked after.

[Senior manager] tells staff about looked after status on a need to know basis. There is a tendency to tag children; the looked after child is nervous about being tagged and while some teachers can be sympathetic, a looked after child is not looking for sympathy. (Principal Teacher)

6.2.56 Communication of information about looked after children and young people in general was an issue, as described by a teacher seconded to a pilot project team, who felt that training should have come at an earlier stage.

I think that one of the things we would have done differently would have been to have the Learning with Care training early on and more widely available...I think it really impacted on teaching staff that were there. Knowing about the realities of the unit and what a kid was coping with by being in looked after care. (Teacher)

6.2.57 Poor communication between the various partners or agencies was cited by several of our interviewees. For example, in one pilot, there was frustration about the project apparently falling between education and social work, without clear lines of accountability, and as a consequence not receiving information at the appropriate time to support the young people in the project. In another pilot, a staff member recalled her experiences and talked about the need for better communication between services.

...an awful lot of the difficulties I'm encountering are caused by break-down in communication and by one service not really thinking that the other service needs to know; and it's that whole who needs to know business, you know, what do you tell people, how do you tell them and they become quite possessive of their knowledge. (Educational Link Worker)

6.2.58 One project worker spoke about the need for a two-way 'network of communication' once a young person was allocated to the project.

Once we get involved, there is a network of communication out from us, but not back in to us. We took that role and we knew we were taking that social-education role and we knew we had to work well between the two of them, but nobody else was doing it. That becomes exhausting after a while. ... Communication has been pretty bad. We've been pushing it but it's been bad. That's a big issue that needs to be dealt with, and before the project starts again (if it does). There is very little respect for this project. (Children's Services Worker)

6.2.59 Project staff often appeared to be relying on co-operation from schools and at times this was problematic. One staff member recalled the disappointment she experienced.

...being an outside agency, if you like, to a school, you are very dependent on the school cooperating with you and inviting you to meetings, keeping you posted actually, and I was disappointed a couple of times...it's a kind of communication problem... (Project Co-ordinator)

6.2.60 In one project, they referred to 'chasing schools for things like getting copies of IEPs (Individualised Educational Programmes) for kids because that's one of the things that they're supposed to have in place.' A project worker referred to the problem of resources and the suggestion that, for one school, looked after children were 'an after-thought'. This view was reinforced when the project received text books with torn pages from the secondary school.

6.2.61 In another project, the difficulty of attendance at crucial meetings was raised. When planning meetings were called at short notice it was often difficult for school staff to attend 'at the drop of a hat'. The school holidays could also present problems in communicating decisions to schools.

...and what I'm finding, like over the holidays, if young people come into the team over the school holidays, ...social work will have the meeting and make lots of arrangements, but don't pass it on to the education... (Educational Link Worker)

6.2.62 A lack of clarity about roles and, at times, about projects was identified, for example, leading to confusion between social workers and schools over where responsibilities lay in relation to learning plans and care plans. In one project, there was surprise at the apparent lack of direction in the project at the start.

...but it was this thing about nobody actually seeming to be terribly bothered. There was a distinct lack of support at that point. ... I think both of us expected things to be more established at the outset. You know, a clearer kind of job specification, if you like. Not this kind of: you do whatever it takes and make it up as you go along. (Educational Link Worker)

6.2.63 Many of our interviewees worried about whether work they had begun as part of a pilot would realistically be sustained after the end of the project. This was particularly the case where staff secondments had been used and workers had left the project to return to substantive posts. There was also disappointment that skills and knowledge developed during the life of the projects were not going to be fully utilised after.

I mean, if you're trying to, you know, create some kind of stability and, oh, March 2008, bye. ...it's a shame because I feel I've built up a huge bank of expertise and I feel I have a lot of knowledge. I feel I have a lot of information that probably not a lot of people have, because nobody's been in all these schools, nobody's going here, there and everywhere, and nobody's got such a knowledge of all the systems. (Learning Support Teacher)

Why is it when something good happens, they always take it away? (Teacher)

6.3 Perspectives of the young people and their parents or carers

6.3.1 This section of the chapter is based on the analysis of interviews with 51 young people and 14 parents or foster carers of those young people. Interviews with the young people were conducted either individually or in small groups, as judged appropriate in the arrangements made by pilot project co-ordinators. Interviews were usually conducted informally, in a classroom, meeting room or children's unit sitting room. Mostly they were conducted in question and answer style or by discussion. Interviewers had prompt cards for use in stimulating discussion, if required. A number of interviews were conducted in a very informal way: in one case while playing a game of pool with a young person; in another while playing a computer game. Interviews with parents/carers were generally conducted individually in straight question and answer style.

Perspectives of the young people

6.3.2 We have not continued the practice of giving details of the interviewee in brackets following quotations in this section as an additional safeguard for protecting confidentiality.

6.3.3 This section is structured around three headings which were used to group the data that emerged from the interviews. These are: perceptions of impact; difficulties encountered; and recommendations for future projects.

Perceptions of impact

6.3.4 In relation to the impact of the pilot projects, two positive aspects emerged strongly from the interviews with young people. These were: firstly, the positive way in which they viewed themselves, their relationships and their enhanced social skills; and, secondly, their perceptions of improved educational outcomes, attitude to learning and achievement.

6.3.5 Some young people spoke about having gained increased self-awareness, confidence and pride. For example, one talked about being able to recognise that she did not need support in school work but did need help with her behaviour. Another commented about how his self esteem was 'way down'. He acknowledged the assessment of his friend, interviewed at the same time, who said: 'Well, you put yourself down all the time.' Another young person indicated that the way he was treated had an impact on him.

...the way that they talk to you, it gives you more confidence to speak to people and that. To speak up, say what you think...I mean, that's changed a lot of me because I was quite shy before but now I came here, I say what I think. I can talk to people I meet and that.

6.3.6 One young person, when asked whether involvement in the project had helped her enjoy school more, commented:

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

6.3.7 Confidence was not always related to achieving in the educational sense.

I've got confidence on my own. I had to have confidence today because I had to ask out this girl I fancied. My mates said 'Ask her out', so I did. I went up in the middle of school and asked her, which was pretty scary but I had to do that. I got a 'yes'.

6.3.8 Many of the young people we interviewed were clear that the experiences of the project had enhanced their personal and interpersonal skills. Some of this change was reflected in improved relationships with teachers at school and with other adults. One young person stated that she got on better: '...with more of the adults - the teachers. People that want to help'. Another, a member of the same project, felt that he had better relationships with the family 'through making more effort at school.' Another talked about how his perspective on people with disabilities had changed as a result of his role in the project.

I never had the confidence to approach people, people like that, 'cause I'm not, I've not known any disabled. I wouldn't have known how to speak to them. But since I have been [working in the project with disabled young people] and I've been in their company, I've understood that I know they can be normal. They are normal people.

6.3.9 Several young people interviewed said they felt they had achieved and improved academically. The project workers were seen as supportive and encouraging: 'The project staff are more laid back; they encourage, for example, tell you how it will help your future.' One girl proudly announced that she had 'actually got work in my English folio now'. Another girl, in the same project, moved from the bottom section to the top section in maths. She commented: 'You can go from the bottom of the class to the top of it, just with extra practice.' One young person, who had one to one support in class, spoke proudly of how she was then able to work just as hard in class without that support.

Yeah, because I had history today and English today and science today, and I worked hard in them [without my tutor].

6.3.10 Another young person, participating in an out of school project, spoke of his pride in achieving in maths. He said that he was enjoying his learning more and that he might not have 'gone up a level' in mainstream school: 'I'm concentrating here and wee fools are not annoying me. I'm not being argumentative.' Indeed, several young people spoke of the support they received with their academic work and how alternatives to mainstream education worked for them.

Better than if I was in mainstream school because there's more support. Whereas there's too many other people in a mainstream school for the teachers. At this project, I've achieved, actually managing to do some school work.
[The mentor]...gives you time to let off steam whenever you want. [They make it] stress free.

6.3.11 For many of the young people positive experiences were related to the more social aspects of the pilot projects which were regarded as helpful and motivating. Outdoor activities such as mountain biking, canoeing and rock-scrambling, sports activities, working with younger children and meeting new friends were cited as positive elements. The flexible nature of the learning environment and the learning process were seen as strengths. Several young people talked about the project workers' attitudes as being pivotal in the success of the project.

...it's totally different, 'cause they're treating me like I'm a person. ...here they listen to what you've got to say and they're taking it into account and they try and support you in everything you need.

I've probably learned more here than I have at school because at school I don't like it when teachers tell me what to do. I just won't listen at all and won't do the work. [Here] the [tutor] tells me that I've got as much time as I need so I just take my time and get it done.

Good to have someone to chat to about things

6.3.12 After hearing about the range of activities that one young person was involved in, a researcher asked if he thought the project made him feel quite special. He responded: 'We're treated like kings.' Several young people said their attendance improved and that they had had fewer exclusions from school. One young person spoke about how the project had helped him reduce his 'skiving' and stay in school for longer. Another, who had been out of school for more than a year, spoke thoughtfully about how she had been helped to return gradually.

We started out for half an hour, then an hour and I'm taking two classes a day at the moment, which is pretty good because before, I was having panic attacks. It feels like I've been there for years and I know them all. I'm just getting on with it. But the first steps are the hardest ones.

6.3.13 Several young people felt that their behaviour had improved as a result of the project work. One young person had a 'contract' between herself, her mother and the school. This allowed her to visit her mother if her attendance and behaviour remained stable. The contract conditions have never had to be revoked: 'Now I am being good for the sake of being good, but at the start the only reason I was being good was just because of this stuff' [the contract].

6.3.14 The following reflections were made by a young person who believed that the project, and new friendships, had changed his attitude to dealing with conflict.

I've made quite a lot of friends, when before, I didn't have that many because I was fighting. That's what made me feel in with the crowd now, 'cause I've got heaps more friends. The people I don't get on with, I just ignore them. If they try to start fights with you, you just ignore it and walk away. I've learned that from past experiences.

Difficulties encountered

6.3.15 In relation to difficulties encountered, some young people commented on the potential for being stigmatised. Some referred to the embarrassment of being part of something different and being perceived by others as being different, yet: 'We are just the same as other people'. One young person suggested that being taken out of class made him stand out.

It was annoying when that woman kept coming into classes and taking us out. Then going back in, everyone said 'Who's that, who's that' who's that? It would be better if they took people when they're not in class time to talk to them.

6.3.16 In one project, two young people talked about the difficulties they perceived. These related to the number of people requiring help and, more interestingly, the rationale behind selecting young people to participate in the project.

Homework club is boring. There are too many of us to get help. Boredom makes us misbehave. The older ones are left to themselves because the young ones are getting help.

[Those who plan] ...should check records and if they don't have a problem, then don't make the young people do the project. Young people should choose if and when they want to join in, like before exams.

Recommendations for future projects

6.3.17 Some of the young people we interviewed made very thought-provoking recommendations for future projects of this kind. One interviewee thought the project would be beneficial to others like him, in achieving their potential.

...and also they've expected me to do it and that's spurred me on 'cause I want to prove that they're right and I can achieve.

6.3.18 One young person spoke about his own experiences and offered some advice for teachers and other professionals: 'Give me a chance to speak, because every time I try to speak, they say 'Oh, I don't care what you do.' Another suggested:

I would say to teachers, don't push me as hard as you can. Support me....I was a wee s*** and as soon as I hit primary six everything just started going wrong in my life. But my head master supported me. He stopped me going AWOL. [He] just wouldn't give up on me.

6.3.19 To conclude this section of the chapter, we quote moving and thought-provoking words of a young person considering things that might make a difference.

[Having] extra time with someone. Getting to know someone, getting to trust them and then being able to let go. Time to adjust to the idea of going back. Stop bribing and threatening with what you are going to end up like, because we are too young to care. We need extra support and help if we're struggling. Using activities that a person likes is the best way to educate them. I like drama and you could do all sorts of things connected to drama, like connecting it to English. People find school really boring but people learn more when they are having fun. ... Talk to people, get to know what they're like. Get to know their strengths. You'll need to concentrate on their weaknesses, but don't push their weaknesses too much. School teachers could learn a lot from us kids, like we can learn a lot from them. If we work together, I believe that we can both come to a conclusion.

Perspectives of the parents or foster carers

6.3.20 The perspectives of the parents/carers emerging from an analysis of the interviews were grouped under three main headings: impact of the project; particular strengths; and problems encountered.

6.3.21 In terms of impact of the pilot projects, positive psychological outcomes for their children and positive educational outcomes were the most important themes. Some of our interviewees also identified personal psychological benefits. Positive psychological outcomes for the children and young people highlighted by the parents/carers included increased confidence, improvements in sense of self, and also social benefits, such as gaining friends.

He's a fantastic boy and it's ever since [the pilot project]: because they've gied him confidence. He thought he was a nothin', d'ya know what I mean?...I was a drug addict for seven years...he probably never hud the support of me. But now [named a project worker] has been supporting me and supporting [son]. (Parent)

6.3.22 Altered constructions of identity featured in the accounts of some of the parents, as in 'realising he's a good person', or 'ridding himself of his bad image', or 'finding himself again'. Improvements in self-image were expressed in improved coping strategies, positive attitudes and increased aspiration.

All over, he's able to talk for himself. When I first met him he wouldn't talk, but he's happy to talk to everybody now, and very positively... He's more able to cope even

when there is difficult circumstances because he's still going through quite a lot, but he's not letting it affect school work and behaviour. (Foster Carer)

He might have fallen back into, 'I don't want to come', and that. But he's been changing his sort of life style, since he came here... He was never a cheeky bairn. I'm glad he's no. But his attitude was something of concern, his attitude towards old people in the street or tenements, in company. But it's all good. (Parent)

6.3.23 Positive outcomes specifically related to education included improvements in attendance and returning to school after periods of non-attendance or exclusion, being enabled to stay on in school beyond age 16, improved relationships with teachers and being noticeably happier.

[Young person] went from not going to school at all for nine months (missed third year). For the first week we got him back into school, apart from the first two days, where on the first day I dropped him off at school and he just went missing for the day, and the second day he went missing for two periods, but from that he's went every day, every period and got 1s. (Foster Carer)

In this six month period [child 1] has come back to finding school fun again. He was under so much pressure. He's the eldest and he saw so much of what went on, whereas [child 2] has coped completely differently: he just floats into school and gets on with enjoying himself and gets down to his work. [Child 1] went through a really emotional time and tried to blame me for destroying his world. (Parent of two children involved in pilot project)

6.3.24 Some of our interviewees were very clear about the benefits accruing to them from involvement with pilot project activity, either because happier, more settled children helped to reduce strains on parents, or because they had been personally supported.

She [support worker] never forgets about me, even if it's just to phone me up for whatever. She phones me about once a week to see if everything's all right, whatever. She got me a freezer, she got me a rug, just pure nice things. (Parent)

...I've spent a lot of time with his reading and homework and helping him and he's come a long way. His anxiety's gone...So it's been uphill with his learning, to really encourage and push him forward and showing him fun things. [Project teacher] has been great in that sense...it's about finding activities where there's not so much pressure about 'do this work, do that work'. Doing fun activities... [Project teacher] also got us passes for swimming at [a club]. That's absolutely brilliant because it gives us a little something extra to look forward to. We go swimming every day. There was a gardening project in the school also that I've been doing with them, building the garden. (Parent)

Direct contact with [specialist teacher] makes you feel involved. Doesn't feel like [specialist teacher] and the school are taking over. You get your say. Quite different from my previous experience. Has benefited me through the effect on [daughter] – she is a lot more tolerant of her brother. Happier house. (Parent)

6.3.25 The strengths of pilot projects highlighted by parents/carers included perceived benefits for themselves and for their children, and developing relationships or having improved communication with project workers or schools.

I'm really pleased that it's there [project]. It makes you feel that bit more confident. He's doing better now. Mr [specialist teacher] is really consistent and we're working together now to get him through the exams. (Parent)

6.3.26 Problems described by the parents or carers fell into two categories: those which concerned the young people; and those more related to 'the system'. However, the problems highlighted were not usually specifically related to the pilot projects, but were either more generally those experienced in relation to social work and education agencies, or were those which involvement in the projects had helped to ameliorate. In fact, unsurprisingly, the parents or carers who agreed to participate in interviews were all positive about the pilot projects.

6.3.27 Problems concerning young people and their families included behavioural difficulties and a lack of stability in their lives. Young people can lack stability as a result of changes in care placement, and even when they do not change school, difficulties can emerge in school due to the other upheavals. How schools and teachers react can make a big difference.

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

6.3.28 The systemic problems described by the parents or carers resemble those identified by professionals, such as 'education and social work are not working to the same plan', feeling that the system creates barriers to accessing support and not being 'kept in the loop'. One carer spoke about the system 'crowding' a young person, while another made the point that too much support can be counterproductive because it can be confusing.

She meets too many people at the moment, psychologist and such, and I'm still waiting for a medical. I'd to take her down to the health centre for a medical with a woman doctor that we've never met before. She had a file that thick on [young person] and the first question she asks [young person] is, 'How often do you see your mum and dad?' Now, her mum and dad's been dead for years. (Relative Carer)

6.4 Conclusions

6.4.1 The aim of the fieldwork was to consider the impact of the pilot projects from the perspectives of the young people, their parents/carers and the professionals working directly with them.

6.4.2 In terms of impact, the most important theme emerging from the interviews with the practitioners was a general desire to increase achievement, while providing support for young people, their parents and carers and schools. Practitioners also emphasised the importance of stability and a sense of normality for looked after children and young people, as the basis of achievement in education.

6.4.3 The practitioners also highlighted the importance of helping looked after children and young people to develop social and life skills through the creative use of a variety of learning experiences, including outdoor activities and more informal

learning opportunities. Using a variety of approaches is important in meeting the varied needs of young people.

6.4.4 The practitioners said that involvement in the pilot activities had a positive impact on attendance at school. This view is generally supported by the quantitative data analysis (see Chapter 7).

6.4.5 Involvement in activities designed specifically to support education does appear to make a difference in a relatively short period of time. This observation is also supported by the quantitative data analysis.

6.4.6 In terms of effectiveness, individualising the approach (keeping the child at the centre), being flexible, including involving the young person in choosing the focus of learning, and providing a breadth of learning opportunities, appear to be important strategies.

6.4.7 Practitioners highlighted the importance of good communication between professionals, and between agencies, as being crucial to the success of a project, and, conversely, poor communication being responsible for problems. In some pilots, difficulties were related to the inadequacies of data management systems, a point that is also supported by the quantitative data analysis.

6.4.8 The young people valued the fact that the adults who worked with them showed belief in their capacity to achieve, treated them with respect and encouraged their autonomy. They spoke warmly about the relationships they had developed and evidently felt that the adults did care about them.

6.4.9 It was clear from our interviews with parents and carers, that they derived immense support indirectly from interventions designed to improve the achievement of their children. They also indicated that involvement in pilot activities had made a positive impact on the self-esteem and confidence of their children.

6.4.10 Some projects experienced delays in starting up, mostly related to staff recruitment, and particularly where internal secondments were involved. Where a range of professionals, from different agencies, are involved in working with looked after children and young people, it is not only important to be clear about roles and boundaries, but also, it is essential to have a sound strategy for working together.

6.4.11 Project workers, in particular, indicated their concern about the sustainability of the work of the pilot projects, once the specific funding had ended.

7 IMPACT OF THE PILOTS – QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 This chapter contains an account of the quantitative data collection and analysis. The findings presented here are intended to answer Research Question 2: What, if any, was the impact of the pilot projects on quantitative measures, including school attendance, exclusion and attainment? The chapter describes the study population, and there is both interpretation of the data and discussion of the issues arising from the difficulties experienced in collecting accurate data about looked after children and young people. In the interests of clarity this chapter summarises the main findings, while more detail is provided in additional data tables provided in Appendix 4.

7.2 Methodology

7.2.1 The aim was to collect 'baseline' quantitative data for children and young people for the academic year prior to the start of the pilots, i.e. 2005-06, and then to follow up by collecting 'outcome' data for session 2006-07. This could never be a perfectly designed study, since different pilot projects were very different in terms of purpose, target population, design and scale. They had different start and end dates, ran for different lengths of time and some experienced delays in starting.

7.2.2 There is, of course, a very important caveat in respect of what measurable improvements it is reasonable to expect within such a relatively short period of time. Significant improvements can be achieved in attendance and attainment when individual children respond to intensive support. However, many of the young people targeted by pilot projects would have had rather complex support needs, compounded by many years of neglect. Also, some of the projects were based on activities designed to make improvements in more indirect ways, such as through personal education planning, development of the planning and monitoring systems, or by professional training.

7.2.3 We prepared notes of guidance and a pro-forma for both baseline and outcome stages, and invited pilot project co-ordinators to record the required data and return these to the research team. The recording sheet asked for details of age, gender, looked after category, attendance, exclusion, and attainment levels on 5-14 National Assessments and on national qualifications.

7.2.4 Additionally, at the outcome stage, approximately one year later, project co-ordinators were asked to indicate a measure of involvement in pilot-related activities for each participant, from no involvement, through some or moderate involvement, to high involvement.

7.2.5 We also asked pilot project co-ordinators to arrange for young people aged over 10 years to complete the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and the Harter & Harter Self-perception / Self-esteem Questionnaire at the outcome stage, since there was an opportunity to describe a fairly large population of looked after young people on these measures and because we wanted to compare the results with those reported in previous studies. Ideally we would have liked to have

both before and after measures, but as the research began after most of the projects this was not possible. In the event, the organisational difficulties encountered meant that the number of questionnaires returned was insufficient for particularly meaningful analysis.

