

Self-study notes

Unit No. 17: Better Planning

Unit objectives

- To consider the implications of shared responsibility when planning for children.
- To identify the planning frameworks in operation for looked after children
- To understand more about the purpose, structure and process of the review system
- To consider the impact of review and other planning meetings on participants particularly children and parents.

Outline of Unit

- Introductory activity
- Presentation: Planning frameworks
- Activity: Educational Planning for Craig
- Presentation: Review System
- Activity: Craig's Review

Resources to support this unit

- PowerPoint slides
- Hand-outs: Craig's Story; Care leavers: duties of the local authority; A Guide to Getting it right for every child

Additional information

- Supporting children's learning :code of practice (Revised Edition 2010)
- Extra support at school -The rights of looked after children
- Multi-Agency working (Graham Connelly 2008)

Introduction

Welcome to the unit on better planning. In the self study mode this includes a small section on working together. Planning for looked after children is essential to ensure that all their needs are systematically assessed and provided for and to prevent children drifting through the system. This unit introduces the main planning frameworks for looked after children and uses the case example of Craig to think about their application. The Additional Support for Learning (ASL) legislation has changed the process and grounds by which children are provided

with additional help and support to ensure they get the best out of the education system. *Getting it right for every child* aims to change the way plans are made for children across a range of agencies and to coordinate help in a much more integrated way. Both these planning frameworks have the potential to be much more responsive to the often complex individual needs of looked after children. They also both operate from the type of explicitly integrated multi agency approach which is often required to meet the needs of looked after children effectively.

Being a corporate parent means local authorities

- have responsibilities for a looked after child
- or young person's wellbeing until they are 26
- Planning for education means that the learning needs,
- progress and aspirations of the child should feature
- prominently in all decision making about their care

Introductory activity: planning for children

Spend a few moments reflecting on the way parents plan for their own children. You can draw on your own experiences of being parented, or think about your own children or those of friends or family.

Consider the following questions.

- Who is involved?
- Why do they do it?
- How do they do it?
- When do they do it?
- What do they do?

Sitting down to 'plan' a child's life in a formal way is not something that parents usually do. Planning tends to be on-going, done in a positive and caring way and is a legitimate and vital task for parents and their children. It can involve talking about what is happening at the moment, making plans, reflecting on events. Most plans are made by parents and other family members although they may take professional advice when appropriate. As children grow and develop they are increasingly included in planning. Parents recognise that relatively small everyday decisions for example developing healthy eating patterns or homework routines can affect longer term outcomes. Planning includes ensuring that children have a positive day to day experience as well as thinking about their long term futures. Parents are planning for their children all the time and constantly review their plans as circumstances or needs change. Cast your mind back to the unit on corporate parenting. The parenting experience of looked after

children is much more fragmentary than for most other children and their needs are usually more complex. The importance of planning is therefore even greater than for their peers but the process is much more difficult. This is why planning frameworks and regular review are essential

Planning frameworks

Download the PowerPoint slides on planning frameworks. Look at these and read the following hand-outs for this unit to expand your understanding of the slides.

- A guide to *Getting it right for every child*
- Care leavers: duties of the local authority

These outline the planning frameworks that are particularly important for looked after children.

The *Getting it right for every child* programme and the *Integrated Assessment Framework* have now been implemented throughout Scotland, although the format may vary in different local authorities.

You may also be useful to check the Scottish Government website <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/childrenservices/girfec> and any look out for any local initiatives.

Pay particular attention to the core components and principles and values which underpin this approach. Ensure there is a full discussion of this. The looked after children planning materials which have been used widely in the past are likely to be superseded by the *Getting it right* materials and have not been included on the training materials but you may need to refer to them if they are still used locally.

All looked after children (including those looked after at home) must have a "child's plan" (care plan) - note that that for some years this requirement was not met. There is also a statutory requirement for reviewing the "child's plan" and the timing of such reviews. Although the "child's plan" is formally reviewed at regular intervals there may be occasions in which planning meetings need to be called between reviews to make decisions about unforeseen situations that arise.

It may be helpful to check the Scottish Government's website on [Child's Planning](http://www.gov.scot/resource/doc/163531/0044420.pdf) <http://www.gov.scot/resource/doc/163531/0044420.pdf>

The planning framework introduced by the ASL legislation has the potential to make a substantial difference to the educational support available to looked after children. Take up of this has been variable across authorities. The decisions have to be made on the basis of individual children's needs. Looked after children are deemed to have additional support needs and education authorities are required to undertake an assessment of the child to determine whether or not the child

requires a coordinated support plan. Parents and carers can ask for a child to be assessed for additional support.

As was indicated in the unit on care leaving, Local Authorities have a specific responsibility to assess the needs of young people becoming independent and develop a plan with them to meet these needs.

Other planning processes may also be activated if a child's particular circumstances require this for example if there are concerns about a child's safety or the risk that a child might pose to others. In situations such as these, child protection procedures would be instigated, These procedures take precedence over other planning frameworks due to the level of risk involved for children if they require child protection intervention.

Activity: Educational Planning for Craig

- Using the case history provided in the hand-out Craig Story – background information think about him at age ten after his grandmother died and before he was taken into foster care. Remember that The Child's Planning guidance sets out that each child should have one plan that relates to any concerns in connection with their wellbeing. Children therefore should have one plan that brings together all previous planning structures in one place. If appropriate these should be multi agency to ensure that there are not separate plans for education, health and social work.
- What kind of educational support might he require?
- What agencies should be involved in planning for Craig?
- What information should the plan contain? (in relation to education, health and social work)?

