

How good is our school? Quality Management in Education

SELF-EVALUATION SERIES



Inclusion and Equality

Part 1: Evaluating education and care placements for looked after children and young people



Inclusion and Equality

Part 1: Evaluating education and care placements for looked after children and young people

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Introduction

This document is one of a series of guides to self-evaluation which builds on the advice given in the publications *How good is our school?* and *Quality Management in Education (QMIE)*. It also shows how the relevant *National Care Standards* can be applied when evaluating the quality of care placements.

The materials are designed for the following groups which have responsibilities relating to the management of education and care placements for looked after children and young people:

- staff in schools;
- centrally deployed staff in local authorities; and
- staff in care homes and foster carers.

The introductory publication to the series, *Planning for Improvement*, outlines how you can use the outcomes of self-evaluation to plan effectively for improvement. This guide can be used when you are ready to evaluate the quality of educational provision for looked after children and young people, and forms the first part of a sub-series which will deal with issues relating to *Inclusion and Equality*. It shows how you can use a cluster of quality indicators from *How good is our school?*, *QMIE* and *National Care Standards* that focus on key features which have a significant impact on the achievement and experience of this particular group of pupils.

Improving educational outcomes for Looked After Children.

The term 'looked after,' introduced by the *Children (Scotland) Act 1995*, signifies the role of public agencies in assisting and supporting families, rather than taking over from them. The term 'corporate parent' is sometimes used to emphasise the role that different local authority services have in working together to provide support for looked after children and young people and their families. Most children and young people become looked after because of difficulties in their home circumstances, including family break-up and an accumulation of the effects of poverty. Reasons for becoming looked after may include child protection issues, parental addiction, school attendance problems and offending.

How good is our school?

Looked after children and young people face many barriers to achieving success in education. Many do well in school despite the difficulties faced in other aspects of their lives. However, they are much more likely than their peers to be lagging behind in terms of attainment and to leave school earlier and with fewer qualifications. They are also at far greater risk of being excluded from school. Research shows that success in education determines whether a young person who has been looked after has a fulfilling adult life. Yet, according to the Scottish Executive report *Learning with Care* (HM Inspectors of Schools and Social Work Services Inspectorate, 2001): ‘...the education of looked after children is not as good as it should be.’ The report contained nine recommendations about improving the education outcomes for these children. It emphasised the need for schools, social workers and carers to work together and have a shared understanding of the importance of education in improving the life chances of looked after children and young people..

Improving the educational outcomes for looked after children is an important issue within all five National Priorities for Education.

NATIONAL PRIORITY	IMPLICATIONS FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN
1. To raise standards of education for all in schools.	The progress and attainment of all looked after children and young people should be closely monitored. Schools and local authorities should have clear approaches to tackling underachievement in attainment of looked after children and young people and to measuring improvements.
2. To establish effective teaching and learning environments.	Appropriate support and training should be provided for teachers, social workers and carers, to help them establish ‘educationally rich’ environments where looked after children and young people can learn effectively.
3. To promote equality and help every pupil benefit from education.	Arrangements should be in place to ensure that looked after children and young people have equal access to a broad and balanced curriculum and the facilities they need to achieve to their fullest potential. There should be a clear commitment to ensuring that looked after children do not suffer from discrimination or disadvantage if their learning has been ‘interrupted’ in any way.
4. To work with others to teach pupils respect and the duties and responsibilities of citizenship.	Schools, social workers and carers should work together to develop the self esteem of looked after children and young people and their sense of respect for themselves and others.
5. To equip pupils with the skills, attitudes and expectations necessary to prosper in a changing society.	Too many looked after children and young people leave school with poor academic qualifications and poor aspirations. The curriculum and learning experiences of looked after children and young people should equip them to enter employment and higher and further education.