7.2.6 We experienced considerable difficulty in getting the data requested from some of the pilots, especially in relation to outcome data. Typically this was because project leaders did not have immediate access to attendance and attainment data, and were dependent on co-operation from another branch of the local authority for which this work was not necessarily a priority. The difficulties experienced have important implications for understanding the issues raised about the educational progress of looked after children and young people in general, and more specifically in relation to offering guidance about data collection for monitoring purposes within local authorities. They may also have implications for the reliability of the data. These points are elaborated in the following section.

7.3 Data collection issues

7.3.1 The process of collecting the required data was generally problematic, though the particular difficulties encountered varied. Sometimes this was a function of the scale of the project. Whereas it was relatively easy to collect data in a single-strand project with a small number of children, in projects potentially aimed at all looked after children within a local authority there were significant challenges. In one project, for example, baseline data could not initially be provided as the local authority had transferred to a new electronic management system and historic information could not be accessed centrally. The information was subsequently provided by manual methods directly from schools, and it was submitted after we had received the pilot's outcome data. In another authority, which had experienced a number of changes of co-ordinator, outcome data were provided only with difficulty and with considerable help from the research team. These difficulties reinforce previous research findings about problems in tracking looked after children and young people (Jacklin, Robinson, & Torrance, 2006).

7.3.2 The problems encountered fell roughly into two categories. Some projects had clearly underestimated the degree of negotiation and planning required to identify the young people and output the required data. This category of problem included lack of clarity about the deployment of resources to extract the data where this was expected to be extremely time-consuming. In most cases, to do this successfully required the co-operation of administrative staff invariably working in different sections or departments, and project staff in some pilots experienced difficulties in getting this work prioritised.

7.3.3 The second category of problem relates to methodological issues which emerged and which have implications for reporting on the accuracy of the data. The research was useful in uncovering a number of difficulties. One included recording errors, such as discrepancies between records for the same child held on different databases (typically social work and education) within the same local authority, and incorrect attendance and attainment information. Sometimes the explanation appeared to lie in a failure to record information, particularly when a child had moved home and school placements. Where we found examples of missing 5-14 National Assessment levels it was not always possible to establish whether this was

due to a failure to record the data or because the child had not been assessed, although authorities were asked to check and clarify this point where possible.

7.3.4 A number of the pilots found that the process of collecting the data alerted staff to particular discrepancies in relation to recording attendance. The problem appears to have been most acute where looked after pupils were involved in off-site education, on either a part-time or a full-time basis. This problem is best understood through the observations of a manager in one pilot project:

We also quickly realised that a pupil can be attending on a very part-time basis (as little as two hours weekly) and their attendance is registered as 100%. There is a school of thought that the pupil is attending to the best of their ability and 100% is an appropriate figure, but, it gives a very misleading impression of the amount of education this pupil is receiving, and the more worrying thing is that an undesirable minimum of attendance might easily go unnoticed by those who are not in direct contact with the pupil. There are not the same statutory requirements to review the case at regular intervals for those who are looked after at home and something like this could go on for a longer period than anticipated at its conception for our most vulnerable looked after children. There appears to be no standard agreement about how to record the attendance of pupils who participate in full-time off-site education, even where a child remains on the roll of a mainstream school.

7.3.5 In one local authority, project staff found that practice varied between schools. In one school 100% attendance was recorded, in another the child was assumed to be absent 100% of the time, while in yet another no attendance data were entered, despite the off-site project having supplied the information to the school every week. In one project, workers found examples of a failure to record National Units¹⁴ achieved by young people while attending alternative education.

7.3.6 The number of young people for whom these kinds of recording errors have occurred is likely to be a minority of the study population (typically older children participating in out of school projects), but the lack of clarity supports a more general conclusion that there is a need to be more explicit about how attendance and achievement should be recorded in situations where looked after children attend school part-time and/or participate in some form of off-site educational provision. This is clearly an important aspect of the corporate parent responsibility.

7.3.7 Despite the difficulties experienced in obtaining data returns, we have no reason to doubt the accuracy of the information received from pilots, a view that is reinforced by comparisons of our study population with previously published government data (see discussions later in this chapter). A matched data set of over 600 looked after young people, is a relatively large study population, though particular analyses have inevitably been carried out on smaller sub-sets of the population.

7.3.8 The combined effects of the small numbers in some projects, spread across age groups, and missing outcome data meant that we were unfortunately unable to carry out the quantitative analysis by type of activity.

¹⁴ In National Qualifications, a course is made up of three units. Units are recorded individually so that a candidate who does not achieve an entire course may gain credit for the component units. For information about the structure of awards, refer to the National Qualifications area of the SQA website at: <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/3.html>

7.4 Description of the study population

Data collected

7.4.1 We received from the 18 pilot projects information about 722 individual young people¹⁵ in total across both baseline and outcome data collection stages. However, when the baseline and outcome data were matched on individual identity codes a total of 636 young people were represented within the matched dataset.

7.4.2 Both baseline and outcome datasets had missing data. Fife (40 young people) indicated at the baseline stage that they would be unable to provide outcome data because the focus of their project was on developing systems and also the administrative resource allocated to the project was not going to be available at the outcome stage. It was reported that 46 young people (across nine pilots) had withdrawn from the programmes. Where a reason for withdrawal was noted, this was typically one of the following: 'young person no longer in the looked after category'; or, 'moved to another local authority'; or, 'left school'.

Characteristics of the young people

7.4.3 Table 2 below shows details of the young people in the matched dataset across 17 pilots by age bands. The age distribution in the population differed in some respects from the distribution of all looked after children and young people nationally in Scotland. While the proportion at the early secondary school stage in the study population was in line with the national profile, there was a smaller proportion at primary school-age and a higher proportion at the older end of the age spectrum in the study population.

7.4.4 There were 280 girls (44%), 349 boys (55%) and seven cases (1%) for whom gender was not reported. The gender proportions in the study population are exactly in line with the national profile.

7.4.5 Table 3 below shows the care category of the young people in the population studied. The different figures for the total study population between the two tables (i.e. 614 in Table 2 and 624 in Table 3) arise as a result of data missing from pilot returns. More details are provided in the notes under the tables and in page footnotes.

¹⁵ In this section of the report we have used the term 'young people' to refer to all ages in place of the more accurate form 'children and young people' for convenience.

Table 2: Age and stage of participants for each pilot in matched data set

Local Authority	Age bands ¹⁶ (N and % ¹⁷ in each authority)										Total for each authority (100%)
	5-8		9-10		11-12		13-14		15+		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Aberdeen City	9	(32)	2	(7)	4	(14)	5	(18)	8	(29)	28
Dumfries & Galloway					17	(71)	2	(8)	5	(21)	24
Dundee City									5	(100)	5
East Ayrshire							39	(44)	50	(56)	89
East Lothian			5	(39)	3	(23)	1	(8)	4	(31)	13
Edinburgh					20	(100)					20
Falkirk	17	(22)	12	(15)	15	(19)	12	(15)	20	(26)	76
Glasgow City	3	(2)	8	(5)	12	(8)	40	(27)	84	(57)	147
Highland	6	(13)	2	(4)	12	(26)	19	(40)	8	(17)	47
Midlothian	1	(7)					6	(43)	7	(50)	14
North Ayrshire							15	(88)	2	(12)	17
Renfrewshire	6	(38)	3	(19)	5	(31)	2	(13)			16
South Ayrshire	2	(10)	2	(10)	1	(5)	8	(38)	8	(38)	21
South Lanarkshire	1	(4)	4	(17)	7	(30)	5	(22)	6	(26)	23
Stirling									8	(100)	8
West Dunbartonshire									8	(100)	8
West Lothian	24	(36)	9	(13)	13	(19)	10	(15)	2	(3)	58
Total and % of population	69	(11)	47	(8)	109	(17)	164	(26)	225	(37)	614

Fife not included. The table total does not add up to 636 (total of the matched dataset) because 11 children were pre-5 and for 11 no age was provided.

¹⁶ Age quoted is the age at baseline, i.e. in 2005-06.

¹⁷ Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number and therefore they may not add up to 100%.

Table 3: Care category¹⁸ of participants in each pilot

Local Authority	Care category (N and % ¹⁹ in each authority)								Total for each authority (100%)		
	At home		Residential		Foster		Kinship ²⁰			Combination and other ²¹	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		n	%
Aberdeen City	21	(75)	6	(21)					1	(4)	28
Dumfries & Galloway	12	(60)	1	(5)	6	(30)	1	(5)			20
Dundee City	2	(40)	3	(60)							5
East Ayrshire	60	(72)	4	(5)	19	(23)					83
East Lothian	6	(46)	4	(31)	3	(23)					13
Edinburgh	10	(50)	2	(10)	4	(20)	4	(20)			20
Falkirk	2	(3)	8	(10)	56	(72)	12	(15)			78
Glasgow City	55	(37)	26	(17)	44	(30)			24	(16)	149
Highland	26	(55)	10	(21)	8	(17)	1	(2)	2	(4)	47
Midlothian	1	(7)	10	(71)	3	(21)					14
North Ayrshire	8	(47)	6	(35)	3	(18)					17
Renfrewshire	2	(13)	1	(6)	1	(6)	11	(69)	1	(6)	16
South Ayrshire			13	(62)	8	(38)					21
South Lanarkshire	2	(7)	24	(86)	2	(7)					28
Stirling	8	(100)									8
West Dunbartonshire	7	(88)			1	(12)					8
West Lothian	20	(29)	4	(6)	15	(22)			30	(44)	69
Total and % of population	242	(39)	122	(20)	173	(28)	29	(5)	58	(9)	624

Fife not included. The table total does not add up to 636 (total of the matched dataset) because the care category was not provided for 12 young people.

¹⁸ Care category quoted here relates to data for 2006-07.

¹⁹ Percentages have been rounded to nearest whole number and therefore may not add up to 100%.

²⁰ Children recorded as being in 'kinship care' are considered to be looked after away from home. As this number is small, for later analysis they have been combined with 'foster care'.

²¹ One young person was recorded as being in more than one care setting; three were no longer looked after, but continued in the programme. Glasgow included 24 young people not 'looked after' but who were considered to be at risk and had therefore been included in the activities. West Lothian similarly included 30 children not technically 'looked after'.

7.4.6 In terms of care category, the study population closely resembles the national profile in the proportion of young people looked after at home (39% compared with 43% for all Scotland) and in foster care settings (28% compared with 29%). The proportion in kinship care considerably under-represents the national profile (5% compared with 15%), while the proportion in residential care is over-representative of the national profile (20% compared with 12%)²². The young people in residential care in the study population were all living in children units or houses in the community and none was living in a residential school or in secure care.

SDQ and Harter Questionnaires

7.4.7 As reported in the introduction to this chapter, we were relatively unsuccessful in achieving the desired level of questionnaire returns. Since the questionnaires were administered at a single point they could only ever yield descriptions of the study population towards the end of the pilot projects, rather than provide an indication of the value added by participation. We outline below a summary of the data received, but this information needs to be approached with caution because of the relatively small numbers involved and because it undoubtedly represent a skewed population.

7.4.8 Pilot project co-ordinators were asked to arrange for young people aged 10 years and above to complete the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and the Harter and Harter Self-perception/Self-esteem Questionnaire. Based on estimates about the numbers who might realistically complete questionnaires, we hoped for a potential sub-set of 390 young people. In the event, this proved to be overly optimistic. We received returns from nine of the pilots: 67 SDQs (37 girls and 28 boys), i.e. 17% of the potential sub-set (11% of the matched dataset), and 79 Harter questionnaires (43 girls and 28 boys), i.e. 20% of the potential sub-set (12% of the matched dataset).

7.4.9 The questionnaires were more likely to have been completed by young people living in residential care and foster care settings than those looked after at home. The SDQs were more likely to have been completed by young people who had high involvement in pilot activities, and therefore the results might be expected to present a more positive picture of the young people's wellbeing than would be typical of the overall study population. The Harter questionnaire, however, was completed by roughly even numbers of young people at all three levels of involvement.

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

7.4.10 The SDQ is a brief screening questionnaire which gives an indication of emotional wellbeing. It comprises 25 items on five sub-scales, each with five items. Respondents rate themselves on statements according to whether they consider them to be 'not true', 'a bit true' or 'definitely true'. The scores for individuals are then analysed to indicate 'low needs', 'some needs' and 'high needs'.

²² See Children Looked After Statistics 2006-07 at:
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/11/27100107/0>

7.4.11 The scores on the SDQ scales for the sub-population obtained are presented in Table 8 in Appendix 4. The results show that, on average, the group is towards the 'low need' end of the scale. For example, the results for the 'pro-social' scale showed that 81% of the sub-population of 67 young people had low needs, compared with only 9% who had high needs. Averaging the four 'difficulties' scales, 45% of a sub-population of 58 young people rated themselves as having high needs, compared with 31% who had low needs. More young people rated themselves as having conduct problems and some indication of hyperactive behaviour than had social or peer issues.

7.4.12 There were no statistically significant differences in terms of age, gender and looked after category, with the exception of gender in relation to emotional symptoms. Girls rated themselves in a way that suggested greater emotional need than boys, but with mean scores still within the low need range. (The proportions of respondents falling into each category of need are shown in Table 9 in Appendix 4.)

7.4.13 The SDQ also invites respondents to indicate whether they have difficulties in one or more of the areas of emotions, concentration, behaviour, or being able to get on with other people, and whether these difficulties are minor, definite or severe. Thirty-eight out of 67 respondents (57%) indicated that they had some difficulty, though in most cases these were rated as minor. This reflects the results in the first section of the questionnaire, with 55% registering some need/high need on the total difficulties score. For 26 (68%) of the young people, the difficulties had been present for more than a year. The perceived difficulties were more likely to cause problems in school and family contexts than with friendships and in leisure activities, a finding that is consistent with the young people's self-ratings on the scales (see Table 10 in Appendix 4).

7.4.14 How do these findings compare with those in other studies? A previous study of 41 looked after children in one English local authority found that 65% rated themselves, on average, across the four difficulties scales, as having low needs (compared with 45% in our sub-set), while 15% self-rated as having high needs (compared with 31% in our sub-set). That study also found a mean rating for total difficulties, measured by self-ratings on the SDQ, of 12.6, while in our sub-population the mean rating was 15.9 (Richards, Wood, & Ruiz-Calzada, 2006). The mean for the general population is 10.3.

7.4.15 Richards *et al.* also found that teachers' and carers' ratings of difficulties were higher than those of the young people themselves. This indicates that despite our sub-set being skewed towards those who had higher involvement in projects their self-ratings of perceived difficulties do appear to be somewhat high. Whilst we should be cautious in drawing conclusions, this finding does support previous work indicating concerns about the poor mental health of looked after children and young people (Meltzer, Gatward, Corbin, Goodman, & Ford, 2003).

Harter Self-Esteem Questionnaire

7.4.16 The Harter questionnaire is an instrument designed to measure self-esteem in children and young people. It invites respondents to rate themselves on how like or unlike they are to certain propositions expressed as opposites, such as 'some kids find it hard...' versus 'other kids find it easy...'. The questionnaire has two underlying principles: that self-esteem has several components; and that young

people's evaluation of their self-esteem is based on a comparison of their attributes with those of their peers.

7.4.17 Responses are rated and added to create scores on the following scales: scholastic performance, social acceptance, athletic performance, physical appearance, behaviour, and global self-esteem.

7.4.18 The detailed results are shown in Table 11 in Appendix 4. We used a version of the questionnaire that was revised for use in a large study of Scottish schoolchildren (Hoare, Elton, Greer, & Kerley, 1993). The results of that study therefore provide a useful comparison. Each item in the questionnaire is scored on a scale from 1 to 4, so the mid-point is 2.5; a higher score indicates greater self-esteem. Hoare *et al.* present their results in a table showing mean scores by age groups and for males and females. Means are reported for the five scales and also for 'global' self-esteem. While mean scores vary by age, they fall within a range of 2.75 (for girls in S4) to 3.06 (for boys in P5). Our sub-set gave a global mean score of 2.65 for all boys and girls of all ages. Girls in our sub-set scored lower than boys (mean of 2.58, compared with 2.74) consistent with the findings of Hoare *et al.*

7.4.19 These findings are indicative of lower self-esteem among the looked after population, again consistent with previous findings which highlight poor mental wellbeing in this group of young people.

7.5 The impact of the pilot projects

7.5.1 The following sections present findings from analyses of the matched dataset. We examine the value added by young people's involvement in the pilot projects, in relation to data about attendance, exclusion and attainment.

Attendance and exclusion

7.5.2 Tables 4 and 5 together describe attendance at, and exclusion from, school of the children in the matched data set during the school year 2006-2007, i.e. the year of involvement in the project for most of the young people. Data were not available for 85 young people in relation to attendance and for the number of days excluded, and for 94 in relation to the number of times excluded.

7.5.3 As Table 4 shows, a large variation in attendance is evident among the young people in the study population. The mean of 81% is somewhat lower than the mean attendance reported for looked after children and young people nationally in Scotland in 2007 (87%) and is also very considerably lower than the (93%) mean for pupils who are not looked after²³.

²³ Scottish Government (2007) Attendance and Absence in Scottish Schools 2006-07: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/12/11160723/0>

Table 4: Attendance and exclusion

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
% attendance in year during programme	551	1.18	100.00	81.2	22.6
number of days excluded in year during programme	551	0	91.5	3.5	11.0
number of times excluded in year during programme	542	0	9	0.63	1.5

7.5.4 Table 5 shows data on exclusion from school for a total of 542 young people. Most of them, i.e. 420 (78% of those for whom data were provided), were never excluded from school, while 130 (24%) had been excluded during the year. Excluded pupils had experienced, on average, 15 days' exclusion in the year (ranging from a minimum of one day to a maximum of 91 days).

Table 5: Number of times excluded

No of times excluded (instances)	No of pupils	Total exclusions (i.e. Pupil numbers times number of times excluded)	%of pupils
0	420	0	77.5
1	47	47	8.7
2	20	40	3.7
3	23	69	4.2
4	11	44	2.0
5	7	35	1.3
6	4	24	0.7
7	4	28	0.7
8	2	16	0.4
9	4	36	0.7
Total	542	339	100

7.5.5 Of the 130 reported to have been excluded, the number of instances of exclusion was reported for 122 young people and of these a total of 75 (61%) had been excluded more than once. As a comparison: of all pupils who were excluded from school in Scotland in 2006-07, 40% were excluded more than once²⁴.

7.5.6 The rate of exclusions (339 out of a total of 542) represents 625 instances of exclusion per 1000 pupils. This rate is very high compared to the national rate of exclusions for looked after children and young people (368 per 1000), which in turn is significantly higher than the rate of exclusion for all pupils in Scotland (64 per 1000). Another useful comparison is the peak rate for all pupils in Scotland (at the S3 stage) of 204 per 1000. Our study population is of course likely to be skewed towards young people particularly at risk of exclusion or selected for participation in pilot activities because they had been excluded from school.

²⁴ Scottish Government (2008) Exclusions from schools 2006/07: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/01/28122247/0>

7.5.7 While gender appeared to have virtually no effect on attendance, boys had a higher mean number of exclusions than girls and were more likely to be excluded (see Table 12 in Appendix 4). Male pupils account for 78% of all exclusions in Scottish schools and are excluded at a significantly higher rate, so the gender difference in the research population is small compared with the national picture. Government statistics for exclusion in Scotland do not provide rates by gender for looked after children and young people.

Impact of the projects on attendance and exclusion

7.5.8 Changes in attendance and exclusion between baseline and outcome data were calculated (see Table 13 in Appendix 4). We found that attendance had increased from 78% to 81%, a statistically significant difference.

7.5.9 The mean number of exclusions declined from 0.85 days to 0.63, a finding which is also significant. The mean number of days excluded increased marginally from 3.5 to 3.7.

7.5.10 Attendance was lower among the older age groups. Attendance improved during the pilot year in all age groups, with the improvements reaching statistical significance among the 9-10 year olds and those aged over 15. Among the over 15s both the number of exclusions and the number of days excluded reduced significantly.

Exclusion rates across the pilot authorities

7.5.11 Considerable differences in exclusion rates have been reported for all pupils between local authorities in Scotland, varying from 10 per thousand in Orkney and 12 in East Renfrewshire, to 110 in Glasgow, and 126 in Dundee²⁵.

7.5.12 We were therefore interested to compare exclusion rates for the pilot local authorities. Examining the rates for nine of the 18 pilots (others were excluded from this analysis due to low numbers), a similarly wide variation was found (see Table 14 in Appendix 4). We should be very cautious, in interpreting these findings, particularly as the pilots had different aims, with some specifically targeting young people at the peak age for risk of exclusion. However, the rates of exclusion for all looked after children show considerable variation between local authorities in Scotland and this is clearly a matter which should be examined further.

Impact of the pilots on attainment: 5-14 National Assessment Levels

7.5.13 The assessment of children in P1-S2 is assessed by teachers and reported to parents in all areas of the 5-14 Curriculum²⁶. National Assessments are used by teachers to confirm their judgements about pupils' levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics²⁷. Assessments are based on attainment levels and

²⁵ Scottish Government (2008) Exclusions from schools 2006/07: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/01/28122247/0>

²⁶ Information about the Scottish education curriculum can be found on the Learning and Teaching Scotland web site at <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/>. At the time of writing a new Curriculum for Excellence encompassing ages 5-18 was due for implementation.

²⁷ For example, in mathematics at any level there are two units, each addressing four attainment outcomes (information handling; number, money and measurement; shape,

targets set out in national guidelines, and these are available at six levels, A to F. Level A should be attainable by some pupils in P2 and by most in P3, while Level E should be attainable by some pupils in P7/S1 and by most in S2. Level F should be attainable in part by some pupils, and completed by a few pupils, in the course of P7-S2.