Notes

Craig certainly requires additional support on several of the grounds that are given as examples. Did you think he met the criteria for a coordinated support plan? There would certainly be an argument for this.

- Craig 's situation at home was having a significantly adverse effect on his education which meets the criteria for a complex factor.
- It is also true that there are a number of different factors that are affecting his education- this includes a longstanding literacy problem, bereavement, parental mental ill health and substance misuse, neglect and being a young carer. Therefore multiple factors were affecting his education.
- The history of parenting difficulties would suggest this is likely to continue beyond a year

- To address these needs would require the involvement of social work and possibly health as well as the education authority

On these grounds a case could be made for Craig requiring a coordinated support plan. The current reality is that very few looked after children have coordinated support plans. This is contrary to the intention of the original Act and a source of concern to many policy makers.

Find out how many looked after children in your local area have either Individualised Educational Programmes or Co-ordinated Support Plans. Think about the children you are working with- could they benefit from additional support. Has this been discussed in their review or other planning meetings?

Presentation on reviews

Download the PowerPoint slides on the review process. These outline the purpose and timing of reviews and who should attend them. The review is a vitally important part of the local authority's role of fulfilling its duties towards young people who are looked after. A review meeting can, however, be a somewhat daunting process for all concerned, particularly the young person. It may be difficult for them to express their ideas and opinions, and the very fact that a review is taking place is a reminder that they are different. Young people are often concerned that teachers and other "outside" people will find out things about them at reviews that they would never know about a young person living at home. The detail of information sharing will be covered in the next unit. .

Activity: Craig's Review

Think about your own experience of reviews and answer the following questions. If you have never attended a review ask a colleague who has if they will give you their opinion of the process.

- In your experience what is the purpose of reviews?
- Has this been achieved?
- Who has been involved?
- What has been the process?
- What has helped or hindered the process?

People have very different experiences of reviews. You may have had experience of being in meetings with children or parents who have been very abusive or challenging or who have found it difficult to participate. It may sometimes seem that the reviews are pointless if decisions are not implemented for whatever reason. You may on the other hand have had positive experiences. If so what contributed to that positive experience? Although all local authorities have to review a child's plan on a prescribed time table the detail of the procedures vary across Scotland. You should check out what your own local authority's

expectations and requirements are, particularly in relation to the format of meetings, what reports are tabled and whether it is policy to invite teachers to all or part of the review.

We are going to use Craig's case history again to explore the review process.

A review has been called shortly after the meeting in school that was shown in the film. Read through Craig's case study again and decide who you think should be invited to the review

Think about all the individuals you have identified. From the perspective of every one of the individuals answer the following

- What issues would you want raised at the review – why?
- What issues would you not want raised at the review – why not?
- What preparation do you think you would need before the review?
- Would you want to attend the review meeting?
- If attending, what support might you need before, during and after the meeting?
- Is there anyone that you would particularly want to invite to all or part of the meeting?
- Is there anyone, in particular, that you would not want invited to the meeting?

After you have completed this exercise decide if there is anybody you would on reflection not have invited to the meeting. Bearing in mind Craig's previous experience of meetings how do you think Craig or his mother might feel about attending a review? Remember the slides that gave quotes from children and parents about their experience. What could have made it a good experience for Craig?

Working together

This is a topic that is most usefully addressed in a multi disciplinary group. It is, however, so important that we are including a brief discussion of the issue in this unit. Read the hand-out on the principles and values underpinning "*Getting it right for every child*". A number of these principles highlight the importance of working together.

Activity: Working together well

Think of an occasion in which you or your agency worked together well with another professional, agency or parent to meet the needs of a looked after child. Reflect on the experience and try and identify what went so well. What did you do and what did the other person or agency do? What kind of attitudes and values were apparent in the work?

It is likely that your work together was child centred, involved a clear shared purpose and was characterised by values and attitudes of mutual respect and supportiveness. There are also a number of factors that act as barriers to effective work. Reflect on your own and your agency's experience of working with other professionals. On occasions where there were difficulties or tensions can you recognise any of the barriers outlined in the slide? Are there improvements you could make?

If you are interested in following this up further there is a discussion about the importance of multi agency working in the article by Connelly in the supporting resources for this unit focused specifically on looked after children's education.

Key Messages

- Planning and reviews are a vital part of the process of 'corporate parenting'. They formalise a process which for most children is an on-going one. All looked after children should have a child's plan and be considered for a coordinated support plan.
- All agencies should be working together to create a shared assessment with a single record that addresses the child's needs. The child's plan should be drawn from this integrated assessment.
- Many looked after children could benefit from additional support with their learning.
- The use of co-ordinated support plans must be considered for looked after children.
- Reviews provide an important opportunity for all those working with and for a child to demonstrate effective partnership to the young person.
- Reviews should be conducted on a 'strengths' based approach, which involves a consideration of all aspects of a young person's development.
- It is essential that the review process is managed so that all involved have the opportunity to prepare for it and are clear about their role and expectations.
- There should be flexibility and choice about who attends so as to respond to the needs and views of individual children.