EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY INVOLVEMENT WITH LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AT HOME, AWAY FROM HOME, IN KINSHIP CARE OR IN OUT-OF-AREA AUTHORITY PLACEMENTS

The Highland Council Psychological Service

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Educational Psychology involvement with looked after children at home, away from home, in kinship care or in out-of-area authority placements

The responsibilities of the Psychological Service in respect of looked after children link in through the Highland Practice Model detailed in For Highland’s Children 4 - 2014-19. http://forhighlandschildren.org/

Being a Corporate Parent means:

- Accepting responsibility for looked after children known to the service. This would include making and maintaining contact with the Lead Professional.
- Making their needs a priority and ensuring support for their education and emotional wellbeing
- Seeking the same outcomes any good parent would want for their own child
- Listening to the views of children and young people and taking account of them
- Respecting diversity
- Giving young people the support they need as they move into adulthood.

As a corporate parent, this means giving attention to whether children and young people are safe, well looked after and supported. The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2009 automatically deems that all looked after children and young people have additional support needs unless the education authority determine that they do not require additional support in order to benefit from school education. In addition, education authorities must consider whether each looked after child or young person for whose school education they are responsible requires a co-ordinated support plan.

Guidance materials on Corporate Parenting are provided by Who Cares Scotland http://www.corporateparenting.org.uk/learning-hub/guidance-materials/

FHC4 wellbeing indicators confirm that we want our looked after children to be safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected & responsible, and included. The Psychological Service can contribute particularly to;
Safe  
- Improving the management of and responses to challenging behaviour

Healthy  
- Assisting in promoting mental health and emotional wellbeing

Achieving  
- Guidance on the education of looked after children  
- Ensuring that achievement is addressed in Child Plans  
- Contribution to educational planning and helping identify Additional Support Needs and strategies to meet those needs

Nurtured  
- Supporting the development of alternatives to out of authority placements  
- Supporting adoption and permanency plans for children where appropriate  
- Identifying opportunities for individual looked after children to return from Out of Authority places

Respected and Responsible  
- Ensuring that children's views are actively sought and taken into account

Included  
- Assisting with strategies that facilitate inclusion

The Psychological Service is available to provide consultation and advice, make assessments of educational and emotional development, help with planning, implementing and monitoring intervention processes, and contribute to the training of parents, carers and professionals directly involved with looked after children. Being a Corporate Parent means being proactive in making and maintaining contact with the Lead Professional to ensure that commitments to Childs Plan meetings and Core Group meetings can be met.
Getting It Right For Every Child through a staged intervention approach to deliver Additional Support for Learning

Consultation
The Psychological Service actively supports the staged intervention approach to deliver Additional Support for Learning. For a child or young person who is Looked After, this means that for most children

- An in-school assessment will be undertaken and need/risk analysed. If there are no concerns this should be recorded on the Childs Plan. The school team (SfL, Pupil Support, Looked After Children Designated Manager) will implement programmes and strategies appropriate for the identified needs of the child or young person. Psychologists will encourage Lead Professionals to ask school staff for initial educational information in the first instance, rather than EPS

- If the concerns continue, advice can be sought from external service, including the Psychological Service. This may be through a Solution-Focused Child’s Plan meeting. Psychological Services will work with school personnel to identify more fully the nature of the difficulties, advise on and help monitor and evaluate strategies that are put into place. Where significant needs have been identified, the Psychological Service may contribute to a detailed multi-agency assessment and/or directly implement intervention strategies. Where other agencies are directly involved in providing education to a looked after child, consideration may be given to developing a Co-ordinated Support Plan (CSP) as well as a Multi-Agency Child Plan.

