

What carers and social workers can do

This hand-out gives a range of ideas that can directly support and encourage children in their learning. It is not exhaustive and there may well be other strategies or ideas that you or others on this course may share with each other. What is important to remember is that the support of education is a core parenting task and that all adults caring for looked after children have a duty to work in this way.

What carers and social workers can do to support literacy?

- Read to or with children. Listen to them read
- Buy books or book tokens as presents
- Help children to join a library
- Go with them to bookshops
- Take them to children's events at libraries, literature festivals or bookshops
- Ensure you have a range of age appropriate (and reading age appropriate) books in the home, including books that relate to the children's life experiences
- Ensure you have reference books e.g. atlas, dictionary, encyclopaedia
- Have subscriptions to newspapers, young people's magazines and comics
- Encourage children to write stories, plays or poems, keep a diary, or write letters or e-mails to friends and family

What carers and social workers can do to support other learning?

- Play board games and card games that will increase literacy and numeracy skills
- Encourage crossword, word and number puzzle solving
- Provide toys that are developmentally stimulating as well as fun
- Watch and discuss TV programmes that have an educational aspect
- Encourage and support talents, hobbies and interests – share yours with them
- Visit museums, art galleries and historic places of interest
- Persuade the local authority to buy enough computers for the children placed with you. Make sure you learn how to use it, that it is insured and that it has programmes to prevent inappropriate Internet use
- Use ordinary every day activities as learning opportunities e.g. following recipes, planning an outing

What carers and social workers can do to create a learning culture at home?

- Chat with children about their day at school
- Ensure you know when homework has been given
- Provide a quiet place and a regular time for homework

- Check homework has been completed to a reasonable standard
- Find out about homework clubs if a child finds it difficult to concentrate at home
- Try to ensure that school attendance and attainment is an ingrained part of the culture in your home/unit
- Show children that you are still involved in learning yourselves
- Look out for and praise children's achievements, however small, in any aspects of their education or school life
- Continue to be interested in child's education even after they have left your care

What carers and social workers can do to support the school?

- Make a good relationship with the link teacher(s) if your local authority has one
- Liaise with the school if you are concerned about the child's attainment, homework, attendance, behaviour or welfare
- Always attend parents' evenings, school events and special meetings
- Join the PTA /School Council
- Be an advocate for the child if they are unhappy about some aspect of school life e.g. bullying, breaches of confidentiality, inability to understand
- Try hard to get necessary funding and permissions for school trips and holidays
- Ensure the school has necessary, up to date information about the child's background and current circumstances. Be sure you know how this information will be treated
- Provide and maintain any uniform, kit and equipment required or recommended by the school

What carers and social workers can do to create a network to support learning?

- Get teachers involved in care planning and reviews
- Encourage friendships with children who are not in care, particularly those who do well in school
- Support parents and other relatives to be involved in their children's education
- Help to find out about careers, FE and HE and, where necessary, advocate for adequate post school financial support
- Involve befrienders in supporting children's learning
- Remember learning is about more than school – encourage involvement in sport, music, drama, creative arts or voluntary work