7.5.14 Details of the results for 5-14 National Assessments in reading, writing and mathematics are shown for the matched dataset and also for four different age cohorts at outcome stage in Appendix 4 (Tables 15-19). The appendix also shows 5-14 data collected nationally for looked after children and published in June 2003 (Table 20). The data tables use age groupings, while the government data are presented in school stages. However, to take one example, we could compare the 11-12 age band of the study population with the S1 stage in the national data. On the target of achieving Level D or better, the pilot population differs from the 2003 national cohort of looked after children in reading (pilot group 22.9%; national 42.0%) and writing (pilot group 18.8%; national 30.0%) but is similar in mathematics (pilot group 30.6%; national 31.0%). We need to be cautious about making such comparisons because the pilot population may not be representative (e.g. it is likely to include children with more difficulties) and because of the small numbers involved.

7.5.15 It is clear that looked after children have low attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. Between 65% and 70% of non-looked after children have attained Level D by age 11-12, compared with the much lower proportions of looked after children attaining these levels. One approximate comparison is to say that while the average non-looked after child progresses at a rate of up to one National Assessment level for every year of chronological age (i.e. six levels in about nine years), it takes the average looked after child about three years to progress up one level.

7.5.16 Since we had 5-14 National Assessment data for more than 230 young people for two consecutive years, i.e. at both baseline and outcome stages, we checked what progress they had made in one year. We found that about 40% of the children and young people participating in the pilots advanced by one 5-14 National Assessment level (38% in Reading; 41% in Writing; 38% in Maths), much better than the average progress for looked after children and similar to the advances made by non-looked after children nationally. These findings are statistically significant (see Table 21 in Appendix 4).

7.5.17 In fact we found that the mean improvement amounted to between 0.4 and 0.5 of a 5-14 level. As the 5-14 levels amount to a six-point scale (A-F), with progression over nine years, you might expect young people to progress at a mean rate of about 0.6 of a level per year. On this basis, the progress of the pilot population could be judged as good for particularly disadvantaged pupils.

7.5.18 We also examined the data by care category, distinguishing between young people looked after at home, in residential care, in foster care and in kinship care. There were, however, no apparent differences in mean improvement between categories of care.

position and movement; and problem-solving). A pupil who answers correctly two-thirds or more of the questions in each unit is regarded as being 'secure' at that level.

Impact of the pilots on attainment: National Qualifications

7.5.19 Results for Standard Grades and National Qualifications²⁸ were provided for 122 young people in the matched data set²⁹. These exam results were converted to tariff points using the Unified Points Score Scale,³⁰ a system which allocates points to all awards and grades within awards, and allows a single tariff score to be computed for an individual. Scores were computed for both total exam results and also for the 'best 5' results. In reality, for many of the young people, both scores were identical, with some having fewer than five passes. Those who might have been expected to have awards but in reality did not were allocated zero points.

7.5.20 Table 6 shows the tariff score for the young people for whom results were provided. The table shows the very wide range of attainment achieved. However, this is partly a function of the spread of ages of those who were in S3 to S5 and beyond. Of the 78 young people in S4 (excluding those not presented for exams) from the pilots, the mean tariff score, based on all results was 59.5 (SD 50.1). The national mean for pupils not looked after is 173.³¹ This comparison of course is simply confirmation of the known low performance of young people who are looked after.

Table 6: Tariff points for National Qualifications

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Mean scores of 'best 5', including those who had not been presented for exams	148	0	264	36.7	42.4
Mean scores of 'best 5' for those who had been presented for exams	122	2	264	44.5	42.6
Mean scores of all results, including those who had not been presented for exams	149	0	264	43.6	52.3
Mean scores of all results for those who had been presented for exams	122	2	264	53.0	52.9

7.5.21 We found that baseline 5-14 National Assessment levels (particularly in maths) had some moderate effects in predicting subsequent results obtained by the young people in Standard Grades and National Qualifications, an unsurprising finding.

7.5.22 Some other features were also found to correlate with results in Standard Grades and National Qualifications. Girls appear to have done significantly better than boys, an effect not observed in the analysis of 5-14 National Assessment data. Young people with high reported attendance, unsurprisingly, attained more. Young people looked after at home achieved significantly less, while those in residential care and, especially, those who are fostered, achieved significantly more. Level of

²⁸ For information about the structure of awards, refer to the National Qualifications area of the SQA website at: <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/3.html>

²⁹ Twenty eight of the young people were in S3, on programmes leading to mainly Access courses and units, and 26 young people were in S4 or beyond who might be expected to have gained awards of some kind, but for whom none were reported. Another 60 had gained awards but details could not be provided. There were 31 young people of an age to have gained awards, but whose data were missing; they have been excluded from the analysis.

³⁰ For more information see: <http://www.hmie.gov.uk/ise/hmieise-49.html>

³¹ Source: <http://www.openscotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/03/14134538/14>

involvement in the pilot projects produced no significant effect, although the number for whom we have such data (i.e. 69) is small.

7.5.23 Because of the significant number of older young people from the Glasgow project represented in the data set, we were able to distinguish two particular programmes (CLASS and EVIP)³² and these young people appeared to be attaining less. Glasgow students overall appeared to have lower attainment, compared to non-Glasgow young people. These particular results seemed odd, given the particular focus on tuition and attainment in this pilot. However, there are two possible explanations. First, the tariff score does not include vocational qualifications which the Glasgow programmes emphasised, and which young people in EVIP are known to have achieved. Secondly, there were particular problems in data recording within the Glasgow pilot and it is possible that many young people who appeared to have no qualifications, in fact did not have their achievements recorded (See also tables 22-24 in Appendix 4).

7.5.24 But all of the differences observed did not necessarily arise during the study year, and cannot confidently be attributed to the effects of involvement in the pilot projects. They may have a longer history, or be due to differences in the characteristics of the young people at the point of recruitment to the pilots. We therefore tried to see what effects we could observe relative to a baseline of previous attainment.

Impact of the pilots: Involvement in pilot project activity

7.5.25 In order to explore the hypothesis that the pilot projects added value overall, i.e. that the young people showed improvement in attendance, exclusion and attainment, we used multiple regression analysis³³ to examine whether the extent of the young people's involvement in pilot project activities influenced their outcomes.

7.5.26 The project co-ordinators indicated the level of involvement on a three-point scale for a total of 402 young people (63% of the matched dataset), as shown in Table 7. We do not know exactly how judgements were made about level of involvement, but we can assume that assignment to the categories was not made arbitrarily and, as the data in any case exclude cases where this judgement proved impossible, it is reasonable to conclude that the results are meaningful.

Table 7: Reported level of involvement in pilot project activities

Level of involvement	N (%)
No involvement	69 (17%)
Low/moderate involvement	130 (32%)
High Involvement	203 (51%)
Total	402 (100%)

7.5.27 In a simple model which examined outcomes correlated with level of involvement we found a statistically significant correlation for attendance only. It is

³² CLASS (Community Learning and Support Services) EVIP (Enhanced Vocational Inclusion Programme)

³³ For an account of multiple regression see: <http://www.statsoft.com/textbook/stmul/reg.html>

likely, however, that the young people with high involvement in the projects had better attendance in the first place and so it is not possible to attribute the improvement noticed solely to their engagement with the pilot activity.

7.5.28 Using a 'value-added' multiple regression model, where baseline data are held constant, we were able to examine apparent progress for the 203 students reported as having a high involvement in pilot projects. The results showed no effects in relation to attendance, days excluded and instances of exclusion.

7.5.29 However, statistically significant levels of progress were found in 5-14 National Assessments on reading and writing, although no significant effect was found in mathematics. Young people reported to have high levels of involvement in the pilots appeared to have made appreciably more progress than those with less involvement in reading and writing, an effect which is statistically significant. It is reasonable to conclude that since there was a particular emphasis on literacy across the pilots, this additional support was effective in achieving improvements in reading and writing.

7.5.30 It was unfortunately not possible to make any meaningful claims about value added in relation to the different pilot authorities and for particular activities, since the sheer variation in the projects meant that numbers required for calculations were not achieved.

7.6 Conclusions

7.6.1 The focus of this chapter was the impact of the pilot projects measured by quantitative data, i.e. school attendance, exclusion from school, and attainment measured by 5-14 National Assessments and National Qualifications.

7.6.2 Results were obtained on the Goodman Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire and the Harter and Harter Self-Esteem Questionnaire for only a small sub-set of the pilot population. Bearing in mind this limitation, the findings support previous work indicating concerns about the poor mental wellbeing of looked after children and young people.

7.6.3 Previous research has shown that collecting robust data about the outcomes of looked after children and young people is problematic, and this finding has been confirmed by the results of the research on the pilot projects. The data tracking systems of many of the pilot local authorities were of variable quality, but the research process itself appears to have been helpful to the pilot authorities in relation to identifying weaknesses in tracking looked after children and young people.

7.6.4 Attendance improved in all age groups, findings which were statistically significant among 9-10 year olds and those over 15. The instances of exclusion and the number of days excluded reduced significantly amongst those young people over 15.

7.6.5 About 40% of the young people participating in the pilots advanced by one 5-14 National Assessment level, much better than the average progress reported for all looked after children and similar to advances made by non-looked after children nationally. Again, this finding was statistically significant.

7.6.6 The research identified effects related to the involvement of the young people in pilot activities *per se*, but was not able to attribute effects to particular activities. Perhaps this is not particularly important, since there is evidence from a previous research study suggesting that high levels of participation in 'study support' activities can make significant impact on attainment, attitudes to school and attendance. Improvements were found to be related to curriculum-focused activities, but also to drop-in sessions, sport and other activities (MacBeath et al., 2001). Perhaps we can conclude that local authorities and voluntary agencies should be encouraged to make provision of a range of activities capable of engaging looked after children and young people and that the precise nature of the intervention is probably less important than participation in an activity.

7.6.7 Younger looked after children who had high levels of involvement in the pilot projects appeared to have made appreciably more progress in one year than the others, measured by 5-14 National Assessments in reading and writing. This is encouraging because it also suggests that providing targeted additional support can raise attainment.

8 LESSONS FROM THE PILOTS

8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 This chapter addresses Research Question 6: What lessons can be learned from the projects? The chapter begins by considering the achievements of the pilot programme overall, in terms of making an impact with looked after young people and their parents and carers. We then consider a number of factors that appear to have been associated with greater success, or which caused difficulties.

8.2 The impact of the pilot projects

8.2.1 Although a number of projects experienced organisational difficulties which reduced their overall effectiveness there is no doubt that, across the projects, many young people had extremely positive, and in some cases life changing, experiences. It is possible to identify a number of the characteristics of the direct work that was undertaken which enabled such successful outcomes, and these are discussed below.

8.2.2 Professionals, young people and parents were at one in agreeing that the attitude of staff was crucial in achieving successful outcomes. We heard frequent comments in interviews comparing previous negative experiences of professionals with the positive attitudes that children or parents had experienced in their engagement with project staff. The qualities that were highlighted included respect, commitment, involvement, being non-judgemental, available and listening.

8.2.3 Equally important was the opportunity for young people to develop a trusting individual relationship with an adult. This required considerable investment of time and energy. Some of the critical comments made by young people about less successful projects highlighted not having sufficient time, or too many people being involved, reducing the individual time available. Young people seemed to flourish in situations where they experienced an individualised approach that was delivered in a personal and non-stigmatising way.

8.2.4 Successful projects did not only focus on providing good support for the child. These spent time and effort on supporting other significant people in the wider system around the young person. We met parents who had experienced very sensitive support that had required workers to be emotionally and physically available to them over a sustained period. This experience had been positive for the parents and also provided support for their children. Careful attention to supporting other professionals was also evident in successful projects and this could range from timely provision of information to providing direct support to carers or teachers experiencing difficulties with a particular child.

8.2.5 Professionals, parents and young people highlighted two particularly important factors that helped promote success. Giving children high but realistic expectations was seen as being very important, though this had to be done in a way that was not perceived as 'nagging'. Also very important was for professionals not to give up on children, even if they were initially reluctant to be engaged or who experienced problems during the project.

8.2.6 Those pilots that had succeeded in engaging young people who had previously been resistant to education seemed to provide a greater degree of flexibility than is normal in traditional education settings. For some young people the opportunity to exercise choice in relation to their education was enabling. In one project the young people were given a blank timetable and encouraged with support to complete it themselves. Contrary to the project leader's expectation, most chose to include English and maths. Linked to flexibility and choice is the importance of making the educational experience meaningful. To some extent this involves allowing young people to have more enjoyable experiences that are not focused on purely academic attainment but it also includes helping them to link their career aspirations to the attainment required to achieve these. For some young people this connection enabled them to see the relevance of education.

8.2.7 A number of the pilots provided support at key transition points in the school career of the children and young people. These projects reported particularly good results. What seemed crucial to this success was the experience for young people of being 'held' through these transitions by a relationship with a particular individual whom they trusted and felt safe with, and which bridged the two settings. These appeared to be important throughout the age range, whether children were starting school or leaving school.

8.2.8 Across the pilots a process was apparent that is potentially very hopeful: the experience for many young people was that involvement in the project seemed to kick start a positive spiral in their lives. Many of the interventions involved resilience building and strength based approaches which had the impact of children feeling confident and competent in one area which made them more able to develop in other areas.

8.3 Organisational aspects

8.3.1 The pilot projects that seemed to have made the greatest impact on looked after children and young people as a group, tended to be organisationally robust. Conversely the projects that struggled to engage with the system or young people themselves had deficiencies in organisational clarity and support, or were placed within a wider organisation that had particularly poorly developed data collection and management procedures for this group of young people.

8.3.2 The difficulties in collecting and managing data were illustrated in two ways. The first was when individuals mentioned the problems directly in interview. It was also, however, apparent in the difficulties experienced by several projects in providing basic data on attendance, exclusion and attainment. For many projects, improving data management systems almost became a secondary aim of the project, not generally a simple process. Some projects had targeted data management as an area of improvement from the outset and achieving this was seen as a significant indicator of success.

8.3.3 Clarity of purpose and detailed planning were also associated with greater overall success. These aspects were often easier to achieve in the smaller, more tightly focused projects or strands, where the immediate managers were able to maintain clarity of roles and remits and ensure that all staff understood their responsibilities. This became much harder to achieve in projects that were attempting to provide a service to the whole looked after population, particularly in

the larger local authorities. An exception to this was where projects were focusing on indirect support for children and young people's education by improving systems such as those involved with data management.

8.4 Management and staffing

8.4.1 A number of the pilots experienced difficulties because the person who eventually became responsible for the management of the project had taken no part in its planning and development. In a short life project this could mean that valuable time was spent trying to catch up with the overall vision and aims.

8.4.2 Maintaining several strands focusing on different aspects of looked after children and young people's education was also challenging and, in a few cases, individual strands were abandoned through lack of progress. Some authorities did manage to develop several successful strands but this could be at considerable personal cost to those responsible for managing them.

8.4.3 Almost all the projects experienced difficulties with recruitment and retention of staff. This was primarily the result of the short term nature of the pilots. Where external recruitment was attempted this usually took several months and meant that post holders were not in place until well into the life of the project. This affected the capacity of some projects to achieve their aims within the timescale. It could also mean that expectations were raised among children, parents and professionals that could not be met and this undermined later enthusiasm and interest.

8.4.4 In some case, where secondments were used to fill key project posts staff were not freed up until their substantive posts could be covered. This again led to delays in projects becoming fully operational.

8.4.5 Another approach that was used to deal with these difficulties was to divert existing resources into the project. This avoided the problem of delay but could mean relying on staff for whom working with looked after children was not a prime interest and who lacked the requisite skills or experience.

8.4.6 The time-limited nature of the projects also meant that some excellent staff, committed and skilled in their work with children, felt the pressure to find more secure employment and left the projects before their contracts finished. This also led to difficulties in filling their posts.

8.4.7 These are familiar experiences where projects attract only short term funding. It is may be that the education of looked after children, a long term area of concern, requires more sustained investment from central and local government if there is to be a major impact on children and young people's life chances.

8.5 Communication

8.5.1 Good communication between different agencies and professionals involved in the pilots was associated with success. In these projects the high quality links that were created, particularly between schools and social work, were seen as one of the important long term outcomes of the project. Some professionals suggested

that the complex needs of looked after children and young people were such that a multi-agency approach was essential to successful work and that this required good communication. Conversely, several people commented on the adverse effects of poor communication on the overall outcomes of the project. Some project staff described attempts to communicate that were met with no response or a refusal to engage because of issues in relation to confidentiality. In these instances there did not seem to be a clear understanding of how and when information should be shared.

8.5.2 We also heard comments about the difficulties of engaging other people involved with the children. This included social work staff feeling that some schools were not interested in looked after children and would avoid being involved in any targeted work with them. Some teachers encountered resistance from foster carers or residential workers who did not believe that the education of the children was their role. Some practitioners working with children looked after at home reported difficulties in helping parents to understand the importance of their children's education.

8.5.3 A few pilots described difficulty in communicating the purpose of the project to other professionals, particularly where a practitioner was working inside another organisation's 'territory'. This could be compounded if there were significant differences in power and status between professionals.

8.5.4 Several projects had staff training included within their aims. This seems to have been very important, particularly when it had been undertaken on a multi-disciplinary basis. Project managers reported considerably increased awareness of the difficulties experienced by looked after children and the kind of support they might need in their education. It also increased the confidence of staff in communicating with each other, and in some cases advocating on behalf of young people.

8.5.5 Strong leadership and a clear vision that was successfully communicated to staff were associated with successful projects. These aspects led in some instances to projects surpassing their aims. Partly as a result of the way the projects were set up, however, a number of them suffered from unclear management structures and in some cases the original vision appeared to have been lost.

8.6 Summary

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

8.6.2 Flexibility, trusting relationships between project staff and young people that continued over time and activities that encouraged the development of resilience in young people were most successful. These were particularly important at key transition points in the school careers of children and young people.

8.6.3 The effectiveness of a number of projects was reduced as a result of organisational difficulties. Nonetheless, the educational experience of many

individual young people was considerably improved as a result of involvement in the projects.

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

9 CONCLUSIONS

9.1.1 The aim of the research was to identify interventions that appeared to make the most difference in terms of both the educational experience and the educational outcomes of the looked after children and young people participating in local authority pilot projects funded by Scottish Government. Data on attendance, exclusions and attainment were collected for a population of more than 600 children and young people, spread across 18 pilots. The research also analysed qualitative data, based on interviews with project co-ordinators, professionals, parents/carers and the young people themselves.

9.2 The key findings

9.2.1 The pilot projects were very different in both their aims and in the range of approaches employed. In relation to their work with looked after children and young people, they could be characterised by five different types of intervention: provision of direct support (e.g. extra tutoring in school or at home); personal education planning; support at transition points in the education system; developing staff and parent/capacity (e.g. training for staff and helping parents/carers to develop confidence in supporting looked after children and young people in their education); and using information technology and computer-based approaches.

9.2.2 The overall programme of very different pilot projects was very ambitious. There is evidence that many looked after young people have derived significant benefit from their involvement in the projects. The programme included several examples of imaginative and innovative practice. The short timescale involved, however, combined with difficulties in recruiting suitable staff, caused organisational problems. It is likely that with a longer timescale more sustainable and transferable outcomes could have been achieved.

9.2.3 In terms of impact, the most important theme emerging from the interviews with the practitioners was a general desire to increase achievement, while providing support for young people, their parents and carers and schools. Practitioners also emphasised the importance of stability and a sense of normality for looked after children and young people, as the basis of achievement in education.

9.2.4 Individualising the approach (keeping the child at the centre), being flexible, including involving the young person to choose the focus of learning, and providing a breadth of learning opportunities appear to be important strategies for effective work aimed at improving the achievements of looked after children and young people.

9.2.5 The research highlighted the importance of staff engaged in supporting the achievement of looked after children and young people having appropriate values and attitudes. This included believing in the fundamental worth of a young person, having high expectations and being flexible in their approaches.

9.2.6 There was a general worry expressed within the pilots about the realistic sustainability of the interventions once the pilot funding had ended. Nevertheless,

some of the local authorities had plans to mainstream entire pilots and in others the experience of the pilots will influence future policy and practice.

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

9.2.8 Previous research has shown that collecting robust data about the outcomes of looked after children and young people is problematic, and this finding has been confirmed by the results of the research with the pilot projects. The data tracking systems of many of the pilot local authorities were of variable quality, but the research process itself appears to have been helpful to the pilot authorities in relation to identifying weaknesses in tracking looked after children and young people and therefore in considering solutions.

9.2.9 Attendance at school improved among the pilot participants, in all age groups, findings which were statistically significant among 9-10 year olds and those over 15. The instances of exclusion and the number of days excluded reduced significantly amongst those young people over 15.

9.2.10 About 40% of the young people participating in the pilots advanced by one 5-14 National Assessment level, much better than the average progress reported for all looked after children and similar to advances made by non-looked after children nationally. Again, this finding was statistically significant.

9.2.11 Younger looked after children who had high levels of involvement in the pilot projects appeared to have made appreciably more progress in one year than the others, measured by 5-14 National Assessments in reading and writing. This is encouraging because it also suggests that providing targeted additional support can raise attainment.

9.2.12 The research identified effects related to the involvement of the young people in the pilots, but the data available did not allow us to attribute effects to particular activities. In any case, it is likely that, in line with previous research findings, high engagement with study-related, cultural and sport activities in general is more important than the actual nature of the activity. Local authorities and voluntary agencies should therefore be encouraged to make provision of a range of activities capable of engaging looked after children and young people.

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

9.2.14 Flexibility, trusting relationships between project staff and young people that continued over time, and activities that encouraged the development of resilience in young people, were most successful. These were particularly important at key transition points in the school careers of children and young people.

