

Trainer's notes

Unit No. 14: The looked after child's world in the education system

Unit objectives

- Consider ways in which foster and residential carers can help to make school a more positive experience for looked after children.
- Enhance their understanding of the ways in which looked after children are supported within educational establishments.

Outline of Unit

- "Craig's Story" – the exclusion incident
- Support arrangements in education establishments
- The designated manager role

Resources required to deliver unit

- Extracts from the Film, "Craig's Story"
- "Learning with Care" film (At School in Care section)
- Flipchart paper and pens
- Supporting Children and Young People (Education Scotland Culture and Ethos Improvement Guide) (pdf)
- Designated Manager Core Task Discussion Cards
- Education Scotland Journey to Excellence website: www.journeytoexcellence.org.uk

Resources required to support this unit

- Education Scotland - [Journey to Excellence website](http://www.journeytoexcellence.org.uk)
- The Core Tasks for Designated Managers in Educational and Residential establishments in Scotland

Introduction to trainer

This unit is aimed principally at foster carers, residential workers and social workers. The unit contains some of the same content as Unit 15 which is aimed at teachers. The unit is designed to stand alone, but could follow on from Unit 13, The Education System.

The unit is designed to last approximately 1½ - 2 hours. The session length could be lengthened or varied by designing alternative activities around different media clips provided. For example, the meeting in the depute head's office from the

film "Craig's Story" could be used to raise issues about school from the point of view of the looked after child.

Alternatively, you might like to use the 'At School in Care' section of the Learning with Care film, also included with this unit. We recommend reviewing the videos and case studies in the [Journey to Excellence website](#) as part of your preparation for the session. They cover a range of aspects of education. If appropriate for the needs of the group, you might choose to incorporate a video or case study into the session to help give participants a better idea of life in a school and ways in which pupils are supported.

Trainer presentation (5 minutes)

Introduce the unit objectives (slide 1). Explain that school staff, according to Education Scotland's Improvement Guide on Culture and Ethics, are expected to: "take positive and proactive steps to ensure that factors, such as the learning environment, family circumstances, health or disability, or social or emotional factors which may hinder learning are promptly identified and addressed effectively." Staff are also expected to: "review these needs with families and consider if support is good enough." In this context 'families' also means carers. These are general expectations and it is important to develop relationships with schools to be clear how procedures operate locally. There may also be a role in challenging school staff where communication is inadequate or correct procedures are not followed.

The Additional Support for Learning (2009) Act also sets out that children who are looked after are assumed to have an additional support need unless assessed otherwise. In practice that means that schools have a legal obligation to carry out an assessment of a child's needs when they become looked after, which should be reviewed at regular intervals, to evidence whether a child requires additional support and thus additional resource, or not. The Children and Young People's (Scotland) (2014) Act also requires local authorities to have a child's plan in place for children who have additional support needs. This plan should be an assessment of need and an action plan which sets out how a local authority will meet a child's individual needs. Information to form this assessment should be gathered and analysed using GIRFEC tools: the my world triangle, the resilience matrix and the National Risk Framework.

Group Activity (30 minutes; you need to allow longer if viewing entire film)

Show the classroom scene from "Craig's Story" which ends with Craig rushing from the room, brushing past teacher Mr Scammell and knocking his papers to the floor. As a result of the incident Craig is excluded from school. If the group has not previously seen the entire film, you might prefer to show it and then to replay the classroom scene.

Divide participants into two groups: one group should consider the incident from Mr Scammell's perspective; the other from Craig's. Provide flipchart paper and pens. Starter questions (slide 2) could include:

- How might Craig / Mr Scammell be feeling?
- What might have caused them to react as they did?
- How could the incident have been avoided?

Take feedback from the groups. You might then choose to play the film to show the scene at Newcross and also the meeting at school. The group could discuss Michael's role and progress to a discussion about their own responsibilities specifically in trying to anticipate and avoid difficulties, and in communicating with schools.

Support in school

The purpose of this part of the unit is to introduce participants to the different ways in which schools provide support for pupils, as well as the formal arrangements for supporting looked after children.

Activity (20 minutes)

Select an appropriate video from the Culture and Ethos section of the [Journey to Excellence](#) website. Which film(s) you choose will depend on the characteristics of the group. For example, you might choose to view "A Nurturing Ethos" (5 minutes) which outlines how a primary school has developed a nurture class. The film, "Mearns Academy Supporting Vulnerable Learners" (3 minutes), outlines a secondary school's support for looked after children.

Allow a few minutes for discussion about the film and perhaps for participants to comment on their own experiences of engagement with schools, as parents or as carers.

Distribute the hand-out, ***Supporting Children and Young People***, from the Education Scotland Improvement Guide series. Briefly select each of the five areas represented and ask participants to suggest practical ways in which schools might meet the standard expected. For example, the guide says that an example of excellent practice would be where: "children and young people have confidence to ask for help when they need it and know that adults will use their power to help them in the best way possible." If a child was being bullied they should expect that telling a teacher or their carer would result in the adults communicating effectively and agreeing suitable action.

The Designated Manager role

Trainer introduction (5 minutes)

The document, Core Tasks for Designated Managers, is available as part of this unit. It is divided into sections for different sectors. Distribute the document or alternatively send it to participants along with the course joining instructions (if the session is being split over two occasions, give it out for home reading) so that it can be read more closely. Explain that all schools are expected to have a named member of the management team who fulfils the role of Designated Manager (DM). In pre-school establishments and primary schools this will usually be the head or depute head. In secondary schools the role may be performed by a member of the senior management team, or by a member of the pastoral care team or support for learning team. Core tasks are indicated in the document in respect of communication, meeting the needs of children and young people, advocacy and learning (slide 3).

Activity (15 minutes)

Form participants into groups and issue each group with a card on which a core task is printed. Invite the groups to engage in discussion for 10 minutes to establish what actions they think might be expected of a DM in relation to the task. Finish with a brief plenary discussion focusing on carers' obligations to liaise with the DM.

Plenary discussion (10 minutes)

Convene a plenary discussion focusing on carers' obligations to liaise with the DM, picking up on ideas generated within the group discussions. Point out that the DM role fits within the general arrangements for supporting all pupils. These are set out in the document, Happy, Safe and Achieving their Potential – a standard of support for young people in Scottish schools. Refer to the 10 Standards of Personal Support in Schools which are provided in an appendix in Core Tasks for Designated Managers (slide 4).

Finally, spend 5 minutes reviewing the key messages (slide 5).

Key messages

- The importance of children having good relationships with teachers as the basis of successful learning.
- The need for an unavoidable exclusion to be managed strictly according to the local authority's guidelines (often available on the web), and the carer's role in being co-operative but firm with the school to ensure that correct procedures are followed.
- The importance of the designated manager role and the value of carers developing good relationships with the DM.
- The need for teachers to examine their assumptions about pupils' home situations and to be careful about inadvertently causing upset when designing lessons.

- The carer's role in advocacy: specifically in relation to their child; more generally in relation to looked after children attending school (e.g. in contributing to teachers' in-service days).