How to use this guide

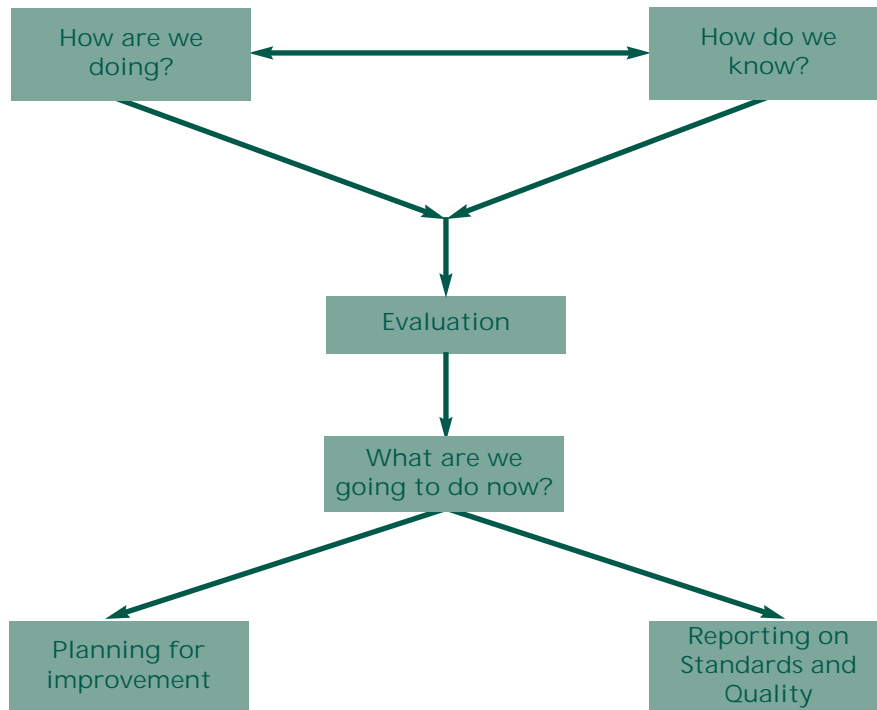
The Scottish Executive funded a partnership of agencies to produce supplementary materials to support the recommendations in the *Learning with Care* report. These materials were published in May 2003. They include:

- a training pack which local authorities can use to train social workers and teachers in the main issues involved in improving the educational experiences for looked after children;
- a booklet which summaries the key messages for social work, education and care staff; and
- a video account of young people's own educational experiences.

A full list of the partner agencies involved in the production of these materials is contained within *Sources of Support* on page 25 of this guide. This self-evaluation guide forms part of these materials.

This guide is designed to help staff in schools, officers in local authorities and carers to evaluate their effectiveness in improving educational outcomes and opportunities for looked after children. The framework adopts the principles of self-evaluation which underpin *How good is our school?* (HM Inspectorate of Education 2002). This approach is designed to help practitioners to:

- recognise key strengths in provision;
- identify areas where good quality needs to be maintained or where improvement is needed;
- identify priorities for a development plan; and
- report on standards and quality.



This guide provides you with formats which you can use as they stand or adapt for your own school, local authority or care placement. You can also download them as blank pro-formae from the HMIE web-site <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/hmie/>

Pages of the guide have been colour coded for ease of use. To evaluate their practice:

- schools should use Section 1;
- local authorities should use Section 2; and
- carers should use Section 3.

Section one: Schools

Part 2 of *How good is our school?* provides all the advice you need about practical approaches to self-evaluation.

This guide:

- summarises the key issues relating to the education of looked after children and young people, and refers to important sources of advice;
- shows how you might reflect these issues in key questions which derive from illustrations within the quality indicators chosen;
- looks at how you might collect evidence from more than one source in order to provide a robust basis for your evaluations; and
- encourages you to weigh up the strengths and areas of improvement in what you observe, in order to come to an overall evaluation of the quality of provision in your school.

To help schools evaluate their effectiveness in improving the educational outcomes for looked after children, six quality indicators (QIs) have been chosen from the revised edition of *How good is our school?* These have been selected as those QIs most relevant to improving the educational outcomes for looked after children. They will help you to evaluate:

- the arrangements for ensuring the care, welfare and protection of looked after children and young people;
- the approaches taken to monitor the progress and achievements of looked after children and young people;
- the provision for meeting their individual needs and supporting their learning;
- the links between schools, carers and social workers which support the educational achievements of looked after children and young people;
- the impact of the school's strategies to tackle discrimination and promote good relations and equality and fairness for all; and
- the effectiveness of promoted staff in improving educational outcomes for looked after children and young people.

You can then use the results of the evaluation and the evidence to plan for improvement and to report on the standards and quality of what you have found.

How good is our school?

Use this page alongside pages 15 and 16 of *How good is our school?*

Note down the sources of evidence on which you are basing your evaluation in the boxes below.

↓

People consulted:

↓

Documentation and resources reviewed:

↓

Direct observation undertaken:

↓

Data analysed:

Evaluating education and care placements for looked after children and young people

Fill in your record of the strengths and areas for improvement for each of the quality indicators using the grids on the following pages.

In the box below, note the overall evaluation for each of the quality indicators using the 1-4 scale from ***How good is our school?***.

Key Question	Quality Indicator	Overall Evaluation
How effective are your arrangements for the pastoral care of looked after children and young people?	4.1	
How well do you monitor the progress and achievements of looked after children and young people?	4.4	
How well do you support the learning needs of looked after children and young people?	4.5	
How effective are your links with other agencies and services?	4.8	
How effectively do you ensure and promote equality and fairness for looked after children and young people?	5.3	
How effectively do staff with additional responsibilities carry out their duties?	7.5	

Go back over all the ***areas for improvement*** you have identified.

Decide which are your ***priorities for development***.