9.3 Concluding comments

9.3.1 Having completed this research reviewing the pilot initiatives aimed at raising the educational attainment of looked after children, it seems important to reflect a little on the whole experience and to offer some brief commentary in respect of future work with the target group of young people.

9.3.2 It would have been easier to draw firm conclusions if the characteristics of the pilot projects had been more similar - in scope, numbers of participants, start and finish times. It would also have been valuable to have had the possibility of collecting clearer 'before and after' measures and also collecting data from a control group of looked after children who had not participated in the activities. More precise record keeping by pilots generally in relation to the degree of involvement of young people in activities would also have been desirable.

9.3.3 The research confirmed that the value of participation in additional activities, broadly aimed at supporting attainment or improving wellbeing, can bring about improvements in attendance and attainment, even in a relatively short period of time. The key message is that it is vital for looked after children and young people to have access to such additional provision; the capacity to engage and support is more important than the precise nature of the activity.

9.3.4 The fact that some of the pilots will be sustained and that others will influence local policy and practice is also encouraging. However, an inevitable disadvantage of a pilot programme is that the additional funding can be used to provide dedicated staffing which is then lost when the financial support ends. We think it unlikely that valuable gains of the kind described in this report can be maintained without skilful co-ordination.

9.3.5 The research confirmed previous findings of poor record keeping and monitoring in relation to the education of looked after children and young people. If being actively engaged can pay dividends quickly, it is sad that so many looked after children and young people seem to get lost in the system. This means that for some their achievements will go unrecognised and uncelebrated, while others will not get the support they need.

9.3.6 A few simple measures might be considered to improve monitoring. We think that all pupils who are looked after should have their attendance and attainment recorded by the school in which they are registered, even where education is taking place off-site for some or all of the time. Actual attendance should always be recorded. Where a period of part-time education has been agreed, full attendance should not be recorded when a pupil attends for all of the part-time period, and the correct proportion should be calculated. The school's designated senior manager (DSM) should track attendance and achievement throughout the school year, as well as providing information for child care reviews. We also think that the system of periodic review of progress (perhaps monthly) by a key officer or a committee at local authority level, similar to that adopted in the Fife pilot, might be regarded as good practice.

9.3.7 Given the importance attached to staff having high expectations, demonstrating appropriate values and attitudes, and being able to develop good relationships with looked after children and young people, there is a clear need to continue to provide opportunities for carers, social workers, teachers and other key

professionals to access appropriate training. The DVD-based training materials published at the same time as this research report, and the looked after children's website³⁴, should therefore be valuable resources for local authorities and voluntary sector organisations concerned with improving the educational experience and wellbeing of looked after children and young people in Scotland.

³⁴ <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/lookedafterchildren>

REFERENCES

- Aldgate, J., Colton, M. J., Ghate, D., & Heath, A. (1992). Educational attainment and stability in long-term foster care. *Children & Society*, 6(2), 91-103.
- Bardy, M. (2008). *Child's experiences, right to participate and to be heard: Quality of care*. Paper presented at the Better future for children today, Helsinki.
- Bebbington, A., & Miles, J. (1989). The background of children who enter local authority care. *British Journal of Social Work*, 19, 349–368.
- Berg, B. (2004). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*. Boston: Pearson.
- Berridge, D., & Brodie, I. (1998). *Children's homes revisited*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Borland, M., Pearson, C., Hill, M., & Bloomfield, I. (1998). *Education and care away from home: A review of policy, practice and research*. Edinburgh: Scottish Council for Research in Education.
- Boyce, P. (2003). *A different class? Educational attainment - The views and experiences of looked after young people*. Glasgow: Who Cares? Scotland.
- Cashmore, J., Paxman, M., & Townsend, M. (2007). The educational outcomes of young people 4-5 years after leaving care: An Australian perspective. *Adoption & Fostering*, 31(1), 50-61.
- Cocker, C., & Scott, S. (2006). Improving the mental and emotional well-being of looked after children: Connecting research, policy and practice. *The Journal of the Royal Society for the Promotion of Health*, 126(1), 18-23.
- Connelly, G., Siebelt, L., & Furnivall, J. (2008). Supporting looked after children and young people at school: A Scottish case study. Retrieved June 13, 2008, from <http://personal.strath.ac.uk/g.connelly/public.html>
- Elsley, S. (2008). Home truths: Residential child care in Scotland. Retrieved June 17, 2008, from <http://www.sircc.strath.ac.uk/publications/publicationsdownloads.php>
- Essen, J., Lambert, L., & Head, J. (1976). School attainment of children who have been in care. *Child Care, Health and Development*, 2(6), 329-335.
- Fletcher-Campbell, F. (1997). *The education of children who are looked-after*. Slough: National Foundation for Educational Research.
- Fletcher-Campbell, F. (1998). Progress of procrastination? The education of young people who are looked after. *Children & Society*, 12, 3-11.
- Gallagher, B., Brannan, C., Jones, R., & Westwood, S. (2004). Good practice in the education of children in residential care. *British Journal of Social Work*, 34(8), 1133-1160.

-
- Gilligan, R. (2007). Spare time activities for young people in care: What can they contribute to educational progress? *Adoption & Fostering*, 31(1), 92-99.
- Happer, H., McCreadie, J., & Aldgate, J. (2006). Celebrating success: What helps looked after children succeed. Retrieved May 20, 2008, from www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/129024/0030718.pdf
- Hare, A., & Bullock, R. (2006). Dispelling misconceptions about looked after children. *Adoption & Fostering*, 30(4), 26-35.
- Harker, R. M., Dobel-Ober, D., Akhurst, S., Berridge, D., & Sinclair, R. (2003). Who takes care of education 19 months on? A follow-up study of looked after children's perceptions of support for educational progress. *Child and Family Social Work*, 9, 273-284.
- Hayden, C. (2005). More than a piece of paper?: Personal education plans and 'looked after' children in England. *Child and Family Social Work*, 10, 343-352.
- Heath, A., Colton, M. J., & Aldgate, J. (1989). The educational progress of children in and out of care. *British Journal of Social Work*, 19(6), 447-460.
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools. (2003). Inclusion and equality. Part 1: Evaluating education and care placements for looked after children and young people. Retrieved 15 January, 2008, from <http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/hgioslac.pdf>
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools. (2008). Count us in: Improving the education of our looked after children. Retrieved June 22, 2008, from <http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/cuiielac.pdf>
- Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools and Social Work Services Inspectorate. (2001). Learning with care: The education of children looked after away from home by local authorities. Retrieved 27 March, 2007, from <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library3/education/lacr-00.asp>
- HMI (Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools) and SWSI (Social Work Services Inspectorate). (2001). Learning with care: The education of children looked after away from home by local authorities. Retrieved 27 March, 2007, from <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library3/education/lacr-00.asp>
- Hoare, P., Elton, R., Greer, A., & Kerley, S. (1993). The modification and standardisation of the Harter self-esteem questionnaire with Scottish school children. *European Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 2(1), 19-33.
- Jacklin, A., Robinson, C., & Torrance, H. (2006). When lack of data is data: Do we really know who our looked-after children are? *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 21(1), 1-20.
- Jackson, S. (1987). *The education of children in care*. Bristol: School of Applied Social Studies, University of Bristol.
- Jackson, S. (1994). Educating children in residential and foster care: An overview. *Oxford Review of Education*, 20(3).

-
- Jackson, S. (2007). Progress at last? *Adoption & Fostering*, 31(1), 3-5.
- Jackson, S., & Martin, P. Y. (1998). Surviving the care system: education and resilience. *Journal of Adolescence*, 21, 569-583.
- Jackson, S., & McParlin, P. (2006). The education of children in care. *The Psychologist*, 19(2), 90-93.
- MacBeath, J., Kirwan, T., Myers, K., McCall, J., Smith, I., McKay, E., et al. (2001). The impact of study support. Retrieved 06 August, 2008, from <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/studysupport/816987/817959/impactsstext>
- McRae, J. (2006). Children looked after by local authorities: The legal framework. Retrieved 15 January, 2008, from <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/128956/0030715.pdf>
- Meltzer, H., Gatward, R., Corbin, T., Goodman, R., & Ford, T. (2003). The mental health of young people looked after by local authorities in England. Retrieved 06 August, 2008, from http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsStatistics/DH_4019442
- Osborn, A., & St. Claire, L. (1987). The ability and behaviour of children who have been in care or separated from their parents. *Early Child Development and Care*, 28(3), 187-354.
- Richards, L., Wood, N., & Ruiz-Calzada, L. (2006). The mental health needs of looked after children in a local authority permanent placement team and the value of the Goodman SDQ. *Adoption & Fostering*, 30(2), 43-52.
- Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People. (2008). Sweet 16?: The age of leaving care in Scotland. Retrieved May 12, 2008, from http://www.sccyp.org.uk/webpages/Leaving_Care_Report_for_Web_20080325.pdf
- Scott, J., & Hill, M. (2006). The health of looked after and accommodated children and young people in Scotland: Messages from research. Retrieved June 18, 2008, from <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/06/07103730/0>
- Scottish Executive. (2006). More Choices, More Chances: A Strategy to Reduce the Proportion of Young People not in Education, Employment or Training in Scotland. Retrieved May 12, 2008, from <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/06/13100205/0>
- Scottish Executive. (2007). Looked after children & young people: We can and must do better. Retrieved 27 March, 2007, from <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/01/15084446/0>
- Scottish Government. (2007). Skills for Scotland: A lifelong skills strategy. Retrieved 08 July, 2008, from <http://www/scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/09/06091114/0>

Scottish Government. (2008). Analysis report for grant to improve educational environment of residential units/schools 2006/07. Retrieved July 10, 2008, from <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/06/10113331/0>

Scottish Office. (1997). Scotland's Children: The Children (Scotland) Act 1995 Regulations and Guidance: Volume 2 Children Looked After by Local Authorities. Retrieved May 12, 2008, from <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2004/10/20067/44723>

Scottish Statutory Instrument. (2000). The education (national priorities) (Scotland) order 2000. Retrieved January 15 2008, from http://www.oqps.gov.uk/legislation/ssi/ssi2000/ssi_20000443_en_1

Stead, J., Lloyd, G., & Kendrick, A. (2004). Participation or practice innovation: Tensions in interagency working to address disciplinary exclusion from school. *Children & Society, 18*(1), 42-52.

Vincent, S. (2004). Looking after children in Scotland: Good parenting, good outcomes: Report on file audit of local authorities' use of looking after children materials. Retrieved 10 February, 2007, from <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2004/06/19439/38253>

APPENDIX 1. SUMMARY OF PILOT PROJECT STRANDS

Pilot Project	Strands in original proposal	Significant changes noted
Aberdeen City	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Additional support for children looked after at home will build on existing family liaison work but will link in with designated teachers. 2. Additional support for two residential units, building on existing provision of LAC link teacher, designated teachers, LAC nurse and LAC counselling staff. 3. IT for looked after children based on learning programme for travelling children. 	Strand 3 did not progress.
Dumfries and Galloway	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Appoint a project officer. 2. Developing My Learning Plan. 3. Piloting the effectiveness of intervention models (e.g. education key working). 4. Staff training. 5. Reducing barriers to learning through individuals' applications to a fund. 	
Dundee City	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Study support and tutoring, aimed at young people taking Standard Grade and National Qualifications. 2. Outreach activities for children and young people in residential units. 3. Support and training for parents and carers. 	Pilot evolved to include a nurture group for pupils failing to attain, literacy and self-esteem for a group of young women, and improvements to data collection. Strand 3 became multi-agency training using <i>Learning with Care</i> materials.
East Ayrshire	Develop computer assisted learning materials. Provide supported study package, associated training, staff development, support for carers, and allied support materials.	
East Lothian	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Providing individual support to pupils (with priority to those who are excluded) through holistic support and intervention packages. 2. Support for parents and carers. 3. Identify 'what works' through an evaluation and training programme. 	

Pilot Project	Strands in original proposal	Significant changes noted
Edinburgh	<p>Team of learning assistants to work closely with group of P 7 looked after children in a transition programme. Learning assistants will work with primary and secondary school staff, social workers, support workers, parents and carers. Support: group and individual work, in-class, out of school. Enhance whole-school approach to looked after pupils in six target high schools and associated primaries providing enhanced training opportunities.</p>	
Falkirk	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify educational needs of looked after young people in crisis care and build on existing good practice and positive working relationships. Develop educational programmes which deliver in the key areas of literacy, numeracy and personal/social development and which cover a broad and balanced curriculum as defined in the 5-14 guidelines or qualifications such as Standard Grade, Access 1,2,3 or ASDAN modules. 2. Offer a specific service for young people accommodated in placements outwith the Falkirk Council area: quality assurance role - visiting the schools, talking to the young people about their education, looking at what's being offered, and giving guidance and advice to the schools about options. 	
Fife	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop data systems for tracking the education of looked after children. 2. Enhance planning and monitoring by developing existing personal planning model. 3. Provide enhanced educational support at key transitional stages (particularly at point of entry). 	
Glasgow	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expansion of existing tutorial support to children looked after at home. 2. 'Flexible Education Support Scheme' focussing on educational achievement. 3. Guidance leaflets for parents, carers and social work staff on Services to support education; attendance; attainment; English folios; ESPs; and, exclusions. 	Strand 3 did not progress.
Highland	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Home education link worker for children looked after at home. 2. Teaching base, in partnership with Highland Football Academy which facilitates re-engagement into fulltime education and assists in development of positive patterns of attendance and personal development. 3. Educational achievement facilitator to work with residential units and staff. 4. Out of school study support programme. 	

Pilot Project	Strands in original proposal	Significant changes noted
Midlothian	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Better learning opportunities in residential units. Developing an inclusive tutoring service. Mentoring for young people. 	Strand 3 did not progress.
North Ayrshire	New Futures Project: Individual tutoring and behavioural support with regards to curricular courses and providing alternative curricular routes to re-engage the young person.	
Renfrewshire	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Support for children looked after at home at an early stage to focus on developing core skills, work with staff in pre-5 centres: behaviour support, work with parents. Support for looked after children and parents/carers to engage in educational process, enable looked after children to identify and achieve goals and to provide family learning opportunities. Enhance life experience and opportunities for children in residential units by attending cultural and sporting activities. 	
South Ayrshire	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Consult with looked after children, school staff, parents, carers to develop, pilot and evaluate child-friendly Personal Education Plans. Work with carers and parents, developing or maintaining a care environment that promotes and celebrates learning. Use of HGIOS. Focus on equipping adults to promote learning. 	
South Lanarkshire	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Literacy: centres on story-telling initiative in four residential units with help of Children 1st and literacy co-ordinators in the units. Reducing exclusion: involves the development of packs for home-school link teachers when child is excluded from school. Hardware and educational software in children's units. Delivery of Learning with Care Training. 	
Stirling	Individually tailored educational interventions for looked after children who have experienced a sustained period of disengagement from mainstream education. In addition to an academic curriculum, flexible packages of support may include voluntary work, ASDAN, outdoor education, PSE, careers advice and art work. Stirling expects improved levels of achievement & attainment at 16, reduced numbers in NEET and/or offending.	

Pilot Project	Strands in original proposal	Significant changes noted
West Dunbartonshire	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve the coordination and analysis of available assessment information for all children in residential care and where necessary carry out a detailed educational assessment. 2. Work with parents of looked after children, to increase their involvement in child's education, improving confidence in supporting child's education. 3. Tackling high exclusion rates for looked after children by promoting 'alternatives to exclusion'. 	
West Lothian	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promotion of nurture groups in an education setting, targeting two schools with significant numbers of looked after children. 2. Developing flexible curricula for young people: one pilot secondary school to promote full time education, further education, employment and training. 3. Development of a buddy scheme where older looked after children support other looked after children as they enter secondary school. 4. Extension of an existing programme, Physical Activity for Confidence and Esteem, run in collaboration with Leisure Services to encourage young people to use sports and leisure facilities. 	Strand 3 changed to become an issues forum.

APPENDIX 2. SUMMARIES OF THE 18 PILOT PROJECTS

Appendix 2.1. Aberdeen City

Project Overview

Aberdeen City Council's pilot project aimed to raise the attainment of the looked after children within the authority, as well as to ensure that effective working practices were in place for looked after children in relation to education. The pilot focused on providing additional support for children looked after at home and developing personalised packages of support for those accommodated in two residential units. The project was partially able to meet its aims, and counts among its successful elements having on board motivated staff members, good sharing of information and good relationships between young people and staff, as well as raised attendance and an intervention package that offered young people the chance to engage with a wide range of learning opportunities.

How did the project come about?

The initial project ideas were based on the fact that the authority had identified children and young people looked after at home as attaining poorly, relative to their accommodated peers, and therefore the project leaders wanted to offer additional support to these children and young people and their families and schools. The project leaders also felt that they needed to involve those children and young people living in the city's children's homes. Barnardo's had also indicated to the project leaders that they had been concerned about the children and young people in their children's home who were not receiving a full time education, and they therefore wanted to be part of a partnership bid.

What was the project about?

The original proposal had three strands, but only two progressed. In Strand 1 the additional support for children looked after at home focused on family liaison work and linked with designated teachers to examine reasons for non-attendance and devise strategies to support attendance within the local authority. In Strand 2 personalised packages of support were created for children and young people living in two residential units. This strand was developed in conjunction with Barnardo's.

Who were the participants?

The Strand 1 participants were children and young people looked after at home who were pupils at one secondary school and three associated primaries. In Strand 2 the participants were young people identified from two medium-to-long term residential units within the authority.

How was the project staffed?

Strand 1 involved one full time project manager, one project strategist, one project assistant and one dedicated family liaison officer. There were also four designated teachers for looked after children and young people within the target schools who offered intermittent help. An educational researcher and an educational psychologist were also involved in this strand. Strand 2 involved two teachers and one principal support for learning worker on a full time basis. They worked with three support workers, two full-time and one part-time. As part of the partnership arrangement, a full time project co-ordinator and two teaching assistants were funded by Barnardo's. The staff involved in this strand had access (for advice) to a teacher of looked after children, a specialist looked after children's nurse and a counsellor.

What has the project judged to be the successful outcomes?

In relation to Strand 1, the staff members involved were said to be extremely motivated, a fact that came across clearly to all involved in the project. They played a key role in feeding back information to the project leaders about the barriers they faced in working within the education system in relation to looked after children and young people. The Family Liaison Officer was able to successfully engage with the families involved, and the project leaders believe that this was because she was based neither in social work nor education and was regarded as a 'neutral' point of contact who acted without a specific agenda. A postal scheme initiative whereby educational books were delivered to primary school aged looked after children, was also seen as successful. While these children were not deemed to be in need of significant support by the project, this initiative ensured that they were not left out of the wider plan to raise attainment (in this case focusing on reading levels). The initiative was welcomed by parents, carers and social workers and used as a basis for social workers to engage with the children.

In Strand 2 Barnardo's provided additional funding to employ a full time co-ordinator (the bid had assumed that a part time position would be feasible). The project leaders were also pleased that a teaching venue was identified that they hope will become a permanent commitment to this group of children. The project workers were valued because they were able to adapt to different roles and a large range of tasks.

You know we'd never ever hear from them, 'No that's not my job, that's not what I do'. Their job was 'looked after children', it was as broad as that...it comes down to specifically recruiting individuals who are motivated to work in this area and you know will make a difference, they will now change things for these children.

The number of children and young people involved in this strand was small. The project co-ordinator said that success was measured by changes for individuals, including improved attendance, reduction in exclusions, re-engagement with education, accessing further education, engaging with out of school activities and moving on to employment. An issue identified for future development relates to which professionals the young people feel comfortable talking to about their careers and future care.

In terms of meeting the initial aims of the project there was mixed success. In Strand 2 the successes achieved for individual children and young people appear to be connected with the involvement of the project workers, whereas the teaching aspect of the project is not regarded as having met the initial aims. The programme experienced low numbers of referrals as the children who were living in the residential units at the time were mostly managing to attend mainstream school. Overall the project leaders felt that while the initial aims were not fully met for this strand, other equally valuable successes were made.

Were there any difficulties which seriously impacted on the project?

The initial project proposal included three strands but one - an online learning scheme - was abandoned because of difficulties in providing staffing. There was also a considerable delay in setting up Strand 1, again because of staffing difficulties; once these were resolved the strand progressed as planned, but within a reduced time frame. In Strand 2 difficulties were experienced in relation to the teaching team assigned to the project. The team came from an existing project and it was felt that the team did not provide certain of the specific needs of the new project and that there should have been more prior consultation to ensure that the team and the project leaders were clear about their roles in working together. For example, it was felt that some of the teachers did not have had the specific skills required for working with the children involved, some of whom exhibited challenging behaviours. Also the teachers could be required to work with children in a different school stage from that which they were trained to teach. Staffing changes and long term illness severely impacted on the teaching resource. Management of this strand was also difficult because separate line managers for the teachers and project workers had been assigned.

What plans are there for sustainability?

Both of the strands are being continued until the end of July 2008 to take the young people through the exam period. Aberdeen City Council allocated funding for this extension. There are no plans for either of the pilots to be mainstreamed. There are however plans to disseminate within the Council messages of success, good practice and lessons learned, and to use these to inform and develop existing roles like those of the home-school liaison and family liaison officers. They are also interested in rolling out the postal book scheme on a wider basis using current resources available within the authority.

Appendix 2.2. Dumfries and Galloway

Project Overview

Dumfries and Galloway's pilot project aimed to raise educational attainment through a multi-agency approach to supporting children and young people who were looked after, and by taking a holistic approach to the child and their needs in order to engage them fully in learning. They looked at improving educational outcomes in the broadest sense, including achievement and participation, rather than attainment only through traditional education paths. Their holistic approach meant looking at such factors as personal growth, and nurturing the potential and talents of the children and young people. The aims of the project were partially met, and successes of the project include improved communication between multi-agency partners, and an intervention that allowed children and young people to engage with activities that they thrived in and would not otherwise have had the chance to enjoy.