Assessments
Assessments will have a clear focus and purpose to ensure relevance. They will be “least intrusive”, whilst ensuring that the child’s voice is heard and direct contact will be conducted in venues that are comfortable for the child. The assessment may involve discussions with key people who know the child/young person best. It may be that direct involvement with the child or young person is conducted over several sessions. Psychologists may contribute to the Health requirement of the Child’s Plan, that every looked after child will have a Mental Health Assessment. The child/young person has the right to refuse direct involvement from a psychologist and they should give their informed consent for this involvement.
Transitions
The Psychological Service recognises that transitions are key times for looked after children. In addition to the key transition times experienced by most children, home to nursery; nursery to P1; P7 to S1; S4,S5 to Post-School, looked after children are likely to experience more school placements and/or interruptions to their learning than other children and transition arrangements at other times will be appropriate. This will include transitions, where young people are being brought back to Highland following a period in an out-of-area placement. Psychologists are kept informed of looked after children's status through circulation of the LAC database and will aim to ask about new looked after children in their schools, pass relevant information on to colleagues and attend transition meetings of looked after children where significant needs have been identified. It is good practice to prepare for transition in advance where possible, for moves of care placement, including providing information about support needs to the new school, e.g. when moving to a new foster placement.

Intervention
Good practice involves the Psychological Service being pro-active in encouraging early intervention, including involvement through consultation at early stage planning meetings. This can include, e.g. Resilient Kids Programmes, advising on strategies that promote Nurturing Principles and the development of Emotional Literacy, Resilience and Self-Efficacy. It might also include direct work with children and young people and their families, e.g. Cognitive Behavioural Approaches, Video Interaction Guidance.

Training
Psychologists are committed to provide training to parents/carers, voluntary groups and other professionals. For looked after children this can be at the level of universal general training on relevant topics. This could include, e.g. Emotional Literacy, Solution-Focused Approaches, Restorative Approaches, Loss & Bereavement. It might also include training on specific areas of disability, e.g. Attachment, Autism, ADHD, and Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.
Looked After Children in Out-Of-Area Placements

- Psychologists may be involved jointly with Social Work Service in advising on suitable placements for children and young people. The psychologist will collaborate with others to ensure that Area Service Managers and the Residential Placement Group receive all the information necessary to reach a decision.

- Within Highland Council, as part of taking a holistic approach to meeting care and education needs, psychologists are the Council’s representatives for monitoring and evaluating the educational provision for children and young people placed out of authority.

- Following an out-of-authority placement the lead professional should ensure that the psychologist is kept abreast of developments for the child and is invited to subsequent reviews and meetings.

- When a child is in an out-of-area placement, the Psychological Service has a key responsibility on monitoring the educational progress of the child. A pro-active role will be taken.

- Where a placement is stable, attendance at every Child Plan meeting may not be necessary, but it is important that the psychologist keeps a close link with the school attended, to be able to monitor and review the educational environment, the child’s academic progress and social/emotional development at school.

- Where a placement is unstable or the child/young person is at a key stage of transition, looked after children will be prioritised by the Psychological Service.

- The best way to meet the overall needs of the child is for regular and open multi-agency working to address issues in a solution-focussed way as they arise and to support the holistic development of the child. This would include supporting a child to develop their own perspective.

- Committee Report November 2017 on the Education of Looked After Children - action is to ‘Review the educational experiences of children and young people at residential schools. Create a process involving the Lead Professional and Educational Psychologist to track the attendance, educational programme and educational outcomes for children/young people.’ The measure is that ‘Information on the educational programme, expectations and outcomes will be clearly identified within the Child’s Plan for all children/young people in schools out of authority.’ This will require EPs to be scrutinising the educational offer and outcomes for
children in residential establishments. We have committed to doing this ‘By June 2018’.

- Please also see ASPEP guidelines: Scotland’s Looked After Children and Young People in Out of Local Authority Placements - A Framework for Educational Psychologist’s Practice (January 2015).

**EP Responsibility**

- Generally, the psychologist linked to the child’s home address at the time of request for involvement will have responsibility for the child.

- When there are changes, e.g., change of child’s home address, changes in patch responsibility, negotiations may take place to transfer responsibility, taking into account such factors as:
  - stability of the change
  - extent of knowledge and involvement by a particular psychologist
  - the wishes of the child and their family.

- Good practice would indicate that where a psychologist is named as a Partner to a Child’s Plan, that this link is maintained. Continuity of relationships is important.

- Where transfer of casework responsibility is appropriate, it would be good practice to write to the young person and their family to inform them of this change. (See Record Keeping policy)