Identify ***criteria for success*** by which to judge progress after you have taken action.

These priorities for improving the provision for looked after children and young people can now be included in your ***development plan***.

QI 4.1: Pastoral care

This quality indicator is concerned with the following themes:

- arrangements for ensuring the care, welfare and protection of pupils
- provision for meeting the emotional, physical and social needs of individual pupils

How good is our school?

Questions to ask	Why is this important?	Evidence	
		Strengths	Areas for improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent do you inform and consult with looked after children and young people, on all matters relating to their care and education, for example through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – providing access to complaints procedures; – a pupils' council; and/or – key staff systematically seeking their views? • How sensitive are you to the likely feelings of anxiety which children and young people feel when they become looked after or move care placement? How sensitive and responsive are you to young people's behaviour resulting from these anxieties? • How accurate and up-to-date are your records of information about the young person's legal status, personal details and contact details for residential staff, foster/relative carers and social worker? • What systems do you have in place to ensure that these records are treated sensitively and confidentially? 	<p>The capacity of children to be actively involved in planning and decision making is dependent on their age and degree of understanding. However, the general principle of involving young people in discussing, planning and reviewing their progress should apply. (Children (Scotland) Act 1995)</p> <p>The Learning with Care report found that some young people were very anxious about attending Children's Hearings. Others were anxious about family problems or about gaps in their education. There is considerable research evidence about the damaging effects of separation. Looked after children and young people may be particularly at risk of teasing, name-calling and physical abuse. Unhappiness at school may be a reason for, or a contributory factor in, non-attendance.</p> <p>The Learning with Care report found that pupil progress records (PPRs) did not always indicate a child or young person's legal status and contact details for social workers and carers were often missing or inaccurate. It is the responsibility of schools to keep accurate records.</p> <p>The school should have clear procedures for advising teachers about any learning, behavioural and attendance implications of children and young people's looked after status. Young people differ in their attitude to disclosure of sensitive information and may require support in managing their relationships with teachers and other pupils.</p>		

QI 4.4: Monitoring progress and achievement

This quality indicator is concerned with the following themes:

- the monitoring process
- profiles of pupils' progress and development
- arrangements for using acquired information

How good is our school?

Questions to ask	Why is this important?	Evidence	
		Strengths	Areas for improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How good is the school at setting appropriate targets for the attainment and achievements of looked after children and young people? • What evidence do you have that looked after children and young people are achieving the educational targets that have been set for them? • How effectively do you ensure that progress towards these targets is monitored, reviewed and updated? • How good are teachers at encouraging young people to attend school and catch up on missed work? • What evidence is there of the successes of children and young people being celebrated and their self-esteem promoted? • What range of strategies is in place to reduce the likelihood of exclusion? 	<p>Main recommendation 4 of the Learning with Care report states: 'Schools should take care to identify the learning needs of all their looked after children, set them challenging but realistic educational targets and systematically monitor the progress made.'</p> <p>Recent statistics on educational attainment of looked after children and young people show that most do not attain as well as other children and young people. The Scottish Executive has a target that all looked after children and young people should attain at least Standard Grade English and mathematics. Most should achieve more. Further information can be found in the report: The Educational Attainment of Looked After Children (Scottish Executive, 2002).</p> <p>The Learning with Care report found that although many schools did celebrate the success of looked after children and young people, this was not the case in all schools.</p> <p>Main recommendation 3 of the Learning with Care report states: 'Except in exceptional circumstances, all looked after children should have permanent full-time education, however that may be organised.'</p>		

How good is our school?

OI 4.5: Learning Support

This quality indicator is concerned with the following themes:

- programmes to support pupils' learning
- pupils' progress and attainment
- implementation of the roles of learning support

Questions to ask	Why is this important?	Evidence	
		Strengths	Areas for improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How successfully do school staff identify individual learning and support needs for looked after children and young people? • What evidence do you have of early intervention to provide learning or behavioural support, where these are required? • How successfully do staff ensure that looked after children and young people are progressing in their educational attainment? • How successfully do school staff liaise with social workers and carers to set and review targets for educational attainment within looked after children and young people's care plans? • Some looked after children and young people may have special educational needs. In these cases, how successful is the school in providing information for Records of Needs and Future Needs Assessments? 	<p>Looked after children or young people will typically have missed schooling, may have attended many schools, and may be at risk of non-attendance. It is therefore important that the school works with parents/carers to help make the child/young person feel welcome and settled. Appropriate extra help should be discreetly available to enable the child/young person to catch up. Programmes of work require to be well designed and meet looked after children and young people's individual needs.</p> <p>The Learning with Care report recommended improvements in the way in which carers and school staff work together to ensure that educational attainment is given sufficient attention in the care plan and reviews of the care plan. Where a looked after child or young person has an individualised educational programme (IEP), or other educational plan, this should influence the care plan.</p>		

QI 4.8: Links with local authority or other managing body, other schools, agencies and employers

How good is our school?