How did the project come about?

The pilot grew out of previous work within the authority: interdisciplinary work; the development of authority guidelines on looked after children's education; and Learning with Care training that had been delivered - all of which suggested a need for both the multi-disciplinary and holistic approaches.

What was the project about?

The project leaders identified five strands to their project which were entirely interdependent: the involvement of a full-time project officer to drive the work; developing personal learning plans for looked after children; trialling the effectiveness of intervention models (e.g. developing and delivering flexible modules and approaches related to employability skills); staff training; and reducing barriers to learning at the level of the individual.

Who were the participants?

The personal learning plan strand was gradually rolled out across the authority (the original intention to pilot in two areas was abandoned, due to time pressure). The need to complete a My Learning Plan was an action from each child's LAC Review, so that most looked after children had at least an initial personal learning plan completed.

In addition, approximately 95 children and young people benefited from the individual funding available and from participation in the interventions trialled through schools.

The multi-agency training was attended by over 240 staff working in education, social work, health and the voluntary and independent sectors.

How was the project staffed?

A full-time project officer was appointed.

What has the project judged to be the successful outcomes?

The training strand which had a multi-agency focus was evaluated very positively by the participants. There have also been successful outcomes for individuals who have accessed the project fund to reduce 'barriers to learning', allowing children and young people to take part in activities that they would not otherwise have been able to access. The project leaders also believe that the pilot has encouraged different parties to work together to improve outcomes for looked after children and has increased understanding and communication between these parties. They are also pleased about an unexpected outcome of the project, which is that the resilience agenda within the authority was highlighted and developed. Out of the training element of the project, a resource booklet was created aimed at what helps in terms of resilience. The booklet was printed and disseminated to all schools and to the social work and voluntary sectors.

The personal learning planning continues to be rolled out, with adjustments made according to feedback. Overall these are regarded as a success, focusing on the holistic needs of the children and young people, and the project leaders hope to continue to share the message behind the holistic method, i.e. that what happens outside school can affect learning as much as what happens inside school.

Were there any difficulties which seriously impacted on the project?

Because of processes happening within the local authority, the project was without leadership for several months in the initial stages, which meant that time between the project proposal and the execution of the project was almost one year. This meant that by the time the project started staff involved had 'lost sight' of what they had signed up to, and the project officer had to spend time looking backwards instead of moving forwards. Based on these difficulties, the project officer would recommend making use of a 'year zero' strategy which would allow leaders time between receiving funding and delivery of the project. The project officer also raised concerns about the often short term nature of pilot schemes, which make it difficult to measure impact.

What plans are there for sustainability?

This project has allowed many agency processes involving looked after children to be reviewed, and positive changes to be made. The project leaders would encourage further training and support to ensure that the practices they recommend are executed successfully. The barriers to learning aspect of the project will continue for another year, funded by the authority. The project leaders plan to disseminate messages of good practice via the Corporate Parenting Agenda and related local authority conferences. My Learning Plan (personal learning planning) continues to be used and ensures the child's view is central in the learning aspect of their plan.

Appendix 2.3. Dundee City

Project Overview

Dundee City Council's original pilot project bid aimed to offer additional educational support for looked after young people in school, for young people who had been excluded from school, and where the young people were facing transitions or exams. It also aimed to deliver outreach activities through after-school clubs and weekend activities, as well as support during school holidays for children and young people in residential units. Support for parents and carers, relating to educational attainment, was also offered. The project planned to make improvements in provision of data relating to looked after children and young people. Overall, the aims of the project were met. A key element of the project regarded as successful related to the multi-agency approach, including the delivery of the *Learning with Care* training materials. The pilot steering group was pleased that the confidence and self-esteem of the young people involved in the project appeared to have increased.

How did the project come about?

The Pilot emerged as a direct response to known poor educational outcomes for looked after children. It aimed to build on existing provision such as Kick It Off (KIKO), thus offering added value, and to utilise the work of the Social Work Department's Review Team and partnership working with colleagues from health.

What was the project about?

The project originally had three strands. The first involved study support and tutoring for young people taking Standard Grades and National Qualifications. The second strand was an outreach programme for children in residential units. The third strand was aimed at providing support for parents and carers. A further objective of the project was to be involved in developments to improve data collection by establishing a client data tracking system. The project evolved to include nurture group work with a small group of pupils who were failing to attain and also literacy and self-esteem work with a group on young women. The focus of the third strand moved towards multi-agency training, using the *Learning with Care* materials.

Who were the participants?

In Strand 1 looked after children excluded from school were involved, as well as pupils referred by schools as needing additional support for learning. Strand 2 involved children in residential units. Birth parents, foster carers and residential staff were involved in receiving support in Strand 3.

How was the project staffed?

A senior officer was appointed to manage the project and to organise data collection and analysis. Two link teachers were appointed. They also had responsibility for parent/carer support. Two resource workers were responsible for the outreach activities. The project received support from a clerical officer.

What has the project judged to be the successful outcomes?

The pilot steering group felt that the original aims of the project had been fulfilled. They thought that the multi-agency and co-located approach had proved to be very beneficial and were also pleased about the links formed with the schools, facilitated by the teachers seconded to the pilot. The external agencies involved, such as colleges and media organisations, also added to the strong partnership the project developed. Attainment levels and exam results for young people who received study support in 2007-08 will be available in the pilot project's own local evaluation report.

Within the young women's literacy group developed as part of the project, self-esteem and confidence levels increased to the point that some of the young people were able to take part in a theatre performance before an audience of over 100 people, during a corporate parenting event. The young people also made films about their experiences from their own perspective.

Were there any difficulties which seriously impacted on the project?

There were initial difficulties recruiting staff, delaying the start. The pilot steering group felt it was difficult to contribute to the national evaluation process because of the time lost. They found that the timing of their project didn't quite 'fit' with the timing of the official evaluations, and the project leaders have concerns about who will be available to complete the evaluation, since the posts will have ended because of the end of funding. The steering group had to find extra resources to maintain supports for the young people during their exams.

What plans are there for sustainability?

The authority has secured funding specifically for promoting education and increasing the achievement of looked after children. There will not be another project, but the funding will be used to provide additional support for existing services, e.g. extra teaching. The pilot steering group feel that it is important to develop existing provisions within the authority rather than tackling issues through the use of time-limited projects.

The authority will sustain the roles of the teaching staff involved in the project, as well as the after-school and holiday provisions. The steering group intends to share their internal project evaluation, including recommendations for practice, with the authority's Integrated Children Services Planning Group.

Appendix 2.4. East Ayrshire

Project Overview

East Ayrshire Council's project aimed to support looked after young people in S3/4 using IT provisions that would help with Standard Grade studies. These provisions meant that schools were able to offer pupils: the chance to work on lessons where they could also access interactive individual tutorials from teachers, online; one to

one mentoring support from teachers; and supported study sessions. The project also aimed to involve training and support for parents, carers and residential staff. The aims of East Ayrshire's pilot project were regarded as having been partially met, and the project leaders believe that their project increased attendance, decreased exclusions and increased engagement with education. The project highlighted the value of individual mentoring in supporting looked after young people in their education.

How did the project come about?

The project arose as a result of awareness of the low attainment of looked after young people, locally and nationally, and the need to address this.

What was the project about?

The project software was developed by a commercial company, Learning Curve. Young people could make use of a series of mini-lessons covering different areas of the foundation and general levels of the Standard Grade curriculum in mathematics and English. On-line tutorial support was also offered. Access was provided at every secondary school in the authority. Schools were responsible for identifying young people who would benefit from participation. Young people disengaged from education were reached via social work. Each young person was provided with a log-on password and the website could be accessed at home or at school. Schools were awarded funding and operational and financial management. They were therefore able to purchase computers and educational software. They provided mentoring and supported study sessions. Training and support were also offered to parents, carers and residential staff.

Who were the participants?

The participants were all looked after young people in S3 and S4. Participation was based on an opt-in process. Parents, carers and residential staff were also involved in the training and support part of the pilot.

How was the project staffed?

The Quality Improvement Officer for the local authority co-ordinated and had overall responsibility for the project. There were approximately 30-40 other staff involved: from the education sector (school senior managers, class teachers/assistants, specialist teachers for looked after children); from the social work sector (managers and social workers); from the residential care and youth strategy sectors, corporate IT and central administration. Involvement in the project was added to everyone's remit and no role was created specifically for the project.

What has the project judged to be the successful outcomes?

The project improved attendance (cohort 1 (N=96), up 3.4%; cohort 2 (N=56), up 9.8%) and decreased exclusions (cohort 1, exclusion events down by 71%; cohort 2, exclusion events down by 82%). The pupils involved in the project are said to be more involved in their schooling. It is hoped that these improvements will translate

to improvements in hard indicators (like exam results) in time. School staff involved in the project thought the mentoring aspect of the project was very successful as the young people valued having a professional interested in them as individuals.

Were there any difficulties which seriously impacted on the project?

The aims identified at the planning stage of the pilot have been partially met. Initially it was reported that pupils and teachers had difficulty accessing the online materials, both in school and at home. Access problems for the pupils were resolved. The software company had difficulty recruiting writers to create the mini-lessons for the pupils, although the project leaders say that this did not impact on the delivery of the lessons. In retrospect, more attention should have been given to the involvement of the people, rather than mainly to the software element. Although the software proved valuable for independent learners, the young people involved in this pilot required the support of mentors. The project leaders also see the short term nature of the pilot as a barrier to longer term success, as they feel that improvements in attainment can only be evidenced over a longer period of time.

What plans are there for sustainability?

The authority will continue to give S3 and S4 looked after pupils access to the software, until June 2009. They will also fund the continuance of the mentoring and tutorial support elements within schools. In terms of the dissemination of good practice, the looked after co-ordinators for secondary schools meet regularly and give each other updates on progress within their own establishments.

Appendix 2.5. East Lothian

Project Overview

East Lothian's project focused on raising attainment of looked after children by providing targeted support, mostly in English but also in maths of primary school-age children. A Reading Fair was organised for all looked after children, parents and carers. There was a programme of raising awareness within the authority. Training for designated teachers was held and this will continue. A corporate parent conference was held.

How did the project come about?

East Lothian approached the project from a position of relative strength, having been in a position where 100% of care leavers attained some qualifications and 71% had Standard Grades in both English and maths in 2004. The project had three aims: to raise the attainment of the most vulnerable and excluded looked after children; to define 'what works' in relation to raising attainment; and to offer a model of good practice for colleagues elsewhere.

What was the project about?

The main focus of the pilot project was to help young people to be interested and engaged in their learning, and to build their capacity to value learning, for example through emotional awareness, developing and experiencing restorative practices and also giving them tools to engage with their community. The project had three strands. Firstly, it aimed to provide 'holistic support and intervention packages', i.e. additional individualised teaching and behaviour support, with a view to raising attainment through the reduction of exclusions and improved attendance. Children will have individual learning plans. Secondly the project planned to work with parents and carers providing support on homework and school systems. Thirdly the project included an evaluation to identify 'what works' and proposed offering a model of good practice.

Who were the participants?

The original plan was to reach all children in residential care (23), about half of fostered children (50), and about a third of children on home supervision (25). The full age range of 5 to 18 was to be included. Schools would be asked to refer looked after children and young people that they felt would benefit from extra support, particularly in relation to English and maths. The parents and carers of the children who became involved in the project would be invited to participate in strand 2 and all participants would be included in the evaluation strand. The original focus on exclusion changed when the responsibility for excluded children within the authority became part of the duties of the mainstream behaviour support service. The target group became mainly primary school-aged children, including some who were not looked after but were regarded as being vulnerable, and there was a particular focus on developing literacy skills.

How was the project staffed?

Two full time teachers and a home-school link worker were appointed. Existing staff from the Inclusion Service, Educational Psychology Service, the Family Support Team and the OSHL/Study Support teams were available to support the project as required. The Children's Services Officer, the Family Support team supported by the link worker would take responsibility for working with parents and carers. Evaluation of the project including collating baseline data and ongoing research was included in the remit of an educational psychology assistant. During the project one of the teachers and the link worker resigned to take posts elsewhere. They were replaced by three part-time support for learning teachers; two were employed for a day and a half per week and the third was employed for two and a half days.

What has the project judged to be the successful outcomes?

The project leaders believe that the pilot met its aims in terms of raising reading attainment, and their internal evaluation of baseline and follow up data shows improvement. The project also aimed to meet the targets set out within We Can and Must Do Better: for example, they provided additional support for residential care workers so that they could support the young people they worked with; support sessions were also held for foster carers, and leaflets and other support materials were developed; teaching support was provided in maths; a series of training events based on We Can and Must Do Better for designated teaching staff was held. A corporate parent conference was also held by the authority, aimed at service

managers and voluntary services, to look at corporate responsibility and the notion of children's champions. The project leaders believed that the profile of looked after children had been raised.

A Reading Fair, aimed at looked after children, parents and carers, was judged to have been particularly successful.

Were there any difficulties which seriously impacted on the project?

There were delays in appointing staff and then some full time staff left. Permanent staff were redeployed part time to assist the project. They found that high tariff cases, like young people at risk of exclusion, could leave little time for other cases. Also, the focus of the project broadened from being mostly about support for children excluded from school to reflect the findings of *We Can and Must Do Better*. This coincided with changes to authority policy. It was refocused on raising attainment of looked after children by providing targeted support mostly in English but also in maths. The priority became raising the attainment in terms of reading of primary school-age children.

What plans are there for sustainability?

The project in full will not be sustained, although it is hoped that key parts of it will be continued. The project leader hopes to carry on the role of the support for learning teachers who were working with the looked after children on reading and maths. The Reading Fair will be repeated next year, with the help of the Adviser in English. The authority plans to continue training designated teachers and to have follow-up meetings to discuss relevant issues. Data awareness and gathering will also continue, and action points for the authority to work on to increase the positive outcomes for looked after children will be identified. The project leaders will be highlighting the positive support that they have had from schools and the positive outcomes for the young people that they have seen, when disseminating good practice messages from the project.

Appendix 2.6. Edinburgh City

Project Overview

Edinburgh City Council's pilot project aimed to support children through transitions from primary to secondary schools. The project leaders hoped that, as a result of the project, secondary schools would respond better to the needs of looked after children and young people. The project leaders felt that aims of the pilot had been met, that they were able to develop good relationships and to offer a consistent support network for the young people. They also felt that professional roles were developed in relation to understanding the needs of looked after children and young people. They believe there was evidence of increased attendance, re-engagement with education, and nurturing of talents.

How did the project come about?

Edinburgh City Council wanted to try a different approach to improving the education of looked after children. They had received some money from the Changing Children's Services Fund to work with children and young people living at home and wanted to expand this work.

What was the project about?

The project was about working with children at the stage of transition from primary to secondary school. The project leaders hoped to build better links between the schools and the homes of the young people, and to make the secondary school experience more like that of primary school, where teachers can often respond better to the needs of the children because they know more about the situation outside school. Another aim of the project was to raise awareness in schools of the issues looked after children face, primarily by training key members of school staff, and to have additional support plans for all the looked after children involved in the project.

Who were the participants?

The participants were P7 pupils being supported as they progressed into S1. This meant linking in with six secondary schools and approximately 28 primary schools within Edinburgh.

How was the project staffed?

One teacher (acting as team leader), and an Education Welfare Officer were seconded to the project full time. Four full time learning assistants were recruited to work within the schools identified.

What has the project judged to be the successful outcomes?

The project aimed to replicate a primary school-type setting which would be more 'nurturing' in nature, by having one person within the secondary school that the children could get to know. The learning assistants reported that this approach was effective. The learning assistants were seen as important people in the children's lives, who were consistently available. The training element of the project, which was delivered by the learning assistants, was also believed to have been successful. This aspect allowed the assistants to develop their role and become more confident in taking on new tasks. The project leaders said that the support of the learning assistants meant that a number of children are still in school who would otherwise not have been. Increased rates of attendance, re-engagement with education were also reported.

The project leaders also said that the pilot helped to raise awareness in schools about the obstacles looked after children face on a daily basis.

One of the comments that was made to me early on in the project which I thought actually typifies teachers' perceptions of these children was: 'Their problems are not in school, their problems are at home.' And we are trying to explain, 'No their

problems come with them.' I think that a very common perception that has to be challenged is that children should be able to leave their emotional baggage at the school door and I think that anyone who works with these children knows that this is just not a possibility.

The project leaders found that by using money made available through the pilot scheme, they were able to engage children in activities that they otherwise could not have been involved in, for example, in educational excursions that nurtured the young people's talents. The close relationships that the learning assistants developed with the children allowed talents and interests to be identified.

Were there any difficulties which seriously impacted on the project?

The project suffered from significant delays because of staff recruitment, meaning that they were not able to work with children during the first term. The schools involved were disappointed that the project did not start on time. They did however manage to make up for lost time once staff were in post. Some of the learning assistants moved on during the life of the project, which meant that some children had to form new relationships.

One of the key aims of the project, to have clear planning and clear additional support plans for all the looked after children involved, was resisted by some schools, and was not developed as well as the project leaders would have liked. There was some adjustment and flexibility required on the part of the project team in order to be able to work with many different schools and some schools were more responsive to the project than others. The project leaders said that a 'settling in' period, in which they would form relationships with the schools before starting to work with them, would have been valuable. The schools had to get used to the project operating in their school and the learning assistants being employed by the project rather than the schools, which was not normal practice. In some cases, it seemed that while the schools were happy to receive the extra resources the project provided, they were less happy about adopting the ideas of the project leaders. Overall, it was felt that integrating the project into the structure of the schools was less successful than the project leaders had hoped.

What plans are there for sustainability?

There are no plans to sustain the project, a disappointment for the project leaders. They are keen to ensure that awareness raising, information exchange and training of relevant school staff continues. The project leaders feel that, as a result of the pilot, there is a much higher degree of understanding in the secondary schools about the issues affecting looked after children. Messages of good practice have also been disseminated by the project to service managers across the city, and have received a positive response.

Appendix 2.7. Falkirk

Project Overview

Falkirk Council's pilot project originally aimed to improve the education available to young people who are looked after or who are looked after and accommodated. The project leaders felt that dialogue between agencies had to be increased in order to provide better support to the young people, and that alternative packages of education should be put together to suit individual young people. Also, they wanted to improve data systems for information about looked after children and young people.

The aims set out by Falkirk's pilot scheme were regarded as having been partially met. Successes included:

- improving the quality assurance procedures of residential schools;
- putting personal education plans in place;
- improving links with schools;
- raising the profile of the needs of children and young people who are looked after;
- improving on data systems holding information on looked after children and young people.

How did the project come about?

At the time the funding became available, Falkirk Council was discussing young people who were in crisis care and the fact that often these young people do not receive a coherent education. The authority was experiencing problems accessing education locally for these young people, and was aware that often crisis care placements do not have an educational component. Falkirk felt that they should be talking to schools more and obtaining packages of education for young people in crisis care, based on at least the core subjects. Also, they were concerned about a number of issues in residential schools, for example, the quality of education being delivered. There was also a need to make sure that information about the young people required by schools was easy to obtain, and that schools had access to a contact person.

What was the project about?

The first strand aimed to identify the educational needs of accommodated young people and improve positive working relationships between all Falkirk staff and the voluntary sector. The project aimed to develop educational programmes in the key areas of literacy, numeracy and personal and social development and which covered a broad and balanced curriculum, as defined in the 5-14 guidelines, or, where appropriate, qualifications such as Standard Grade, Access 1,2,3 or ASDAN modules. Strand 2 offered a specific service for young people accommodated in placements outwith the Falkirk Council area. This strand involved a quality assurance role - visiting schools, talking to the young people about their education, looking at what was being offered, and giving guidance and advice to the schools about options.

Who were the participants?

The looked after and accommodated pupils were at the centre of the pilot, especially the accommodated children. In Strand 1 the young people were living in various care facilities. Their locations were nationwide, and any child with parents living in Falkirk and therefore could be on a Falkirk authority school roll, had the potential to be involved.

How was the project staffed?

The day to day responsibility of the project lay with one looked after and accommodated education co-ordinator. The role involved liaising with crisis care providers and residential schools, identifying what curriculum could be offered, and ensuring the delivery of appropriate educational packages to the children to provide continuity. Educational psychologists were also consulted on an intermittent basis about individual cases. Some resources were deployed to support the integration of an accommodated child into a mainstream school.

What has the project judged to be the successful outcomes?

The looked after and accommodated co-ordinator was regarded as having been successful in the role:

- advancing the quality assurance procedures of residential schools;
- visiting all schools related to the project;
- attending the reviews of the looked after children in these schools;
- ensuring that the children had education plans; and
- creating a bank of information on these children that had not previously been available.

The pilot also raised the profile of all looked after children in a number of ways. For example:

- when Quality Inspection Officers visit schools they now include looked after children in their reviews and collect data about them, as well as asking questions about their education;
- the looked after and accommodated co-ordinator ensures that continuity of education for looked after pupils is now part of the Joint Care Committee Resource Allocation Group's agenda;
- the co-ordinator has liaised successfully with relevant parties about the education of those who return to Falkirk from external placements.

Were there any difficulties which seriously impacted on the project?

The timescale of the pilot project and a lack of flexibility in the bid were regarded as having impacted on the project. Initially the project leaders experienced difficulties in recruiting the co-ordinator and while the project bid detailed a desire to appoint 0.5 educational psychologist, this aspect was not fulfilled because of a reported shortage of educational psychologists in Scotland. They did, however, involve educational psychologists in several individual cases, and in consultancy on procedures. The project leaders felt that having an educational psychologist dedicated to the project would have added both quality and status to the learning plans being drawn up for the individual pupils in the residential schools.

