

Trainer's notes

Unit No. 19: Making it better together

Unit objectives

- To identify the differences between school and home and the impact of these differences for looked after children
- To work together to identify what factors create supportive or inhibiting environments at home and in school
- To recognise the importance of partnership working in supporting the education of looked after children and young people
- To identify what promotes good partnership working
- To explore factors that prevent individuals, teams and agencies working together well
- To identify personal examples of joint working that have enhanced the educational experience of looked after children or young people.

Outline of Unit

- Presentation and large group discussion
- Group activity
- Presentation and group activity

Resources required to deliver unit

- PowerPoint slides
- Flipchart paper and pens
- A guide to Getting it right for every child (handout)

Resources required to support this unit

- *Guidance on partnership working between allied health professionals and education.* Scottish Government. 2010
- *Supporting children's learning code of practice.* Scottish Government. 2010
- *Multi-Agency Working* Connelly, G. Scottish Education, 2013

How Good is our School 4

www.educationscotland.gov.uk/resources/h/hgios4/introduction.asp

Introduction to trainer

This is the last unit in the course and you should encourage participants to draw on all their learning. The unit focuses on people working together to improve the

educational experience of children. This is based both on the recognition of, and respect for, differences as well as on a shared goal to improve outcomes for children. Within the unit participants work together in mixed professional groups to recognise difficulties and strengths and to identify strategies for improving the experience of looked after children. The final activity requires participants to identify challenges in their own work experience and provides an opportunity to develop effective strategies for change.

Useful Web links

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inclusionandequalities/supportingchildrenandyoungpeople/partnershipsfor-support/>

Presentation and large group discussion: Differences between home and school

Use the 'Home and School Learning' PowerPoint slide to explore with participants the differences between home and school learning. Encourage a discussion about these ideas to consider other differences between home and school culture.

This presentation and discussion should open up a number of the differences between school and home. You should encourage participants to think about how these differences may impact on looked after children both negatively and positively. As well as the differences outlined on the overheads make sure that participants think about issues such as language, behaviour, dress, level of intimacy in adult/child relationships, safety, freedom and the different peer groups. This input and discussion should feed directly into the group activity on supportive and inhibiting environments so the task is to open up participants' thinking rather than to develop solutions.

Group Activity: Supporting and inhibiting environments

Split participants into four professionally mixed groups. Each group should concentrate on one of the following sets of factors.

- Factors that would *support* the learning of looked after children in their *daily living* environment.
- Factors that would *support* the learning of looked after children in their *educational environment*.
- Factors that would *inhibit* the learning of looked after children in their *daily living* environment.
- Factors that would *inhibit* the learning of looked after children in their *educational environment*.

All the groups should consider:

- the external physical environment and resources
- daily routines, rhythms and rituals
- the social/interpersonal environment
- the individual histories and emotional experiences of looked after children.

Participants should record their discussion and be prepared to feedback to the large group.

Trainer's notes

The purpose of this activity is to help participants recognise the impact of the environment on looked after children's capacity to learn. Encourage participants to draw on the information presented in the child development unit and/or their own knowledge of child development in their discussion. Link the activity to the discussion about differences between home and school learning.

Although participants will almost certainly begin with their own knowledge of what actually happens in their environments, encourage them to think beyond this to explore very helpful and very unhelpful aspects of environments more generally. Remind them that some aspects of environments may be creative, exciting and challenging to young people who have healthy attachments and secure identities but may be frightening, damaging and destructive to others with more difficult experiences. Participants may begin to realise, for example, that a large secondary school may be a much more difficult environment for some looked after children to manage than a small primary school.

In the feedback session ensure that factors such as the implications of trauma and attachment difficulties are considered. Work with the whole group to identify strategies to maximise supportive factors and minimise or counteract inhibiting factors. Highlight that often the creation of a supportive environment or the modification of an inhibiting one require adults to work together across the boundaries of different environments. Wherever possible identify actual local examples of positive practice as well as areas where participants feel they could make positive changes in their practice.

Presentation and group activity: Working together

Use the '*Working Together*' PowerPoint slides to remind participants of the principles of working together for the benefit of children and their families. These are drawn from ***A guide to Getting it right for every child***. Emphasise that effective joint working is not about people "doing other people's jobs" but is about understanding each other's roles and seeking to complement one another. Interacting successfully with other people is a key skill that we want to develop in children and young people so it is important that adults model this by working together well. Challenge and conflict resolution are part of this.

Trainer's notes

Group activity: A current Challenge

The activity will give people an opportunity to consider current situations that are causing difficulties and consider strategies for dealing with them. It creates an opportunity to discuss how conflicts arise and how they can be addressed.

Ask participants to highlight a current difficulty or difficulties that they are experiencing in relation to a child or young person who is looked after where a joint approach is needed. Encourage them to draw on as wide a range of difficulties as possible, from difficulties with individual children, to difficulties with parents, to resource issues, to organisational issues, to professional disagreements.

In the piloting of the original materials the following situations were raised:

- Children placed with foster carers but with a threat of parents abducting them from school;
- A young person refusing to sign a contract about their future behaviour following exclusion;
- Children going to another place whilst on their way to school;
- A young person being very abusive during a review, and this going unchallenged by carers.

You should encourage a wide range of problems to be flagged up and then identify three or four that seem to:

- Be capable of some resolution by participants within the group;
- Require a multidisciplinary approach;
- Reflect some common themes that have arisen during the training.

Ask participants to select the 'problem' that they would like to work on, and then to work in small groups. Ensure that the small groups have a mixture of education staff, carers and social workers.

Ask the group members to consider:

- Why has this situation developed?
- What are the professional and organisational components?
- What are the child's/young person's needs at this particular time?
- What positives, strengths or information do you have that could help?
- Are there any local facilities, resources, guidelines that would assist?

The groups should record the strategy and present this to the main group.

In the feedback, ask if participants discovered information which helped them to understand better other people's perspectives, e.g. that residential units are not

allowed to lock doors to keep children in; that children cannot be left unsupervised in school premises; that schools cannot routinely administer medication.

Key messages

- School and home are different in a variety of ways.
- Carers and teachers themselves need to be aware of the different cultures within which they operate and the impact of these on looked after children.
- Looked after children may need the adults who care for them or teach them to be explicit about these differences and help them to manage the movement between cultures.
- All aspects of the environment impinge on children's learning either positively or negatively.
- Normal positive educational or home environments may not automatically support the learning of looked after children.
- Insecurely attached or traumatised children require careful individualised planning to support their learning at home and at school.
- Environments can be manipulated to provide a more supportive experience for these children.
- In working with other professionals the rights and needs of the child must remain at the centre of the process.
- The scope and limitations of the resources of all concerned need to be made explicit and it is important to identify when differences are caused by operational constraints.
- It is important to acknowledge that there will be professional differences, emanating from different values, about appropriate responses to looked after children's needs, but that these differences should not be personalised.
- Lateral thinking can sometimes free up responses for example working out **who** can do something, rather than **whose job** it is to do it.
- Clarity and familiarity with local protocols, procedures and key people are essential