



CASCADE

Children's Social Care
Research and Development Centre

Canolfan Ymchwil a Datblygu
Gofal Cymdeithasol Plant

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Improving the Educational Experiences of Children and Young People who are Looked After

ExChange: Care and Education Launch

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The LACE project

“Understanding the educational experiences and opinions, attainment, achievement and aspirations of looked after children in Wales”

Project Partners – The Fostering Network, Voices from Care Cymru, Spice Innovate Music and Art Extension Project – Ministry of Life

Methods

- Statistical and literature review
- Systematic review
- Creative methods and interviews
- Peer researcher led focus groups

Key findings

Aspirations and Experiences

Aspirations

- Children and young people did not lack aspiration
- They often had altruistic aspirations and wanted to help others
- Barriers

“Various people to do with the care system were like ‘oh people in care don’t go to into higher education’. ‘It’s like they don’t believe that children in care will do anything. And so if they don’t believe it, then how is anyone going to believe it about themselves?’ (Female, age 24)

- Enablers

“So she had a look at it with me and she said well I can do this by hand, so she sat down with me and helped me do my homework... So that member of staff sat down with me and said we can do your homework here and there” (Female, 16+ group)

“She [foster carer] put a lot of belief in me and she always told me that I could do it [go to university]” (Female, age 21)



Experiences

Being 'different'

'We don't want people to be 'looked after', you want to be a normal kid too you know because it's only one, its only label of you' (Female participant, 16+ group)

Being 'visible'

'Any meetings, if they are necessary, should be held outside of school time, not just at a time that is convenient for the professionals'. (Female participant, 16+ group)

Conflict in meetings

'If you're moved out of county then one county will argue with the other county about who pays for transport, who pays for the schooling, who pays for food, who pays for everything that has something to do with your education' (Male Participant, 16+ group)

'Let off' or 'let down'

'As soon as I went into care, then went back to school and my teachers majority of them treated me completely different, because I was in care they moved me down sets, they put me in special help, they gave me – put me in support groups. And I was just like I don't need all this' (Female, 16+ group)

Recommendations

The final research report concluded with 17 recommendations...

- Minimising disruption during school time
- Universal programmes for support
- Educational champions to resolve disputes
- Access to computers and to a wide range of reading materials
- Opportunities to meet with others who are looked
- Training for foster carers

Recommendations incorporated in WG strategy for Looked after children and education

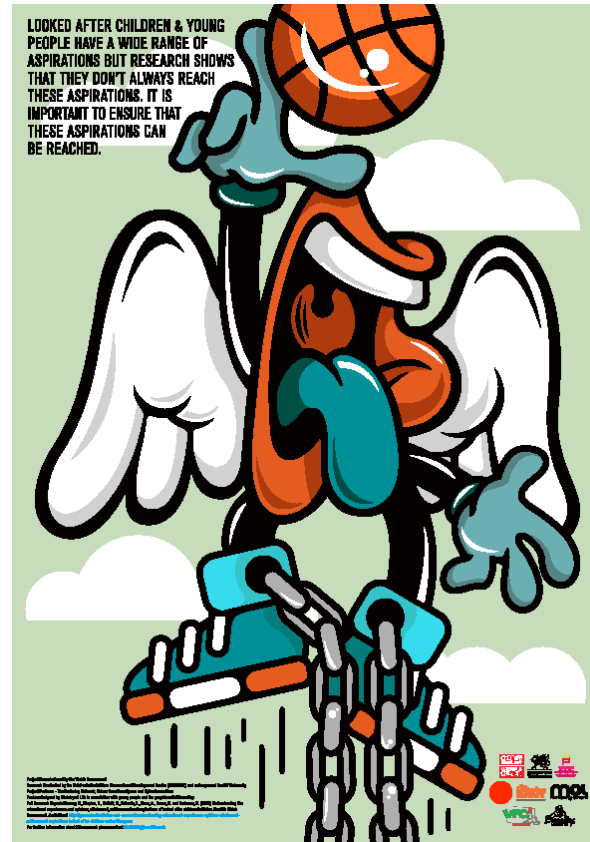
Outputs – please use and share

Short films x 4

Songs and music videos x 3;

Posters and postcards x 3

Thrive magazine



Available at: <http://sites.cardiff.ac.uk/cascade/looked-after-children-and-education/>

Impact and engagement award

- ESRC Impact Acceleration Account
- *Generate instrumental impact by extending the dissemination of findings to a wider policy and practitioner audience, whilst also generating conceptual impact by raising public interest and awareness of this concerning issue to keep it on the public and policy agenda; this will build more effective relationships and communications between individuals and agencies involved with children and young people.*

Impact and engagement activities

- Workshops and events
- Poetry/song lyric competition – #messagestoschools
- Music and video
- ‘Greater Expectations’ magazine
- Educational charter

#messagestoschools
from children and young people who are looked after

Children and young people who have been in care tend to gain less qualifications and have a less positive time at school. But this doesn't have to be the case – they are aspirational and with the right support they can achieve. Children and young people appreciate the valuable help that they get from teachers but there are still some things that they think all schools could do to help. These are their #messagestoschools

- We want to be treated the **same as everyone else** and not made to feel different or made to stand out.
- We don't want to be taken out of classes for meetings, or have meetings in rooms that are visible to other people
- We want to be **listened to** and **understood**, and have a voice in decisions about our education
- We can achieve, and we want teachers to have high expectations for us, believe in us, and support us to realise our aspirations
- We want to know who the designated teacher is and what **support** is available
- We would like teachers, social workers, and foster carers to communicate effectively to enable consistent support systems
- We want to be seen as **individuals** and not labelled or **underestimated** because we are looked after
- We need access to computers, books and other materials related to our education

Speech bubbles:

- "They say they won't treat us different when they do"
- "My school time is my learning time"
- "Listen to children and young people"
- "I want you to push me to reach my full potential"
- "I am not just a number, I am me"

Logos at the bottom: Cardiff University, Fostering Network, CASCADE, Cardiff University, Cardiff University, Cardiff University, Cardiff University.



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