The project leaders also experienced difficulties in establishing a reliable data system that could 'speak to' both the education and social work sectors. They also highlighted the need for staff in schools to be aware of the fact that private foster carers were taking children from other authorities, and that the right questions needed to be asked by the schools so that Falkirk City Council could monitor these children.

The project was not able to address the issue of children in crisis care. However, the Additional Support for Learning Adviser (LAC Co-ordination) is furthering this concern at both authority (Falkirk Children's Commission) and national (the forum) levels.

What plans are there for sustainability?

A proposal to continue the post of the co-ordinator and the required administrative support has been made to the authority, and accepted. The authority hopes to develop the roles of other relevant parties who can assist in their goals, for example, educational psychologists, school-based looked after children co-ordinators who might take on the responsibility for liaising with schools from other authorities regarding continuity for those who return to Falkirk schools.

Good practice will be disseminated through a network of Looked After Children Co-ordinators working in schools. The project leaders are interested in the development of a national code of practice regarding procedures in relation to looked after children. This includes:

- having a standard procedure for reporting and the transfer of documentation
- addressing the issue of whether every looked after child should have a co-ordinated support plan
- working with private providers to ensure that they are inspected according to national guidelines
- addressing the question of why criteria for taking children into care are determined locally

They would also like to see the issue of crisis care addressed nationally.

Appendix 2.8. Fife

Project Overview

Fife Council aimed to develop more effective data systems for looked after children and young people than were already being used in the authority. The pilot project leaders also wished to enhance planning and monitoring of young people's education and to provide additional educational support at key transitional stages of the young people's lives. The aims of pilot were partially met. Improvement in data systems and the development of a resource pack about the needs of young people in relation to education were the main achievements. The project also had some success in identifying key activities and strategies which more effectively support young people in education at points of crisis or change in their care circumstances.

How did the project come about?

The funding for this project provided a timely opportunity to address, in a focused way, issues about which the services were aware and had wanted to address for some time.

What was the project about?

The project had three aims and three strands. The aims were: to develop effective data systems for looked after children; to enhance planning and monitoring by developing existing personal learning planning models to take account of the particular needs of looked after children, taking account of family group conferencing and person centred planning techniques already being used; and to provide enhanced educational support at key transitional stages, in particular when a child is at the point of entry to care.

Who were the participants?

Strand 1 involved the development of a data system. Strand 2 (personal learning planning) was piloted in one school cluster. Children and young people who became involved in Strand 3 were included in the personal learning planning process. Strand 3 targeted all children referred to the Social Work Transitions Team. The team provided resources for children and families when an emergency admission to care was likely for a child living at home.

How was the project staffed?

A data management project officer and a project planning officer were appointed for strands 1 and 2. Two educational link workers and a manager were appointed for Strand 3, although this staffing was part time, and the target level of appointment was never achieved. All staff members had a teaching background. Additionally, existing staff from IT services, Psychological Services and Social Work supported the project.

What has the project judged to be the successful outcomes?

Strand 1 (data collection) in particular has delivered good outcomes, according to the project leader, and the data systems for looked after children and young people are considerably improved. The authority now has a much more robust system for processing Regulation 7 letters and a monthly monitoring system, which records attainment, attendance, and exclusions, as well as general progress, areas of concern and unresolved issues. As a result, the six joint action teams (JATs) within the authority can identify specific areas of work requiring attention. The functionality means that staff from Fife Council, and independent residential houses, both Council and independent, are able to feed into the information database, providing information about a young person's educational progress. This helps to identify cases where a problem cannot be resolved within the houses, and where the intervention of a service manager may help. Schools have given positive feedback about the new system. Every month school liaison groups discuss all looked after pupils in the school and updated information is sent to the Joint Access Team.

Previously we'd given them a fairly open ended request: 'Will you monitor looked after children?', which is so vague as to be virtually meaningless. We assumed people would know what that meant, whereas now we are giving them explicit instructions. There is a strict way to record it...The first couple of forms, people were scratching their heads and asking questions, but when you get into the habit of doing it - it's very straightforward.

The outcome of Strand 2 is a resource pack for looked after children and young people which makes reference to Fife-based issues and is concerned with planning, helping schools understand the issues in relation to interrupted learning and attachment. The pack was developed in conjunction with one secondary school and three associated primary schools, and has been extensively piloted. Publication of the pack has not proceeded at this stage as much of the content has been overtaken by the LAC web site, developed as one recommendation of 'We Can and Must Do Better'. It is likely that the pack will be electronically published in an abbreviated form and act as a gateway to the Learning and Teaching Scotland Looked After Children website and other web based resources.

Were there any difficulties which seriously impacted on the project?

The third strand, providing enhanced educational support at key transitional stages, was less successful. A difficulty in recruiting staff members for this strand impacted on its development. The staff recruited covered primary education, secondary education, learning support and behaviour support, though the project work proved challenging to adapt to in the early stages. Once confidence grew, their roles began to develop. While the project leaders received positive feedback, the responses also raised wider concerns about the systems already in place between social work services and schools for discussing the progress of looked after children. For example, the quality of feedback from schools to social work staff should be addressed as part of the school improvement agenda, and this will be examined as part of the authority's looked after strategy.

Other difficulties were also identified. For example, the workers sometimes found it was difficult to gather meaningful information about the basic attainment and attendance of young people in schools, which was often due to periods of interrupted learning and crisis placements where no education provision had been available. These young people can become lost in the system which results in an associated loss of information. The project leaders would also like to see developments in the area of transitions. Therefore Strand 3, though less successful in terms of meetings the aims of the original bid, has been useful for identifying areas that need attention.

The management structure of the project, based on a matrix model of two education and two social work personnel, also created some difficulty. While it is important to have joint-agency working and commitment to projects, it would perhaps have been better if a simpler and more transparent model of management was employed.

What plans are there for sustainability?

The data system will be maintained, and information for primary school children and children in placements outwith Fife will be added to the database. There is consideration of developing an electronic form of the LAC resource pack, to be more accessible and available for regular updating and monitoring by schools, though as noted above this is subject to review in light of the new LAC website.

The posts of the educational transition workers have ended and will not be resumed, but key learning points can be taken forward from their work, and these will be shared with schools. These points include information, such as what schools should do when young people leave for another authority but remain the responsibility of the school in Fife (because they are still on the school roll).

The authority is drawing up a framework of best practice evidenced by the project, which they will use as part of their quality improvement agenda, both in schools and in residential houses. Opportunities to disseminate the project recommendations within the education and social work sectors of the authority will be seized.

Appendix 2.9. Glasgow City

Project Overview

Glasgow's project originally had three strands: direct tutorial support to assist where there have been gaps in learning or to give extra help for examination preparation; more indirect support to allow young people to participate in educational or cultural activities; development of a training pack for parents, carers and social workers to help them support young people working on folios for examinations. The third strand did not progress and the funding earmarked for the first two strands was used more generally to support a range of activities aimed at providing for looked after young people attending school, college and vocational education projects.

How did the project come about?

The project is an expansion of the current provision of out of school support for Glasgow's looked after children and young people.

What was the project about?

The overall aim was to improve the educational outcomes for the young people involved in the project by providing a flexible, needs-led package of inter-related education support. Originally, the three elements were considered as one strand. However, the Glasgow team indicated that they should be considered as three separate strands.

Strand 1: Expansion of existing tutorial support. Out of school support was initially offered only to those children and young people who were in foster care or in Children's Units. It is targeted in particular at children and young people who have

either missed significant periods of learning at school or those who are preparing to sit examinations. The project plans to expand that provision to those children and young people looked after at home.

Strand 2: Development of a 'Flexible Education Support Scheme'. The 'Flexible Education Support Scheme' relates to providing support to remove barriers to learning that many children and young people face. It is directly linked to the child or young person's Education Support Plan. Examples are: supporting the child, and possibly family, to attend, for example, nursery school, further or higher education on a regular and sustained basis.

Strand 3: Development of a folio training pack. The proposed resource aimed to provide parents, carers and social work staff with guidance on how to support young people when preparing their folios for SQA examinations. The potential for peer mentoring between parents, carers and social work staff was also to be considered.

Who were the participants?

Strand 1: Children and young people who are looked after at home as well as those who are in foster care or in Children's Units. Strand 2: as Strand 1. Strand 3: as Strand 1; additionally involvement of the parents/carers and social work staff as a means of support.

How is the project staffed?

For the project overall, there is one full-time member of staff. In Strand 2 other agencies and providers (voluntary and private sector) were involved recruited as appropriate.

What has the project judged to be the successful outcomes?

The project began following a delay of six months. Strand 1 progressed as planned (taking account of the delay stated). Strand 2 began by setting criteria for access to the funds. Responsibility allocating funding was devolved to community planning partnerships. Unfortunately it was not possible to conduct fieldwork to discuss the operational aspects of the project.

Were there any difficulties which seriously impacted on the project?

The project faced significant difficulties in relation to overall co-ordination. The author of the original application for funding was seconded out of the authority. There was a significant delay in appointing a project co-ordinator who then set up the operational arrangements for the project. That person left the authority; a replacement was appointed but unfortunately sustained several periods of sick leave. The project suffered from a lack of co-ordination and reporting.

What plans are there for sustainability?

There has been a significant reorganisation of the infrastructure for the delivery of services for children and families, notably with a sub-division into five area community planning partnerships which coincide with the community health

partnerships. The authority has made improving the wellbeing of looked after children and young people a particular priority. Provision of support aimed at improving school attendance and attainment, reducing exclusions and support to help with participation in educational, vocational and cultural activities will be sustained. An important outcome of the project is the recognition of the need to provide support for all looked after children and young people, not just those looked after away from home.

Appendix 2.10. Highland

Project Overview

The project comprised four separate strands which included enhancing the educational attainment of children, reintegrating looked after children into mainstream education, creating educationally rich environments in residential units and providing out of school study programmes. The project progressed in line with the original proposals with no major changes.

How did the project come about?

The project came about by identifying gaps in the education of looked after children in Highland. Overall, the project was committed to improving achievement and the opportunities for achievement for the young people involved.

What is the project about?

There were four separate strands to the project. Strand 1 aimed to promote the effective coordination of support for the education of looked after children (particularly those with home supervision requirements) and to secure full time education provisions to allow the young people to develop to their fullest potential. Strand 2 addressed the difficulties experienced by looked after and looked after and accommodated children whereby they are academically disadvantaged due to disruption in their lives. A group of young people attended the Highland Football Academy on a regular basis by way of assisting them to prepare for return to school, through physical, social and educational activities. Strand 3 involved an Educational Achievement Facilitator working with residential unit staff to have a focussed and intensive approach to the educational environment in residential care. Strand 4 was an out of school study programme involving homework clubs and individual tutoring.

Who were the participants?

Each strand had a different cohort, outlined below in the descriptions of the strands.

What has the project judged to be the successful outcomes?

In Strand 1, a teacher was appointed as the Education Link Worker for children looked after at home. The Link Worker was notified as soon as a child became looked after. He would receive a pack with information which detailed the reason for the child being referred. He would then start to work with the social worker, the child

and the parents and would liaise with the school to put a plan in place, including additional support. He identified the barriers and how to overcome them in a way that was meaningful for the child or young person. This approach was well received and was judged to be ‘...hugely successful’. This strand was successful because it addressed the issues which cause children to have a poor attendance record and it identified ways of overcoming barriers which resulted in more children being back at school. It also ensured that children were picked up at a much earlier stage than before. Part of the success of this strand is attributed to the fact that the education link worker was a teacher and his skills and experience complemented those of the social workers. In addition, his personality was ideally suited for the role and he contributed well and as a member of a team. The project leader felt that it was too soon after the start of this strand to see concrete evidence of its effectiveness in improvement in attainment.

In Strand 2, the Goals 4 Us project was very successful with the P7 transition group. The staff found that this age group was particularly enjoyable to work with, and also more enthusiastic. This was because the S1s and S2s were more disengaged by the time they were referred to the project. Some of the children who coped well with the small and very supportive environment have managed to maintain attendance at an out of school tuition service. Some have engaged in education, even if they have not managed to reintegrate into full-time education. This strand has been successful because of the number of children that it has been able to reintegrate into mainstream education. It has also been flexible in being able to reintegrate children at a slower pace when there have been problems.

In Strand 3, the Educational Achievement Facilitator did a lot of work on resources for residential units, working with staff on materials and packs for children in school on a part-time basis, out of school, or as homework. The facilitator also liaised with FE colleges and arranged for college staff to meet the young people and staff from the children’s units to hear about the types of courses available, the level of these courses and the type of support available at the colleges, and how to access this support. Staff at units spoke very highly of this aspect of the strand and felt it was both beneficial and enjoyable. The facilitator also arranged to get computing equipment into the units and for appropriate security, like firewalls. She also organised an IT trainer to work with unit staff so that they could deal with day to day issues like ensuring that the firewall was operational and that the children were not accessing certain web sites. Some staff were also trained to a higher level so that they could do troubleshooting and reset the system if necessary. The facilitator also worked directly with individual staff in the units to coach them. This strand has been successful because it has helped to sustain an educationally rich environment in most of the units. Also, some units where children did not go to school now have all children attending school. The units are keeping their resources up to date and are proactively seeking assistance to ensure this happens. Some units have also reorganised to create learning rooms.

In Strand 4, a number of initiatives were started. Originally nine children started on the Kuman Maths and English scheme. The maths seems to have been very successful with some of the children still doing it for 20 minutes every night, although this is onerous for foster carers. The children involved in the Kuman scheme improved in 5–14 levels and the schools reported that there was a marked

improvement in the children's confidence to tackle work on their own and in their approach to school work.

All young people in S4 were offered a tutor in English, maths or any other subject they were doing at Standard Grade. Some children had more than one tutor. Every looked after child in S4 was contacted via their school and social worker. The tutoring worked well for the children in foster care but did not work so well with children in residential care or those looked after at home. All of the fostered children achieved Standard Grade English and maths in 2007, in addition to other standard grades.

Were there any difficulties which seriously impacted on the project?

In Strand 1, the Education Link Worker was given the opportunity to stay in post when the initial secondment ended but elected to return to classroom teaching because of the amount of travelling involved. It has subsequently proved difficult to get a replacement member of staff to fill this role.

In Strand 2, it was realised that having a mixed cohort with different age groups and different attendance regimes was difficult to manage and made group work and relationship building challenging. This meant that it was more difficult to settle the group down.

In Strand 3 the biggest obstacle to overcome was that the unit workers wanted the Educational Achievement Facilitator to come in and work directly with the children, rather than to coach them and help them to establish good learning facilities and practices and be able to support and encourage the young people. There was a lot of resistance as care staff did not see education as part of their remit. They felt that education was the responsibility of schools and the care of the children was their responsibility. Also, the start of this strand was delayed by three months as the school that the facilitator was employed in was not prepared to release her until they had a replacement. This meant there was insufficient time to bed in some of the initiatives like the liaison work with colleges, the units and the young people.

In Strand 4, offering a tutor to children who are looked after at home did not work particularly well. This was judged to be because the children tend to be living in rather chaotic circumstances. The success of putting homework tutors into the residential units was variable but two of the units are still using the tutors.

The amount of time and effort required to manage and run the four separate strands was underestimated. With hindsight, a co-ordinator should have been appointed to manage the project. If the project was running in future then the lessons learned would be: (1) Ensure that there is senior management responsibility for the project and do not allow the responsibility to be delegated. (2) Recognise the amount of work that is required to support a project of this nature in terms of management, coordination and reporting and ensure that this is included in the budget. (3) Be realistic about the number of strands that you can support and run. If the project was to start again then there would not be four separate strands. Be realistic about the lead-time required to recruit staff and factor this into the project.

What plans are there for sustainability?

A budget has been allocated to allow a replacement Education Link Worker to be appointed although this post has still to be filled as Highland Council is currently redeploying staff. A budget will also be made available for the out of school specialist tutoring programme.

Appendix 2.11. Midlothian

Project Overview

The project comprised three strands which aimed to increase the number of looked after young people who were successful in further education and training by providing a flexible and needs-led responsive service, and to provide a rapid response to children in crisis by bringing education to them within residential units. Following the experience of the first six months of the project, the scope was narrowed to concentrate on developing a better service for young people in two residential units and only two of the original three strands made progress.

How did the project come about?

Before the project Midlothian had very little resource or special provisions for the education of looked after children. The authority wanted to highlight the issue of looked after children's education so they could be more in line with larger authorities with dedicated staff supporting looked after children. In addition, achievement and attainment levels among Midlothian looked after children were fairly low. They therefore wanted to design a project that would raise both levels for the specific population of looked after children.

What was the project about?

The project focused on work within residential units and schools to provide individualised education plans for all looked after children and young people, according to their needs. There were three strands to the project. The first focused on improving the learning opportunities within residential units. The aim was to motivate and engage those young people who were disaffected with education and who, despite flexible plans from schools, still did not attend. They wished to develop a rapid response to children in crisis by bringing education to them, within the units. The second strand was about developing an inclusive tutoring programme. The aim was to provide robust support earlier to increase the number of looked after young people who were successful in further education and training. There was particular focus on those young people in mainstream education who had missed periods of education or who had under-performed but were 'catching up'. Strand 3 aimed to focus on mentoring for young people and the authority collaborated with the voluntary organisation Children 1st but this strand did not progress with as many young people as was hoped.

Who were the participants?

The participants were nearly all children or young people living within two residential units. There was smaller provision made for some young people who were in foster care in Midlothian. All of the provisions in the project were available to each participant, according to their own needs.

How was the project staffed?

The project employed a full time principal teacher who was responsible for the day to day running of the project. The tutors for Strand 2 were existing teachers who were prepared to do additional work. The project also used teachers from the Outreach Team, an existing authority provision, for small amounts of tutoring, and employed some youth worker time on a sessional basis.

What has the project judged to be the successful outcomes?

A principal teacher was appointed to take the lead role in supporting the young people in the two residential units. She had her base in one of the residential units which meant that she was on hand and could work with the staff. She also had a base in one of the secondary schools and was able to develop good links with them from the start of the project. She was also available when young people were received into care to work with them from the outset and to ensure continuity of education. She was able to make clear the expectation that the young people would be planning and thinking about their education.

The project team judged that they had been very successful at getting young people back into mainstream education. At one point during the project all accommodated young people who were of school age were in mainstream education. This was regarded as a major achievement considering the difficulties experienced by the residential units to get the accommodated young people into school and to maintain them there.

Having the principal teacher on hand to harangue and cajole the young people was helpful. She was also very persistent when things went wrong and was able to advocate on behalf of the young people with head teachers. The principal teacher post worked well because the person appointed was confident and was able to deal with people at a senior level. She was very comfortable in dealing with head teachers and was able to insist that they complied strictly with the exclusion guidelines. She was able to advise the residential units of the expectations that the authority places on individual educational establishments and this led to the residential workers being more confident about the demands they could place on schools. The teacher also understood how to access support for young people with special needs or additional needs and the processes and protocols to be followed when a young person is being excluded or is in danger of being excluded. Training was provided to the residential workers and to staff in schools with a particular emphasis on developing resilience in young people and what teachers and care workers could do. The principal teacher worked closely with the unit manager and developed a checklist for care staff regarding thinking about young people's needs. The principal teacher established close links with the secondary schools. She was

able to work with young people in the classroom when the young person was being reintegrated into mainstream education.

Were there any difficulties which seriously impacted the project?

The mentoring and befriending strand was subcontracted to Children 1st but it did not progress with as many young people as was hoped. There were difficulties with communication in relation to organising individual education packages but these were offset by the close involvement of the principal teacher. Schools sometime felt that there were timetabling difficulties which could not be overcome and also questioned whether it was appropriate for young people to be studying or doing certain things. The principal teacher was able to encourage the schools to agree to the individual packages. If the project was being run again, more thought would be put into how to purchase youth worker time and befriending support.

What plans are there for sustainability?

The Principal Teacher for looked after children has now been confirmed as a permanent post, supported by a steering group which will provide strategic direction for the development of the post. Midlothian will continue to build on the work that has been done with young people in shared placements. There is offsite provision for secondary pupils and youth workers have been recruited. The youth workers have an outreach role in all the main secondary schools. Young people now have an individual assessment of what they can sustain in school, where the weakness is and what can be provided in another form or elsewhere. This assessment is done either when a young person is received into care or at the point when they are flagged as being at risk of exclusion and a proposal for a package that is jointly shared by social work and the school is agreed.

Appendix 2.12. North Ayrshire

Project Overview

The project aimed to raise the educational attainment of looked after children and young people by creating Personal Learning Plans which were designed to help young people to become engaged in their education, become more confident and resilient and have a sense of control over their lives. The Personal Learning Plans were developed by maintaining core academic subjects like English and maths but were flexible enough to include college modules or work placements. The project progressed in line with the original plans but it was able to take on young people with more complex needs as the team's skills developed and grew.

How did the project come about?

The proposal was prompted by a desire to respond to the fact that a lot of pupils do not cope at secondary school because the curriculum just is not appropriate for them.

What was the project about?

The project centred on developing the concept of personal learning planning: talking to young people about their goals and then working back to look at what they would have to start doing to be able to achieve them. This involved individual tutoring and behaviour support and also providing alternative curricular routes to re-engage the young person.

Who were the participants?

The participants were young people in S3 and S4 who were beginning to enter the Children's Panel system radar. They had all been through a Joint Support Team process, many had exhibited fairly high levels of truancy, and all had been failing to thrive within the current secondary school curriculum.

How was the project staffed?