This quality indicator is concerned with the following themes:

- links with the local authority or other managing body
- links with other educational establishments
- links with voluntary organisations, the wider community and employers
- links with statutory organisations

Questions to ask	Why is this important?	Strengths	Evidence Areas for improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What evidence do you have that the school has taken account of the Children's Services Plan and other relevant policies and guidance when planning for the education of looked after children and young people? • How successful are you in networking with other schools and external agencies to share good practice and improve provision for the education of looked after children and young people? • How effectively do school staff collaborate with carers, link teachers and other relevant professionals to help provide adequate arrangements for study and completion of homework? • How effectively does your school plan for educational provision for looked after children and young people by consulting and communicating with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – young people themselves; – parents; – residential carers; – foster and relative carers; – social workers; and – Children's Hearings? • How knowledgeable are staff about the 'care system' and the roles of social workers, residential care staff, foster carers and related professionals? Are there suitable opportunities for staff development including relevant opportunities for job shadowing? 	<p>Every local authority has a duty (Children (Scotland) Act 1995) to publish a Children's Services Plan. This document outlines the targets for service delivery and is the basis for effective co-operation between key agencies.</p> <p>The Learning with Care report noted examples of good practice in individual schools in working with other agencies with an interest in pupils' welfare and educational progress. Schools should use every opportunity to share experiences, to participate in joint in-service training with social workers and carers, and to participate in relevant local and national events.</p> <p>Every school should help carers to become familiar with its expectations, for example of homework and attendance. Parents of looked after children usually retain their parental rights and responsibilities and should, generally, be encouraged to remain involved in their child's education and should receive school reports. The best ways of retaining or encouraging parental involvement should be agreed with the child's/young person's social worker.</p> <p>School staff should be knowledgeable about the 'care system'. This knowledge should form part of the training of the designated senior member of staff, and he or she should also be familiar with relevant Scottish Executive and local authority papers, circulars and guidelines (e.g. Social Justice... a Scotland where everyone matters, Scottish Executive 1999), and the provisions of relevant legislation (e.g. Children (Scotland) Act 1995).</p>		

How good is our school?

QI 5.3: Equality and fairness

This quality indicator is concerned with the following themes:

- sense of equality and fairness
- ensuring equality and fairness

Questions to ask	Why is this important?	Evidence	
		Strengths	Areas for improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How supportive and sensitive is your school to the diverse cultures and needs of looked after children and young people? • How effective is your anti-bullying policy at dealing with incidents of bullying involving looked after children and young people? • How do teachers ensure that teaching materials do not stigmatise children and young people who are looked after? • What steps does your school take to make pupils aware of the circumstances of looked after children and young people (without breaching confidentiality)? How is this taken forward as part of the school's wider promotion of inclusion and diversity? • What evidence is there that looked after children and young people have good access to extra-curricular activities and positive encouragement to take part? • What evidence do you have that looked after children and young people are treated with equality and fairness? 	<p>The home backgrounds and living arrangements of school pupils are very varied. Nevertheless, looked after children can be acutely aware that they are different from other children, and this may cause embarrassment and feelings of insecurity.</p> <p>It is important that lessons, text books and worksheets do not perpetuate assumptions that all families are 'normal'. There may be opportunities, for example in class lessons, to study information or literature which features the experiences of looked after children and young people.</p> <p>It is important that looked after children and young people have access to a full range of stimulating sporting, cultural and musical activities, but they may need additional encouragement and support in order to participate. The Learning with Care report found that schools needed to remember to give sufficient notice of trips to ensure that permission forms could be signed, particularly where time is needed to involve a parent or social worker.</p>		

QI 7.5: Effectiveness and deployment of staff with additional responsibilities
 This quality indicator is concerned with the following themes:

- remits and deployment
- individual effectiveness
- corporate effectiveness

How good is our school?

Questions to ask	Why is this important?	Evidence	
		Strengths	Areas for improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How effectively does the remit for the designated senior member of staff ensure that the needs of looked after children and young people are met? • How successful has the advocacy of the designated member of staff been in ensuring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – that high priority is given to raising educational attainment; – that care plans are reviewed; and – that school or placement moves are well planned? • How effectively do staff with additional responsibilities collaborate with carers, through care workers and career advisers, to ensure that looked after young people are given advice and support about subjects such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – careers; – opportunities in further education and higher education; and – funding for education and training • Have key members of staff received in-service training about looked after children and young people? How appropriate has this training been? 	<p>Each school should ensure that the designated teacher has a clear remit. An example of a remit for a designated teacher can be found in the booklet which forms part of the Learning with care support materials.</p> <p>The Learning with Care report said: 'Schools should take particular care to identify the learning needs of all their looked after children, set them challenging but realistic educational targets and systematically monitor the progress made' (5.5). It is the responsibility of the designated senior member of staff to institute action to ensure that these requirements are met.</p> <p>Research has shown that educational attainment is often ignored or given low priority in making decisions about looked after children and young people. The designated teacher senior member of staff should participate in care planning and reviews, provide progress reports, and liaise with social workers and carers.</p> <p>The Learning with Care support materials include a training pack for education and social work staff and carers. Further details can be obtained from the Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care.</p>		

