

# Trainer's 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 required to deliver unit

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

### Resources required to support this unit

- *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 to trainer

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♦

## **Activities**

### **Introductory group activity: planning for children (15 minutes)**

Ask participants to discuss in small groups the way parents plan for their own children. They can draw on their own experiences of being parented, or think about their own children or those of friends or family. Ask them to 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?

In the discussion you should draw out the following points.

- Sitting down to 'plan' a child's life is not something that parents usually do.
- Planning tends to be ongoing, 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 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.

Remind participants of the Corporate Parenting Unit. 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

### **Presentation: Planning frameworks (10 minutes)**

Use the PowerPoint slides and handouts to introduce 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. A guide to *Getting it right for every child* has been included as part of the materials to support this unit. Give copies of this handout to participants at the start of your presentation and refer to it throughout.

It may also be useful to check the Scottish Government website

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/childrenservices/girfec> and any local initiatives to include in your presentation.

You should draw participants' 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.

Emphasise that **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. Outline the 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. Point out that looked after children are deemed to have additional support needs and that 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 supporting young people leaving care, 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.

### **Group Activity: Educational Planning for Craig (20 minutes)**

- Distribute Craig's Story – background information hand-out to the participants and give them a few minutes to read it over. Using the case history on Craig ask participants think about him at age ten after his grandmother died and before he was taken into foster care. Remind participants 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.

In small groups ask the participants to consider the following:

- 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)?

Allow time for feedback and a short discussion re the points raised.

### **Notes for trainer**

Craig certainly requires additional support on several of the grounds that are given as examples. Explore with participants the thinking behind their decisions and get them to reflect on the meaning of complex or multiple factors. If many of the participants believe that Craig should have a co-ordinated support plan discuss what might be the factors in the low use of this procedure for looked after children. Invite suggestions as to how to tackle this at a local level.

### **Presentation on reviews (10minutes)**

Use the PowerPoint presentation to explain the review process. Discuss the comments from parents and children and remind participants of Craig's response to formal meetings. Point out that the review is a vitally important part of the local authority's role of fulfilling its duties towards children who are looked after. A review meeting can, however, be a somewhat daunting process for all concerned, particularly the child. 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. Children 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. Explain to participant that information sharing will be explored in a subsequent unit.

### **Group Activity: Craig's Review (35 minutes)**

Participants should be asked to comment on their experience of reviews by discussing in two's and three's the following questions:

- 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/inhibited the process?

You may find that a wide range of views emerge during this discussion. Some people may never have been involved in any way at all with reviews, others may be unsure about the format. Others 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. Some may express a view that the reviews are pointless if decisions are not implemented for whatever reason. Other participants may have had positive experiences and they should be encouraged to identify what contributed to this. You should provide input about what the 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 etc.

### **As a big group:**

Explain that Craig's case history is going to be used as the basis for this activity. A review has been called shortly after the meeting in school.

Ask participants to read through Craig's case study again and then suggest who should be invited to the review. Divide people into small groups to represent each of the different individuals whom they have suggested could/should attend the review.

**In the small groups** ask people to answer the following questions from the perspective of the particular individual (i.e. social worker, carer, child, etc.).

- 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?

Participants should summarise their discussion for feeding back to the main group.

Ask each 'character' to feed back to the larger group and discuss the different responses, identifying any common themes, and reasons behind any significant differences between the groups. Encourage, in particular, discussion of the role of teachers.

### **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.