Two teachers and a project officer were seconded to the project, full time. The team worked well together and has been able to build a good rapport with each of the participants. By the end of the project three teachers and four project officers had been seconded to work in the project.

What has the project judged to be the successful outcomes?

Schools started to identify the children who would benefit from the project at a much earlier stage, i.e. at the point when the school was beginning to have concerns about attendance or attainment. As a result, there was a waiting list of children who met the criteria to be included in the project but the project did not have the capacity to accommodate them.

The attendance, exclusion and truancy rates of the young people on the project were tracked and these apparently decreased significantly. Also, if a child was in the process of being resettled with parents the project worker was aware of the issues and pressures that the young person was experiencing and could liaise with school guidance staff or the looked after children/young people co-ordinator in the school, to alert them that there may be problems and ask them to be more tolerant and sympathetic with the child. Although young people were still excluded, the rates were reduced.

The project maintained contact with young people who were going on to college to ensure that they had support to help them overcome the stresses of settling into college work. This also meant that they had someone to go to if they needed help with things like structuring essays. All of the young people who were included in the project performed much better than the schools would have predicted, with children who were working at access level now working at credit level. Attainment in English and maths was raised for the full cohort of young people, according to the project manager. An unexpected benefit of the project was that the schools changed their attitude to the young people. They became more sympathetic and supportive towards the children and were more aware of the issues that the young people were coping with. Information was shared with the looked after children/young people coordinator and with the child's guidance teacher to ensure that someone in the

school really understood what was going on with the child. This was done with the child's permission and the child was usually at the meetings. Also, the school was only told sufficient information to allow them to manage the child's difficulties. The school would be alerted if something was happening in the child's life which might result in an educational issue and staff were asked to be more sensitive towards the child. The social work database was being amended to include information for schools and all schools were given access to Care First, the social work assessment database.

The young people who were included on the project changed their attitudes toward education. They completed evaluations which were all positive. Some of the features mentioned included the extra support from the team, how much more focused they were in education and how they enjoyed work placements. They also mentioned the fact that they could make choices that they had a better chance in life. The project leader felt it was clear from the evaluations that the young people had been empowered by being involved in the project. The children were able to have eye contact and engage in conversations with confidence.

The attitude of staff in children's units also changed. At the start of the project there was 'no educational climate' in the children's units but by the end there were homework clubs in four of the five units. The reason that the fifth unit did not have a club was that it caters for young people who have left school and are doing things like apprenticeships. The key workers in the children's units were encouraging the children to do homework and also to get to school. The attitude of the children's unit workers completely changed from being somewhat antagonistic towards education to being enthusiastic and very accepting of input from education.

Were there any difficulties which seriously impacted on the project?

There was a lack of informed understanding between the different professional groups: social workers had little regard for the education staff and what they were trying to achieve and vice versa. At the start of the project, when trying to identify young people to be included, schools would not agree to withdraw pupils from subject areas, even although the young people were not working at Access level. They were being forced to take subjects that they had no desire to learn. Eventually there were young people on the project who were taking four academic subjects like English, maths and biology and complementing this by doing college modules like beauty therapy or building practice. Young people were undertaking a wide range of college based modules which were studied either in college or at an outreach base. They were also all on work placements where they were learning skills like the importance of punctuality and taking responsibility.

The project tried to identify a half day when they young person did not have any of the core academic subjects at school and arranged the work placement for that time. Provision was made for a member of the project team to cover the work missed where there was an overlap. It took nearly three months before the schools started to identify the young people that the project had been established to help. In one school, they thought that they had seven looked after children when they had nearly 90. They had not been getting up to date information from social work so now processes have been put in place to ensure that schools have up-to-date information. Information was not disseminated for five months while issues related

to data protection were resolved. The social work databases were altered to include a school field. This allowed information to be sorted by school and for that information to be sent to the relevant schools at the end of each month. This overcame the problem of missing young people because they were being transported to the school from another area in order to maintain their educational placement. This still does not ensure that all looked after children and young people who are placed in North Ayrshire by other authorities are identified.

If a similar project were to be started in future, much more time would be spent working with schools, social work services and the children's unit workers to clarify the aims of the project and to get a wider range of people on board before appointing a team to deliver the agreed agenda. More consultation would be done with field staff to ensure that they understood what the project was setting out to achieve. This would ensure that time was not wasted in the early months of the project.

What plans are there for sustainability?

There are now three teachers and four project officers who are engaged on the project on a full-time basis. The savings that have been made by preventing the children who were included on the project from ending up in residential placements or external day placements amounted to over £850,000, after taking into account the total running costs of the project which include salaries, transport, books, materials and paying tutors.

Appendix 2.13. Renfrewshire³⁵

Project Overview

Renfrewshire Council has responsibility for around 600 looked after children, of whom about 15% are looked after away from home. The Council wished to extend already existing good practice within the authority, in the area of looked after children's education. The project, comprising three strands, focused on: extending the provision of the team of specialist looked after children's teachers by employing additional staff to provide support to children at the early stages who are looked after at home; extending the provision of the home link service by targeting a group of pupils who are at risk of underachieving; and providing cultural and leisure opportunities for children living in residential units. A number of aspects of the project were regarded as having been particularly successful, including: the individual support provided for parents/carers and for children and young people by the LAC teacher and home link workers; developing good relationships among key stakeholders; the increased level of support seen at transitions; improvements in the young people's social skills and increased confidence in and enthusiasm for schoolwork.

³⁵ Evaluation reports for both years of the pilot are available on the Renfrewshire Council Educational Psychology Service website at: www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/edpsych

How did the project come about?

Renfrewshire's pilot project work was based on developing and extending current good practice within the authority. It was based on one of the key actions identified in the Children's Services Plan for Renfrewshire 2005-2008 which requires that social, emotional and educational needs of children are met and that partner agencies should work together to deliver an integrated service.

What is the project about?

There were three strands. Strand 1 focused on: providing additional individualised support for looked after children in order to develop their core skills; working with staff in pre-5 establishments and the early years of primary school to help support educational achievement and behaviour of children looked after at home. Strand 2 aimed to extend the provision of the home link service by employing a full-time home link worker and a team of sessional support workers for children looked after at home and at risk of under-achievement. The strand made use of goal setting and opportunities for family learning opportunities. Strand 3 was about providing cultural and leisure experiences and other learning opportunities, linked to school curricula, for children in residential units. Initially the project leaders proposed a further strand to look at funding and training to support foster carers, though this strand did not receive funding.

Who were the participants?

Children aged 3-6, looked after at home (Strand 1), children looked after at home and their families (Strand 2), and children living in residential units (Strand 3). Participants were identified by the Social Work Department.

How was the project staffed?

The project was staffed by increasing the LAC teacher service by one full-time teacher (Strand 1) and by increasing the home link service by one home link worker and by sessional support workers (Strand 2). In Strand 3 a residential unit manager and residential worker from each unit acted as links to the project team.

What has the project judged to be the successful outcomes?

According to the project team, all the aims of Strand 1 had been successfully achieved by the end of year 1 and the Strand 2 aims had been partially achieved. An internal evaluation of the project reported that it was the strong leadership skills and motivation of the project leaders that had allowed progress to be made. In terms of the impact of the project, the evaluation reported that the social and communication skills of the children involved in the project improved, which the project's formal evaluation team attributed in particular to the work of the looked after children teacher. It was also reported that parents and carers felt that their children's confidence and enthusiasm for schoolwork had increased since becoming involved in the project. Parents and carers also reported feeling more comfortable in working with agencies in supporting their children.

In Strand 1 a particular strength identified was the role of the teacher of looked after

children. Most parents/carers felt that the one-to-one support provided had a positive impact on their child, socially and academically. In Strand 2 parents/carers felt positively about the support provided by the home link worker and attributed positive changes in their child to this contact. Teachers were similarly positive about the support provided by the home link worker, identifying improved relationships between home and school as a direct consequence. In Strand 3 a total of 38 young people from four units participated in cultural outings, including short-stay trips. Residential unit managers were very positive about the benefits, identifying increased confidence among young people as a direct result of involvement in planning and participating in trips. Young people were able to identify cultural and educational benefits from involvement in the trips.

The internal evaluation indicated that the project had made a positive impact on all the stakeholders involved, highlighting the support provided by the LAC teacher and home link worker, increased knowledge and confidence of parents and direct benefits to children, particularly in relation to the cultural outings.

Were there any difficulties which seriously impacted on the project?

No serious difficulties were encountered. The interim evaluation identified a need for improved communication with parents/carers, particularly in relation to the provision of regular feedback about children's progress. Keyworkers and teachers also said that they would like more regular, formal feedback to allow them to monitor a child's progress. Teachers reported that they were unsure of the home school worker's role within school and the work carried out with children. The unit managers made a number of suggestions aimed at improving the administration of the cultural activities in Strand 3.

What plans are there for sustainability?

The pilot was independently evaluated in both years by a team from the local authority's educational psychology service. The evaluators made seven recommendations at the end of year 1. In addressing these recommendations, the pilot project not only ensured that the aims were addressed in year 2, but also provided the basis for more general improvements in practice. For example, the project managers established accurate record keeping in year 2, including interval planners and evaluation sheets. Head teachers were more involved in decisions and there was evidence of young people working in collaboration with staff members in selecting and designing trips. The evaluation indicated that some stakeholders did not receive feedback on work being done with the young people, and recommended better levels of communication – ideally by deciding on ways in which communication will be relayed at the stage of planning an activity or intervention. Another important point highlighted in the evaluation was that parents/carers reported that they would have liked to receive more regular feedback from the LAC teacher and home link worker on the work done with their child, allowing parents/carers to feel more involved in their child's education. An important finding arising from Strand 3 was that basing trips around social outcomes yielded greater benefits than trying to fit them explicitly to educational outcomes.

Appendix 2.14. South Ayrshire

Project Overview

The pilot funding provided South Ayrshire Council with the opportunity to refine personal education planning and develop an action plan to create a culture which promoted educational achievement in residential and foster care placements. The project aims were partially met and successful elements of the pilot included consulting with the young people about their educational needs, the multi-agency approach to needs, and the personal education plans created. The young people showed improved communication levels and social skills, and improved self esteem after being involved with the project.

How did the project come about?

Although educational outcomes were generally improving for looked after children within South Ayrshire Council, the authority felt that extra input to some of their services would accelerate these improvements.

What was the project about?

The Taking Time to Talk Project was split into two strands: the first focused on personal education planning and involved consultation with young people and staff to develop the young people's plans; the second focused on residential staff, carers and parents and aimed to increase the capacity to develop and maintain a care environment that would promote and celebrate achievement.

Who were the participants?

The participants in Strand 1 were children looked after away from home in residential schools, secure accommodation, local authority units and local authority schools. In Strand 2 participants included residential staff, carers and parents, related to children looked after away from home in local authority residential unit/s and foster care placements, and children looked after at home involved in transitions in school or placements.

How was the project staffed?

Responsibility for the project fell jointly with the authority's Quality Improvement Officer and the Assistant Manager for Children and Families. Each strand involved a development worker, one employed by education (Strand 1) and the other employed by social work (Strand 2). Other personnel involved in the overall project included the Looked After Children Review Officer, the Care and Learning Steering Group, teachers, and administrative support. Residential school staff were also involved.

What has the project judged to be the successful outcomes?

According to the project leaders, Strand 1, which focussed on creating personal education plans, was very successful. They feel that the young people appreciated

being highly involved in the process through the consultation sessions. The leaders were also pleased with the personal education planning aspect. Strand 2, which aimed to build capacity with staff in units, was also successful, mainly because the development officer involved in this strand was resourceful and proactive.

Outcomes developed from the project that were not necessarily expected or part of the original plan. For example, a resource booklet was created using data gathered by the young people about local amenities, youth activities, places of interest etc. This was produced to be used when the young people were being consulted on their personal education plans, in terms of interests, hobbies and holidays. Copies of this booklet were made available to the outreach team, the support team, the fostering and adoption team, the community safety partnership, and social work.

Young people were involved in focus groups which the project leaders say improved their communication and negotiating skills, and their self-esteem. The relationships that were developed as a result of the project were said by the project leader to be extremely powerful and positive.

The development workers in the project were very resourceful and managed to develop a number of smaller ventures under the umbrella of the pilot project. Although these ventures were funded by sources other than the original pilot funding, it was the work of the development workers employed through the pilot that made these ventures possible. Work included a library project that involved storytelling, guided library tours, free books, author signings, and magazine subscriptions and novels for the children's units. The interagency network the project was built upon worked very successfully, and the project leaders highlighted particularly the link between social work and education.

Were there any difficulties which seriously impacted on the project?

The project faced a delay in recruiting staff and also a loss and changeover of staff during the project. The original pilot aim in relation to children and young people in transition was difficult to fulfil, due to the constantly changing situation of the children and young people.

...the movement of young people, it happens so quickly that it was difficult to put in the transition work that needed to be done, and that has been highlighted as something that needs to be taken forward...it wasn't as effective as it could've been...[but] a lot of work has been done on it.

What plans are there for sustainability?

Strand 1 of the project will be maintained entirely by the Social Care and Learning Team. The work on transitions will also be taken forward. In terms of disseminating messages of good practice, the two development workers have already raised the profile of the project and, more significantly, that of looked after children and young people in general. The resources booklet developed alongside the young people will continue to be made available to relevant agencies.

Appendix 2.15. South Lanarkshire

Project Overview

The project was split into four separate strands which aimed to improve inter-agency working and provide accommodated children and young people with more flexible home-school links, roll out the literacy programme and Seasons for Growth, further enhance specialist learning/ behaviour support for looked after children and young people within school and home and provide further opportunities for extra-curricular involvement and citizenship.

How did the project come about?

The pilot grew out of existing work by a joint agencies forum specifically set up to improve the attainment of looked after and accommodated children, and from a resilience steering group which had begun to promote activities designed to improve literacy within children's units.

What was the project about?

The project aimed to develop resilience among children and young people living in residential units, through activities related to literacy, reductions in exclusion, the use of ICT and the delivery of Learning with Care training for staff.

Who were the participants?

The participants were approximately 65 young people resident in eight (now 10) children's units (though only five units have so far been involved in pilot work). The training participants were residential care staff, designated teachers, foster carers and educational psychologists.

How was the project staffed?

Two home-link workers were appointed and two teachers seconded to the project, all full-time a full time psychologist was appointed with a specific remit for attachment. There was a part-time administrator (10hpw) and the part-time involvement of two educational psychologists, a principal teacher and an external residential unit manager, reporting to the inclusive education manager. Two workers from the voluntary organisation Children 1st, engaged on a sub-contract basis, helped to develop story-telling activities.

What has the project judged to be the successful outcomes?

The storytelling and literacy strands of the project were very successful. HMIE were very impressed with this aspect. It was particularly well organised by Children 1st, who took responsibility for developing and running this strand, with South Lanarkshire staff monitoring it in the background.

The original idea for the storytellers came from a unit worker who was very good at telling stories. Staff in the unit had noticed that it was only on the evening when he was on duty that no children or young people would disappear because he would

engage them by telling stories. Storytelling was flexible enough to be able to adapt to what was happening in the houses and in the children's or young people's lives. All of the children and young people in each unit were invited to participate in the storytelling. They were able to opt in, choose to observe from a distance or opt out. They always had the choice.

The children and young people in the residential units were found to be reading more. There was better awareness that reading can be pleasurable. This helped to improved resilience as the more children and young people read, the better they got at it, so the frustrations encountered at school where reading was involved in a subject were lessened.

The introduction of ICT in the residential houses was judged successful. An external consultant was engaged to provide a report. Computers and software were installed in the residential houses in an extension to the network used in the authority's schools. Staff members encourage the young people to use them for educational purposes like homework and projects.

The Learning with Care training was regarded as successful. Four members of staff delivered the training across the four localities and there was a good uptake from residential and teaching staff. The feedback was very positive. The teachers reported a greater understanding of what it was like for children to be accommodated. Similarly, the feedback from the residential staff included a greater awareness of the expectations in schools, the folio work required for English Standard Grade, how they should be completed and how young people could be supported to complete them. The residential staff also felt more confident about contacting schools and the training improved the relationship between schools and the residential workers. Four foster parents also participated in the training. The feedback from the sessions was also useful to help with re-writing the Learning with Care materials used locally.

The number of exclusions from school was reduced. The home-link workers contacted the residential units every morning to check if there had been any exclusions or problems at school. They developed very close contacts and good working relationships with the residential staff. They were also working in the classroom with young people who were either at risk of being excluded or were returning following a period of exclusion. The home-link workers were able to be flexible because they did not have set timetables. They could also work with the children in the residential units when required. The feedback from schools and residential units about the work done by the home-link workers was very positive.

The improved relationships between education and social work staff also resulted in meetings being more constructive and a more collaborative approach being taken. There was support for the project from directorate level and this gave the project credibility. The staff were allowed to get on with running the project without having people looking over their shoulders all the time.

Were there any difficulties which seriously impacted on the project?

The introduction of ICT was not as successful as hoped. Staff in the residential units were very wary of using the internet with the young people who were more

skilled and were able to override some of the [security] arrangements. The residential workers were unsure about using IT, as were the teachers who were supposed to be driving this aspect forward. As ICT was introduced into the residential units, the number of visits to the library by the children and young people went down. They had been using the library to get access to the net.

Education support plans existed for a very high proportion of children and young people but when these were examined there were gaps, for example, in relation to identifying educational needs or being specific about their strengths. There was a lack of understanding about the terms like 'looked after' and the figures provided by schools were inaccurate.

There were occasionally problems in residential units when staff changed and had not been informed about the storytellers. The storytellers would have to start again from the beginning, particularly if the changed staff did not want them.

What plans are there for sustainability?

There were over 30 members of staff involved in the storytelling training so they will continue to provide storytelling. The concern is that the staff who participated in the storytelling were particularly enthusiastic and if they move on to other posts it will not be possible to keep delivering the training.

The two remaining home-link workers are continuing to provide support for excluded children and support between the residential units and schools. These posts are confirmed on a yearly basis. Both the Learning with Care training and the IT developments are continuing.

Appendix 2.16. Stirling

Project Overview

The funding Stirling received provided gave the opportunity to devise and implement a programme to work with looked after young people disengaged from education in order to raise educational attainment. The aims of Stirling's project were realised, and the project leaders are pleased about the good relationships developed between the young people and the project workers, and that there was evidence of increased attainment, more positive attitudes to education, and increased accessing of further training and education by the young people.

How did the project come about?

The authority was having limited success working with children and young people disengaged with education, compared to their work with other looked after children and young people. They took the opportunity to try to re-engage these young people with education.

What was the project about?

Stirling's project (known as the Real project) worked with young people who had difficulty engaging with education, using education packages of the young people's

choice. The young people were consulted about timetables which could be a mixture of academic and outdoor activities, and individual or group teaching sessions. It was also regarded as important that activities should take place in a non-threatening, nurturing environment and that they should be designed to also help the young people with their social skills.

Who were the participants?

The pilot was aimed at looked after young people of secondary school age who have disengaged from education, primarily, but not exclusively, in S3 or S4.

How was the project staffed?

An education officer from the authority had responsibility for the project, and the project was further staffed by a principal teacher, two teachers, two inclusion support workers and two support for learning assistants. Administrative support was included, and there was a project management group. None of the staff members worked exclusively for the project. External agency staff (e.g. ArtLink, Careers Scotland, local FE colleges) were also available to the project.

What has the project judged to be the successful outcomes?

The pilot project leaders feel that it is too soon to know whether the longer-term target of positive post-18 outcomes has been successful, though indications are that this is likely to show a mix of success and failure. In their report to Scottish Government they say: 'For example one young person dropped out of a college course but then, with some support and encouragement from project staff, decided to return to undertake higher courses. Another young man has recently completed an army preparation course and is very positive about the future. On the other hand some of the young people remain known to the youth justice service and one has had a prison sentence. Although all had a post- school destination in place on leaving some did not remain engaged for very long in what were, on the face of it, very appropriate post school programmes such as 'Get ready for work.' Some of the young people continued to have very difficult problems to deal with in terms of lack of support and interest from home and in some cases homelessness.'

The young people became comfortable with the workers in the project, so they returned for advice even after their time in the project had ended. Some of the young people who were involved in the Real project became mentors for young people in other projects.

Were there any difficulties which seriously impacted on the project?

Initially the project leaders thought that the young people would want to work on a small amount of education and a lot of alternative learning activities, such as outdoor education. However, they found that the young people bought in to the educational aspects of the programme and had to employ more teaching staff and make more time available for educational aspects.

...we got a huge buy-in for these youngsters, but it was because the programme was explained to them as: 'This is your programme, you tell us what you want and we will try and supply it.'

The project leaders found that holiday periods could be quite difficult for the young people as they became used to the support that the project offered them. Without the daily structure provided by the project, the young people were more likely to slip back to habits of the past, including offending.

What plans are there for sustainability?

The ethos of the project will be continued as it will be embedded in to the work of the Secondary Support Service (Stirling's service for children with social and emotional needs). The internal evaluation will recommend that attempts are made to work with young people in a more empathetic manner and to help them choose life paths to which that they are more suited.

Appendix 2.17. West Dunbartonshire

Project Overview

West Dunbartonshire's pilot project focused on young people looked after at home who were working towards Standard Grade qualifications. As well as improvements in attainment, the project leaders also hoped to see improvement in softer measures. The aims of the project were partially met, and the project leaders are pleased that young people were helped to prepare for exams and that there were positive shifts in the soft indicators measured. They believe the intensive support given to the young people was effective and the work of their project staff was valued by the young people.

How did the project come about?