Section two: Local Authorities

To help senior managers within local authorities evaluate their effectiveness in improving the educational outcomes for looked after children, four quality indicators (QIs) have been chosen from *Quality Management in Education* (HMIE 2000) These have been selected as those QIs most relevant to improving the educational outcomes for looked after children and young people. They will help you to evaluate:

- the range, appropriateness and clarity of policies on looked after children and young people, and their coherence with corporate policy;
- the range, appropriateness and effectiveness of approaches to communicating aims, policies, provision and performance to stakeholders and to staff and establishments;
- strategic approaches to the allocation and management of resources to meet the needs of looked after children and young people; and
- the range and rigour of processes for collecting, analysing and evaluating information to measure establishment and authority performance.

Key Question	Quality Indicator	Overall Evaluation
How effective are your policies for improving the educational outcomes for looked after children and young people?	1.3	
How effective are your systems and procedures for communicating with establishments and stakeholders about looked after children and young people?	2.2	
How effectively do you manage resources to improve educational outcomes for looked after children and young people?	4.1	
How effectively do you monitor and evaluate the performance of establishments and staff in improving educational outcomes for looked after children and young people?	5.1	

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QI 1.3: Policy Development

This quality indicator is concerned with the following themes:

- range, appropriateness and clarity of policies
- coherence with corporate policy.

Questions to ask	Why is this important?	Evidence	
		Strengths	Areas for improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent does the joint documentation used by education and social work services within your authority specifically indicate measures for ensuring that the educational needs of looked after children and young people are met? • To what extent does your authority's Children's Services Plan, and other policies and plans, take account of the needs of looked after children and young people? • To what extent do your authority's policies and plans for looked after children and young people reflect national and local priorities and related improvement objectives? • To what extent do your policy documents specifically address the issue of liaison between school and carers and the parents of looked after children and young people? • To what extent does your authority provide guidance to ensure that full attention is paid to fulfilling the educational component of care plans for looked after children and young people? 	<p>Main recommendation 5, in the Learning With Care report states: 'Local authorities should develop an integrated policy covering education and social work which ensures that the educational needs of looked after children are met effectively.'</p> <p>Main recommendation 8, in the Learning with Care report states: 'Local authorities should include explicit and targeted consideration of the education of looked after children in Children's Services Plan and reviews.'</p> <p>All looked after children are required to have a care plan. The Learning With Care report, Main Recommendation 2, states: 'Local authorities should ensure that all looked after children have care plans and placement agreements as specified in the legislation.'</p> <p>Care plans should clearly state educational provision and outcomes.</p> <p>Main recommendation 6 in the Learning with Care report states: 'Unless there are compelling reasons to the contrary, parents having contact with their children should receive regular information about their children's progress including end-of-session reports.'</p>		

QI 2.2: Mechanisms for Communication

Quality Management in Education

This quality indicator is concerned with the following themes:

- range, appropriateness and effectiveness of approaches to communicating aims, policies, provision and performance to customers/citizens
- range, appropriateness and effectiveness of approaches to communicating aims, policies and establishments, performance to staff and establishments.

Questions to ask	Why is this important?	Strengths	Evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent do your authority's systems and procedures ensure structured, supportive and efficient communication and collaborative working between establishments and all relevant agencies and carers? • To what extent does your authority communicate and consult with all partners (including, for example Who Cares? (Scotland), The British Association for Adoption and Fostering and The Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care) when developing policies and guidelines for looked after children and young people? To what extent does your authority facilitate communication between schools, social work services, carers and parents? • To what extent is there good communication to promote the education of looked after children and young people: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – at senior officer level between education and social work services; and – between senior officers and elected members? 	<p>Good communication and liaison is vital for continuity and is an important characteristic of effective corporate parenting. Care settings, schools and social work services may need advice and support in relation to establishing and maintaining effective liaison. Research literature has highlighted the negative effects of delays in transfer of school records when a looked after child or young person moves school.</p> <p>Authorities should communicate with parents, carers and other stakeholders with information about educational outcomes and policies for looked after children and young people. Main recommendation 6 in the Learning with Care report states: 'Unless there are compelling reasons to the contrary, parents having contact with their children should receive regular information about their children's progress including end-of-session reports.'</p> <p>The research literature highlights problems of communication between education and social work services departments which have not always been alleviated despite the increased use of information technology.</p>		Areas for improvement

QI 4.1: Resource Management

This quality indicator is concerned with the following themes:

- strategic approach to the allocation of resources
- strategies to improve economy, efficiency and effectiveness in use of resources
- systematic approach to the management of resources
- evidence of improved resource management.