Within the authority there were already specialist teachers with responsibility for supporting children and young people who were accommodated. The authority also saw that young people living at home were not attaining as well as their accommodated peers. Efforts were therefore targeted at young people looked after at home, specifically those preparing for Standard Grade exams.

What was the project about?

The project was designed to improve educational attainment and also softer measures like the young people's self esteem, and to support the families of the young people.

Who were the participants?

The target group was all young people in the authority in S3 and S4 and their families. The project also aimed to provide support for secondary schools.

How was the project staffed?

The project team included a co-ordinator and an advisory group. Other staff involved included also an outreach teacher for looked after children, an educational coordinator, support workers for looked after children and an educational psychologist.

What has the project judged to be the successful outcomes?

The project leaders were pleased that they were able to support young people who would not otherwise have been presented for Standard Grade exams. Some of the young people apparently also attained more highly than was predicted. The measures of softer indicators improved for all the young people involved as their work with the project team progressed. The role of the support workers and the relationships they built with the participants were reported as being particularly valued by the young people, their families and by other professionals. Where the team were not able to get those young people who were out of school to re-engage, they were able to develop alternative educational provisions to help young people out of school to sit exams. The project leaders believe that it was the intensity of the work that managed to reengage them with education, where others had failed. Where appropriate, the project also managed to link young people to positive post-school destinations.

Were there any difficulties which seriously impacted on the project?

The initial project proposal was less focussed and included some aims that were not taken forward. The project leaders decided that, by narrowing their efforts, they would be more likely to make an impact; therefore, they reduced the target group.

There was a significant time gap between receiving the money for the project and recruitment of staff. Individuals who were already part of the authority's staff were seconded to the project and there was a subsequent 'knock-on' effect for further recruitment. The delays resulted in less time being spent with the first cohort of young people. They also reported that they had a limited number of young people to work with.

One aspect that had to be addressed early related to identifying the role of the project in the authority's wider support structures, such as the Joint Assessment Team and the looked after children support workers and teachers. Ultimately, this provided the impetus to help the authority re-define some of its support strategies.

What plans are there for sustainability?

The project leaders have a desire to carry on the project, but the availability of funding remains a concern. They had secured funding to extend the project through the 2008 examination period to support their second cohort of young people. They are awaiting exam results for these young people and believe that the true evaluation of the project will arise from discussion of these results. In terms of disseminating the ideas that have arisen from the project, the advisory group members and those who have worked within the project (representatives from the

social work and education sectors, as well as educational psychology) have been discussing the project and its impact with their colleagues.

Appendix 2.18. West Lothian

Project Overview

The project had four separate strands which aimed to: provide a supported setting within mainstream primary schools (the nurture groups) and deliver the 5-14 flexible curriculum for specific looked after children; provide agreed programmes of inter-agency support in secondary schools for looked after young people (some of whom were offending in the community); provide support for looked after children in the transition period from primary to secondary school; and to help improve confidence and self-esteem of looked after children and young people through regular physical activity. Both the nurture groups and the flexible programmes have now become mainstream and have expanded since the start of the project. The buddy strand (transition from P7 to S1) is now incorporated as part of the 'having your say' forum.

How did the project come about?

Improving services for looked after children was a target area in the Children Services Plan and a multi-agency team was established to take this forward. The project provided an opportunity to build on earlier work and also to respond to the support issues identified in consultation with young people themselves, through the forum for looked after children.

What was the project about?

Firstly, nurture groups were being promoted in two primary schools where there were significant numbers of looked after children; this was part of a wider development of nurture groups in the authority. Secondly, personalised programmes with a flexible curriculum were being offered to young people in one pilot secondary school to assist them to remain in education, or to access training or employment. The third strand was the development of a buddy scheme whereby older looked after children supported other looked after children as they entered secondary school (this was developed in response to suggestions from the young people themselves). The fourth strand was an extension of an existing programme – Physical Activity for Confidence and Esteem (PACE) which was run in collaboration with West Lothian Leisure Services and provided the resources and opportunities to enable young people to use sports and leisure facilities.

Who were the participants?

All categories of looked after children were included in all of the strands. The nurture groups were being piloted in two schools: in one school the pupils were from P1 and P2 only; in the other school there was an opportunity for P5 to P7 to take part in a supportive setting with a motivating, flexible curriculum. Six to eight children were involved each time. By the end of the project, nurture groups had been established in nine schools. The personalised programmes involved a group of six to eight pupils from S3 and S4 from one secondary school; they were selected

on the basis of being at risk of becoming looked after. The buddy scheme was piloted in two secondary schools and their associated primary schools; young people became volunteer buddies and there was a recruitment target of up to 30 children. Children were referred to take part in the PACE programme from a wide range of partnership agencies, with over 16s being allowed to 'refer' themselves. There were about 80 young people involved.

How was the project staffed?

All strands drew on a wide range of existing staff. The following were appointed specifically for the project: nurture groups – two full-time teachers and two part-time support assistants; personalised programmes for S3 to S6 – one part-time teacher, one part-time key worker and one part-time support assistant; the buddy scheme and the PACE programme were supported by one full-time development worker.

What has the project judged to be the successful outcomes?

The nurture groups proved to be very beneficial in the schools where they were piloted. The early intervention focus helped young children to access school in a more positive way. A further benefit was that the enhanced contact with parents enabled those who did not have good personal associations with their own school life, to establish more positive connections. The schools that took part in the project all had nurseries attached to them and the parent / staff relationships in nursery schools were very strong.

The benefits of the nurture groups were identified by the head teachers in the pilot schools and they communicated these benefits to their colleagues in other schools. As a result, other head teachers approached the project for funding to start their own nurture groups.

There were noticeably fewer referrals to the senior officer review group from the schools with nurture groups. These schools were in the areas of greatest challenge and had a high level of success in supporting the children in mainstream education.

A school which had a nurture group received very positive comments from HMIE which recognised the impact that the group was having on the school and the way in which it was promoting positive learning. The nurture groups were flexible enough to provide support for children who were not looked after but were experiencing a chaotic home background. One of the schools which was not part of the project but had established a nurture group, reported that the proportion of looked after children was lower than those not looked after.

The school where the flexible curriculum was piloted managed to ensure that the young people were more successful at accessing courses, attended school on a more regular basis and were more successful in gaining basic qualifications. The results in standard grade English and maths had improved every year, indicating that the flexible curriculum packages had been successful.

The buddy scheme evolved to become an issues forum to overcome problems experience with the original model. This has now merged with the youth participation network in West Lothian and is no longer regarded as a separate buddy scheme.

Information was available from West Lothian Leisure showing every looked after young person who had a pass for leisure centres and how often these passes were used. West Lothian Leisure dedicated a member of staff to administer the PACE project and to provide statistics on the level of use. Children who were looked after at home were using the swimming facilities three times per week and going swimming with a parent because the PACE passes allowed them to do this as a family.

The success of this project was due to the multi-agency approach. There is now a well established, multi-disciplinary team established for looked after children dealing with teaching, health, educational psychology and the confidence and mental well-being aspects of PACE. All of these strands would be involved if a future project was being established.

Were there any difficulties which seriously impacted on the project?

The success and the way in which this success was communicated among the head teachers resulted in requests for funding to support nurture groups elsewhere in the authority.

The young people involved in the flexible curriculum strand of the project were the more challenging looked after young people. They often came from families which did not regard education as a priority so were unlikely to cooperate with daily activities such as getting the young people out of bed and off to school. There were also difficulties in agreeing how flexible the package could be and how much the young people's wishes should be taken into account when creating the package. Many of the young people who were included in the flexible curriculum strand had attachment issues, so it was sometimes better to reduce the staff involved to one or two people. This meant that the package could be very limited because a single teacher could not address all subjects at secondary school level.

The PACE strand experienced staff changes resulting in some delays in implementation. It was difficult to make suitable pairings of the older children with the younger ones. Both sets of looked after children had personal issues which required a level of 'crowd control' and resolving of inter-personal difficulties. This was managed by changing the approach and establishing an issue-based forum (having your say) based on the West Lothian youth forum model.

There was some difficulty in accessing data required for the project because of the IT systems. There are now two separate databases available which can be shared.

What plans are there for sustainability?

It is not possible to create additional funds for setting up nurture groups as in West Lothian, 92% of funding is devolved to schools. The main focus will be on promoting the nurture group techniques and training with head teachers. Also, it is likely that children who required support from the nurture groups at an early stage may require further support again at later stages in their lives as the demands on them increase (for example, in P3 where they have more written work or P5 when they are expected to work more independently).

Over the next year, training for the nurture groups will be rolled out so that by the end of session 08-09, one person will be trained in each school. This will ensure that children throughout the school will benefit from this approach.

The use of flexible packages has proved to be successful with the standard grade results providing the evidence.

The young people are committed to the continuation of the 'having your say' forum. In addition, an application has been made to the local action fund to allow the PACE passes and vouchers to be funded for next year. The plan is to continue to target PACE as there is a large waiting list already.

APPENDIX 3. PILOTS RELATED TO FIVE INTERVENTION TYPES

Pilot Project	Provision of direct support	Personal Education Planning	Transition support	Developing staff and parental capacity	Use of IT
Aberdeen	✓				
Dundee	✓		✓	✓	
Dumfries/Galloway	✓	✓		✓	
East Ayrshire	✓			✓	✓
East Lothian	✓			✓	
Edinburgh	✓		✓	✓	
Falkirk	✓	✓			
Fife	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Glasgow	✓	✓		✓	
Highland	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Midlothian	✓		✓	✓	
North Ayrshire	✓	✓	✓		✓
Renfrewshire	✓	✓	✓	✓	
South Ayrshire		✓		✓	
S Lanarkshire	✓			✓	✓
Stirling	✓		✓		
W Dunbartonshire	✓			✓	
West Lothian	✓	✓	✓		

APPENDIX 4. ADDITIONAL DATA TABLES

Table 8: Scores on scales of the SDQ

Scale	Min (0)	Max (10)	Mean	SD
Pro-social scale (n = 67)	2	10	7.3	2.1
Hyperactivity scale (n = 62)	1	10	5.3	2.3
Emotional symptoms scale (n = 65)	0	9	3.5	2.6
Conduct problems scale (n = 64)	0	8	3.3	1.9
Peer problems scale (n = 65)	0	8	2.1	1.9
Total difficulties (N = 58)	3	29	15.9	6.3

Notes: (1) Where a respondent had omitted an item on a scale, or where the response was invalid because more than one response had been marked, the whole scale was omitted from the analysis. In these cases, the total difficulty score was also not calculated. (2) The total difficulties figures are based on four scales and exclude the pro-social scale.

Table 9: Proportions in each category of need by SDQ scale

Scale	Low need	Some need	High need
Pro-social scale (n = 67)	81%	10%	9%
Hyperactivity scale (n = 62)	55%	13%	32%
Emotional symptoms scale (n = 65)	72%	11%	17%
Conduct problems scale (n = 64)	53%	25%	22%
Peer problems scale (n = 65)	80%	15%	5%
Total difficulties (N = 58)	45%	24%	31%

Notes: (1) Girls rated themselves in a way that suggested greater emotional need than boys, but with mean scores still within the low need range: boys, 2.1; girls, 4.5 ($t = 4.5$; $p < 0.001$). (2) The total difficulties figures are based on four scales and exclude the pro-social scale.

Table 10: Harter: Do the difficulties interfere with your everyday life?

	Home life	Friendships	Classroom learning	Leisure activities
A great deal	5 (14%)	2 (5%)	9 (24%)	1 (3%)
Quite a lot	9 (24%)	4 (11%)	12 (32%)	4 (11%)
Only a little	11 (30%)	13 (34%)	12 (32%)	11 (30%)
Not at all	12 (32%)	19 (50%)	4 (11%)	22 (58%)
Mean	1.2	0.7	1.7	0.6

Table 11: Mean scores on scales of Harter by gender

		Scholastic	Social	Athletic	Appearance	Behaviour	Global
Female	mean	2.32	2.86	2.20	2.45	2.34	2.58
	SD	0.51	0.72	0.43	0.67	0.72	0.52
	N	41	42	0.55	40	42	43
Male	mean	2.66	3.01	2.78	2.68	2.40	2.74
	SD	0.57	0.63	0.58	0.54	0.67	0.41
	N	35	36	35	36	35	33
Total	mean	2.48	2.93	2.46	2.56	2.37	2.65
	SD	0.56	0.68	0.63	0.62	0.69	0.48
	N	76	78	78	76	77	76

Table 12: Attendance and exclusion by gender 2006-07

Gender		% attendance	No of days excluded	% excluded (and number)
Female	Mean	79.0	2.9	22% (52)
	N	237	236	237
Male	Mean	82.7	4.1	25% (77)
	N	311	312	312

Table 13: Attendance and exclusions in 2005-06 and 2006-07

		Attendance		No. of days excluded		No. of exclusions	
		2005-06	2006-07	2005-06	2006-07	2005-06	2006-07
5-8	Mean	93.9	93.8	0.5	0.8	0.23	0.20
	N	61	61	66	66	65	65
9-10	Mean	93.4	96.3*	0.1	0.5	0.03	0.15
	N	39	39	33	33	33	33
11-12	Mean	90.7	88.3	1.6	4.6*	0.32	0.71**
	N	84	84	85	85	85	85
13-14	Mean	71.2	75.2	6.6	5.7	1.48	1.11
	N	136	136	125	125	121	121
15+	Mean	68.7	74.7**	4.1	2.6*	1.03	0.46**
	N	186	186	183	183	178	178
All	Mean	78.1	80.9**	3.5	3.7	0.85	0.63**
	N	510	510	497	497	487	487

* p<0.05 ** p<0.01

Note: Age is as at the baseline year. Totals in 'all' are greater than the sum of the age groups, due to missing age data.

Table 14: Exclusion rates for nine pilot authorities

Local authority	Rate per 1000 pupils ³⁶		No. of pupils
	Baseline	Outcome	
Aberdeen City	629	423	26
Dumfries & Galloway	86	173	23
East Ayrshire	1200	764	89
Edinburgh City	400	750	20
Falkirk	420	338	71
Glasgow City	1770	557	61
Highland	255	534	43
South Ayrshire	950	1350	20
West Lothian	615	518	52
All authorities	854	631	487

Note: we excluded from this analysis pilots where there were data for fewer than 20 pupils; below this number statistical comparisons would be unsafe.

Table 15: 5-14 National Assessment Data: Reading, Writing and Mathematics

	Reading	Writing	Maths
	No. (and percentage)	No. (and percentage)	No. (and percentage)
not achieved A	33 (13)	32 (13)	25 (10)
A	50 (20)	51 (21)	43 (17)
B	52 (21)	65 (26)	58 (23)
C	55 (22)	57 (23)	74 (29)
D	39 (16)	30 (12)	45 (18)
E	16 (6)	11 (5)	7 (3)
F	3 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Total	248 (100)	246 (100)	252 (100)

Notes: (1) By academic year 2006-2007, 336 of the young people were no longer within 5-14 as they were in S3 to S6 at secondary school. (2) There were 300 young people within the 5-14 stage. Data were not available for 52 young people in reading, 54 in writing and 48 in maths.

³⁶ The rate is expressed as a ratio of the number of exclusions per thousand pupils, and since a pupil may be excluded on more than one occasion, it is possible for the numerator to be larger than the denominator.

Table 16: 5-15 National Assessment Levels at ages 5-8

	Reading		Writing		Maths	
	No. (and %)		No. (and %)		No. (and %)	
not achieved A	19	31.7	16	27.1	11	18.0
A	30	50.0	32	54.2	29	47.5
B	9	15.0	10	16.9	19	31.1
C	1	1.7	1	1.7	2	3.3
D	1	1.7	0	0	0	0
Total	60	100	60	100	61	100

Table 17: 5-14 National Assessment Levels at ages 9-10

	Reading		Writing		Maths	
	No. (and %)		No. (and %)		No. (and %)	
not achieved A	2	5.3	3	7.9	2	5.1
A	7	18.4	5	13.2	5	12.8
B	15	39.5	17	44.7	13	33.3
C	12	31.6	12	31.6	16	41.0
D	2	5.3	1	2.1	3	7.7
Total	38	100	38	100	39	100

Table 18: 5-14 National Assessment Levels at ages 11-12

	Reading		Writing		Maths	
	No. (and %)		No. (and %)		No. (and %)	
not achieved A	3	3.1	4	4.2	3	3.1
A	10	10.4	10	10.4	5	5.1
B	15	15.6	23	24.0	16	16.3
C	32	33.3	33	34.4	39	39.8
D	22	22.9	18	18.8	30	30.6
E	11	11.5	8	8.3	5	5.1
F	3	3.1	0	0	0	0
Total	96	100	96	100	98	100

Table 19: 5-14 National Assessment Levels at ages 13-14³⁷

	Reading		Writing		Maths	
	No. (and %)		No. (and %)		No. (and %)	
not achieved A	1	2.4	1	2.4	1	2.4
A	1	2.4	2	4.9	2	4.8
B	13	31.0	14	34.1	10	23.8
C	9	21.4	11	26.8	16	38.1
D	13	31.0	11	26.8	11	26.2
E	5	11.9	2	4.9	2	4.8
Total	42	100	41	100	42	100

Table 20: 5-14 National Assessment data, Scotland 2003³⁸

School stage	Level attained	English Reading		English Writing		Maths	
		Not LAC	LAC	Not LAC	LAC	Not LAC	LAC
P2	A or above	52%	29%	42%	20%	76%	57%
P3	A or above	88%	74%	85%	69%	95%	89%
P4	B or above	81%	56%	75%	50%	79%	52%
P5	B or above	92%	73%	88%	64%	92%	73%
P6	C or above	86%	59%	75%	40%	80%	46%
P7	D or above	73%	34%	60%	20%	69%	24%
S1	D or above	74%	42%	65%	30%	70%	31%
S2	E or above	59%	15%	50%	12%	53%	12%

Table 21: Changes in mean attainment levels in 5-14 National Assessments

		2005-06 (Baseline)	2006-07 (Outcome)
Reading	Mean	2.0	2.4
	p<0.001 (t Test) N	232	232
Writing	Mean	1.8	2.3
	p<0.001 (t Test) N	229	229
Maths	Mean	2.0	2.5
	p<0.001 (t Test) N	235	235

³⁷ The ages used in the tables are those provided at baseline. In reality, all the young people whose results are shown for year 2006-7 would have been approximately one year older.

³⁸ Source: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2004/10/20121/45478>

Table 22: Factors correlating with attainment in Standard Grade and National Qualifications

N=149	Total tariff all awards (correlations)
Gender	-.28(**)
Level of involvement	.14ns
% attendance in year during pilot	.30(**)
CLASS (a Glasgow programme)	-.31(**)
EVIP (a Glasgow programme)	-.29(**)
Looked after at home	-.25(**)
Looked after in residential care	.17(*)
Looked after in foster care	.23(**)
Glasgow (All young people in Glasgow pilot programme)	-.35(**)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

ns Not significant

Table 23: Characteristics of 109 young people: Tariff scores

N=109	Mean	SD	N
Total tariff all awards	43.5	50.0	109
Tariff points (in 'best 5')	25.8	36.4	109
% attendance in year during pilot	74.1	25.5	109
A-F level in writing (baseline)	3.2	1.1	109
A-F level in maths (baseline)	3.3	1.0	109

Notes: (1) For 109 of the 148 young people for whom we had Standard Grade / National Qualifications data we had three baseline 5-14 National Assessment levels, and we found that maths and writing (taken together) were a reasonably good baseline for prior attainment. We took account of the fact that these effects may well be inter-related, since the young people participating in the different pilot activities may not be randomly assigned to them by gender, or pilot or 5-14 levels.

(2) We examined this using multiple regression analysis. (The results of three such models are shown in Table 24 below). Gender was found to be significantly associated with attainment. When we added care placement (Model 2), the gender effect diminished. Girls are more likely to be in foster care, while boys are more likely to be looked after at home. The effects of these three variables (attainment, gender and care placement) are therefore impossible to extricate from each other. However, baseline 5-14 maths remained a good predictor of attainment in Standard Grade / National Qualifications, even when everything else was held constant (Model 3).

(3) Model 3 also showed that young people in the Glasgow pilot attained least. This is in part because they are more likely to be boys, to be looked after at home, to have lower attendance and to have lower 5-14 levels of attainment. There is, however, a large and significant Glasgow effect over and above all of these factors.

Table 24: Factors correlating with attainment in Standard Grade and National Qualifications - multiple regression model

Model		Standardized Coefficients (β)	Significance
1	Gender	-.236	**
2	Gender	-.178	ns
	Looked after at home	-.150	ns
	Looked after in foster care	.163	ns
3	Gender	-.059	ns
	Looked after at home	-.060	ns
	Looked after in foster care	.028	ns
	A-F level in writing (baseline)	.136	ns
	A-F level in maths (baseline)	.218	*
	% attendance in year during pilot	.084	ns
	Glasgow	-.297	**
	EVIP	-.099	ns

Dependent variable: Total tariff all awards (outcomes)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) ns Not significant

Notes: (1) Concerned that the young people within the Glasgow EVIP project might typically have some National Qualifications which were however unrecorded and that it was unfair to include in the analysis Glasgow students in CLASS who were below S4, we re-ran the analysis (on 77 students rather than the 109 included in the earlier analysis, i.e. we excluded all EVIP students and all CLASS students below the S4 level), but the same effect was noted.

(2) However, there were particular difficulties in recording information about the progress of young people within the Glasgow pilot and so it is impossible to draw particular conclusions from these findings, other than reinforcing the more general points made at the start of this chapter about the difficulties noted in relation to collecting robust data on looked after children and young people.

ISSN 0950 2254
ISBN 978 0 7559 7233 3
(Web only publication)

www.scotland.gov.uk/socialresearch

RR Donnelley B57671 09-08