Quality Management in Education

Questions to ask	Why is this important?	Evidence	
		Strengths	Areas for improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How effectively does your authority use additional resources and alternative educational settings to ensure that full-time education is provided for those looked after children and young people who cannot remain in school? • How well are resources deployed to ensure that there is minimal disruption to the education of looked after children and young people, and to encourage their good attendance at school or college? How adequate are the resources provided? • To what extent does your authority make adequate funds available for children's units and foster homes to purchase/replace books, toys and other educational material including ICT? To what extent are funds made available to support looked after children and young people's special interests, needs and talents (for example by providing extra tuition, music lessons, school trips, cultural and religious activities)? • How effectively does your authority use a dedicated budget to support looked after young people entering further and higher education? 	<p>Main Recommendation 3, in the Learning with Care report says: 'Except in exceptional circumstances, all looked after children should have permanent full-time education, however that may be organised.'</p> <p>A very high proportion of looked after children and young people have been excluded from school at some time. SEED Circular 2/98, Guidance on Issues Concerning Exclusions from School says that a local authority's duties to children and young people who are looked after are relevant to the decision to exclude and to any appeal. The research literature highlights failure to take steps to pre-empt exclusions, and the lack of educational support where a looked after child or young person is excluded from school.</p> <p>The Learning with Care report described units where 'staff complained they had no money for basic educational resources such as books, pencils and rubbers'.</p> <p>Experiencing financial problems is a major obstacle to going to, and remaining in, college or university. Looked after young people require help to apply for grants and bursaries, and financial assistance with the expenses associated with attending higher education, particularly if they have little or no family support.</p>		

QI 5.1: Measuring, Monitoring and Evaluating Performance

Quality Management in Education

This quality indicator is concerned with the following themes:

- range and rigour of processes for collecting information to measure establishment and authority performance
- range and rigour of processes for analysing and evaluating establishment and authority performance.

Questions to ask	Why is this important?	Strengths	Evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How effectively does your authority ensure that relevant education and social work staff and carers are aware of, and carry out their responsibilities in relation to, monitoring the progress and quality of the education provided for looked after children and young people? • How effectively does your authority monitor to what extent care placements provide an 'educationally rich' environment? • How well does your authority monitor and evaluate the strategies in place to reduce the numbers of exclusions of looked after children and young people? • How effectively does your authority gather data to provide baseline information on the educational achievement of looked after children and for monitoring progress? This data will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – school placements; – care placements; – educational attainment; – attendance; – exclusions; – Records of Need; and – leaver destinations, including progress to further and higher education. 	<p>In the report, Social Justice... a Scotland where everyone matters (Scottish Executive, 1999) the following 'milestone' was set: 'All our young people leaving local authority care will have achieved at least English and Maths Standard Grades.' This minimal level of attainment may seem unambitious to those looked after young people who achieve much more. However, most looked after young people leave school with no qualifications and lack of attainment remains a serious social and individual problem.</p> <p>Main recommendation 7 in the Learning with Care report states: 'As part of their quality assurance procedures local authorities should undertake an audit of their residential units to assess how far they are educationally rich environments and, where shortcomings are found, make plans to take appropriate action.'</p>		Areas for improvement

Section three: Carers

The *Learning with Care* report makes the obvious point that children who are removed from their own homes should experience better care than they previously received. In particular, their learning and attainment should be well provided for, because education has the potential to improve young people's life chances and help them to overcome disadvantage. The phrase *an educationally rich environment* is used to describe a residential unit or foster placement where a child or young person's learning and progress in pre-school education, school or college are given high priority. It is impossible to provide a single definition of what constitutes an educationally rich care environment but it encompasses a combination of factors, such as:

- interested, encouraging carers;
- effective collaboration between the educational establishment and the child's placement;
- good access to educational resources; and
- creative use of opportunities within the unit/placement and community to support learning.

This guide is designed to help:

- staff teams to evaluate the educational environment of a children's home or other residential unit, and
- social workers, or foster or relative carers to evaluate the educational environment of a family placement.

The term 'carer' is used to describe all residential care staff, foster carers and relative carers.

To help carers evaluate the extent to which the educational outcomes for looked after children have improved, standards from *National Care Standards for care homes for children and young people* and *National Care Standards: foster care and family placement services* have been chosen to help you to evaluate:

- the support which carers give to children and young people to help them achieve well at school;
- the environment provided, and how educationally rich this is; and
- the links between schools, parents and carers.

It is important that sufficient time is given to evaluation, reflection and discussion. You could carry out self-evaluation during a series of staff meetings, during meetings between foster/relative carers and their link social worker, or at a specific development event. You should encourage children and young people to take part in the evaluation.

How good is our school?

Key questions are used to exemplify the care standards. You should try to reach a view about the current level of provision using a four-point scale. This approach is similar to that used by teachers to evaluate key aspects of educational provision in schools. The four levels of performance are:

Level

- 4 very good – major strengths
- 3 good – strengths outweigh weaknesses
- 2 fair – some important weaknesses
- 1 unsatisfactory – major weaknesses

You should note evidence of good practice and areas which need to be improved. These levels give a baseline against which you can measure future progress. In particular, where an indicator is rated as 'fair' or 'unsatisfactory', you should take action for improvement. You can use the grids on page 6 of this guide to help you note your sources of evidence.

Key Questions	National Care Standard	Overall Evaluation
How effectively do you support looked after children and young people in their studies and provide an 'educationally rich environment'?	National Care Standards for care homes for children and young people: Standard 13 National Care Standards: foster care and family placement services: Standard 2	
How effective are your procedures for linking with schools and other agencies to support the educational achievement of looked after children and young people?	National Care Standards for care homes for children and young people: Standard 13 National Care Standards: foster care and family placement services: Standard 2	
How effectively do carers advocate on behalf of looked after children and young people?	National Care Standards for care homes for children and young people: Standard 13 National Care Standards: foster care and family placement services: Standard 2	
How effectively do you help looked after children and young people maintain relationships that are important to them?	National Care Standards: care homes for children and young people: Standard 3	

National Care Standards

Key questions: How effectively do you support looked after children and young people in their studies and provide an 'educationally rich environment'?

To answer this question refer to:
 National Care Standards for care homes for children and young people. Standard 13,
 National Care Standards: foster care and family placement services. Standard 2.

Questions to ask	Why is this important?	Strengths	Evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How effectively do you encourage and support young people to do their homework? Is there good provision of special quiet areas for study? To what extent do you understand, and demonstrate, the importance of education in helping children and young people to become more resilient and achieve their potential in all areas of their lives? How good are you at helping children and young people to develop and maintain hobbies and interests? How well do you encourage children and young people to read for pleasure, and to be active, regular users of their local public library? What level of financial help do you receive to allow young people to take part in wider educational opportunities such as school trips, clubs, and to help with travel to events or matches? How knowledgeable are you about the legislation, procedures and provisions relating to children and young people with special educational needs? How many books, educational toys, newspapers, computers and educational, artistic and other cultural materials are there in your care placement? How suitable are these for children and young people of different ages and abilities? How well does your care placement use its budget for purchase (or replacement) of educational materials and activities? 	<p>The ethos of the care placement is very important. Carers should expect that children and young people will attend school and will complete homework. Carers can help by checking homework diaries, ensuring that children understand what is expected of them and providing support where they lack confidence to seek help from teachers. Some carers undertaking courses have found that studying openly is encouraging for young people.</p> <p>Carers should be familiar with local authority guidelines in relation to provision for special educational needs.</p> <p>The Learning with Care report described units where 'staff complained they had no money for basic educational resources such as books, pencils and rubbers'. By contrast, some children's homes have subscriptions for daily newspapers, and can pay fees for private tutoring and music lessons. Unit budgets and foster carer allowances should take account of such needs.</p> <p>Main recommendation 7 in the Learning with Care report states: 'As part of their quality assurance procedures local authorities should undertake an audit of their residential units to assess how far they are educationally rich environments and, where shortcomings are found, make plans to take appropriate action.'</p>		

National Care Standards

Key question: How effective are your procedures for linking with schools and other agencies to support the educational achievement of looked after children and young people:

To answer this question refer to:

National Care Standards for care homes for children and young people. Standard 13,

National Care Standards: foster care and family placement services. Standard 2

Questions to ask	Why is this important?	Strengths	Evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How knowledgeable are you about the education system, public examinations and assessment? How good are you at working with teachers to help young people to attend school or college regularly? Where non-attendance is unavoidable, how effective are the alternative arrangements provided? If a child or young person is excluded from school, do you know how to advise about their right of appeal? What level of support do you provide when an appeal is made? To what extent do you ensure that young people receive appropriate support in considering career options, including access to careers advisers, and planning to meet particular job/educational entrance requirements? How good is the advice you give to young people about applying for and obtaining grants for further or higher education? How do you help them to get appropriate information about financial and other support from the social work department, education authority or government to continue with education after school or college? To what extent do you receive relevant training, support and advice in relation to education? 	<p>It is important for carers to be familiar with how the curriculum is organised and the requirements of the 5-14 curriculum, Standard Grade, and National Qualifications. Carers should make arrangements to obtain school handbooks, and to attend curriculum meetings and other advice sessions run by schools.</p> <p>Carers should keep in regular contact with schools, including going to parents' meetings or other school or community events. Carers should consider joining parent-teacher associations and participating in other aspects of school life, such as School Boards.</p> <p>Where exclusion is unavoidable, carers should collaborate with the school to ensure that alternative options are explored. Where parents retain parental responsibility, they have the right of appeal against exclusion. Where the local authority has parental responsibility, it has the right of appeal. Young people with 'legal capacity' have the right of appeal against exclusion: Legal Capacity (Scotland) Act 1991. Most young people of 12 years and over are deemed to have legal capacity. This may also apply to some younger children.</p> <p>All young people receive career education and participate in work experience. Looked after young people may require additional support and encouragement to access these services. Where non-attendance or exclusion is an issue, it is important to check that these opportunities have not been missed. Helpful career planning information is now available on the Internet, for example, at the Continuing Education Gateway site (www.ceg.org.uk) and career advisers can advise carers on suitable approaches for individual young people.</p>		Areas for improvement

Key question: How effectively do carers advocate on behalf of looked after children and young people?

To answer this question refer to:

National Care Standards for care homes for children and young people. Standard 13,
National Care Standards: foster care and family placement services. Standard 2

National Care Standards

Questions to ask	Why is this important?	Evidence	
		Strengths	Areas for improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How good are you at providing advocacy on behalf of children and young people to ensure that high priority is given to educational attainment in reviewing care plans? How good are you at ensuring that schools hold accurate, up-to-date information about young people's legal status and their personal and contact details? When children or young people need to change schools, how good are you at consulting with teachers about the most appropriate schools for them to attend? How good are you at helping young people to understand how schools will treat confidential information, and the consequences of disclosing information about their home circumstances to teachers, so that they can make appropriate decisions? How good are you at counselling and supporting children and young people with anxieties about school or other concerns which are affecting their ability to study? 	<p>In some residential units, one member of staff liaises with particular schools, which can help to develop good working relationships. Some young people prefer to have the same carer attend all meetings and in residential units ideally these commitments should be taken into account in drawing up staff shift rotas.</p> <p>Disruption to education, including changes of school, should be avoided wherever possible. Carers should be aware of the advantages of stability in this important area of the child's life, and should advocate on behalf of the young person at care planning and review meetings to ensure that education and schooling are given prominence in discussions. Where necessary, transport should be provided to maintain children and young people in their present schools.</p> <p>The Learning with Care report found that some young people were very anxious about attending Children's Hearings and that this could affect their concentration or behaviour in school. Others were anxious about family problems or about gaps in their own education.</p>		

Key question: **How effectively do you help looked after children and young people maintain relationships that are important to them?**

To answer this question refer to:

National Care Standards for care homes for children and young people. Standard 3

National Care Standards

Questions to ask	Why is this important?	Evidence	
		Strengths	Areas for improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How effectively do you consult and involve parents and other friends and relatives in educational aspects of their child's life, where this is appropriate? How effectively do you advise schools on how to consult with, and involve parents in the educational aspects of their child's life? 	<p>Parents are usually interested in their child's educational progress and can be an important source of encouragement and support.</p> <p>School staff may need advice and sometimes help from carers with practical matters. This could include advice on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – involving parents in correspondence, school reports, curriculum meetings; and – the implications for parental involvement with the school of overnight home visits or temporary placements. 		

SOURCES OF SUPPORT

Additional information and sources of support can be obtained through the following links:

- *Care to Learn?* (Save the Children and Who Cares? (Scotland), May 2003)
- *Learning with Care: The education of children looked after away from home.* (HM Inspectors of Schools & the Social work Services Inspectorate, March 2001)
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library3/education/lacr.pdf>
- *Learning with Care: Training materials for carers, social workers and teachers concerning the education of looked after children and young people.* (University of Strathclyde, May 2003) These materials have been developed and produced by a partnership between the British Association for Adoption and Fostering; Save the Children; the Scottish Institute for Residential child Care; the University of Strathclyde, Professional Development Unit, Department of Educational Support and Guidance and the Quality in Education Centre; and Who Cares?(Scotland).
<http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/5679text.pdf>
- National care standards: care homes for children and young people
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library3/health/ncschc-03.asp>
- National care standards: foster care and family placement services
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/social/ncsfc.pdf>
- Quality Management in Education (HMIE, 2000)
(<http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/qmie.pdf>)
- Social Justice.... A Scotland where everyone matters (Scottish Executive, 1999)
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library2/doc07/sjmd-09.htm>
- Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care, Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care, University of Strathclyde, 76 Southbrae Drive, Glasgow G13 1PP

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