Evidence-informed educational practice for children in care

Dr Alun Rees & Lucy Wawrzyniak

Visiting Practitioner Fellows

Rees Centre for Research in Fostering and Education

University of Oxford, Department of Education

alunreeslearning@aol.com

lucy.wawrzyniak@oxfordshire.gov.uk

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Aims for the webinar

- Outline recent research findings
- Put the findings in a practitioner context
  - Schools
  - Virtual schools
  - Other children's workforce professionals
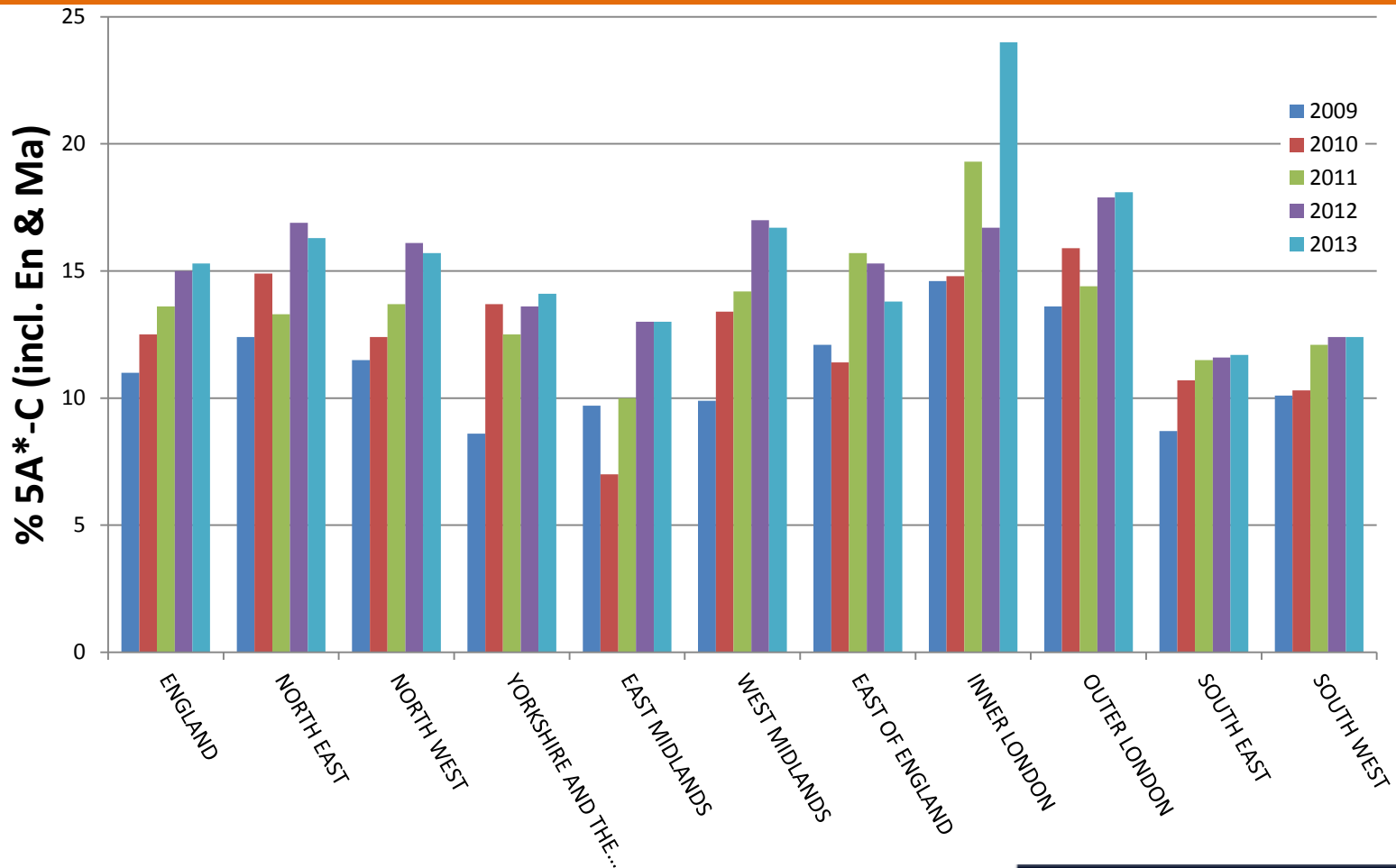- Challenge you to think about your place in developing the evidence base

Why bother - SCHOOLS

- Looked after children are a specific priority for Ofsted

- School Inspection Handbook: paragraphs …
  - 59
  - 129
  - 171
  - 195
  - 210

Why bother – LOCAL AUTHORITY

- 'Promoting the education of looked after children - statutory guidance for local authorities', July 2014

- Local Authority Inspection Framework: what is 'Good' …
  - … attend school or other educational provision and they learn.
  - … assessments of their needs, as well as specialist support … help them to make good progress in their learning and development …
  - … receive the same support from their carers as they would from a good parent.
  - … attainment gap between them and their peers is narrowing.
  - … up-to-date information about how looked after children are progressing at school … urgent and individual action when not achieving well.

Why bother – VIRTUAL SCHOOL

Outcomes, and trends in outcomes, are too varied.

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Research … what can you believe?

- **Best buy**
  - Randomly Controlled Trial (RCT)
  - Comparison with robustly constructed control group
  - Correlation & Statistically Significant associations
    - Association vs. Impact
- **Worth looking at**
  - Validated local practice
  - Promising local practice
  - Emerging local practice
- **Don't buy**
  - Blog posts and twitter feeds
    - … use them as prompts

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What are the risk and protective variables for the education of children in care?   Aoife O'Higgins

Purpose: To inform the resource priorities of central and local government, the practice of professionals, and the databases used to monitor outcomes.

October 2013 – October 2016

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Systematic Review – Aoife O'Higgins

37 quantitative studies from US, England & Canada:
- Older children do less well in every study looking at age, whatever the age range studied, e.g. 9 year olds do less well than 7 year-olds as well as 16 year olds doing less well than 12 year olds.
- Minority ethnicity associated with poorer outcomes.
- Boys do worse, on average.
- Children with SEN and behavioural issues do less well (and the proportion is much higher in the looked after cohort).

- Findings on age at entry into care, stability and placement type are mixed, but the different study designs place a question mark over these findings.

- Carer attitudes, aspirations and home-based involvement consistently predicted better educational outcomes

NB: preliminary exploratory analysis

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The Educational Progress of Looked After Children in England: Linking Care and Educational Data

Purpose: To inform the resource priorities of central and local government, the practice of professionals and the databases used to monitor outcomes.

February 2014 – April 2015

Nuffield Foundation

University of BRISTOL

School for Policy Studies

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Research design

Linking national data sets on the education (National Pupil Database) and care experiences of looked after children in England (SSDA903)

- to explore the relationship between educational outcomes, the children's care histories and individual characteristics, and practice and policy in different local authorities.

Interviews with 36 children in six local authorities and with their carers, teachers, social workers and Virtual School staff

- to complement and expand on the statistical analyses, and to explore factors not recorded in the databases (e.g. foster carers' attitudes to education, role of the Virtual School)

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Description of the cohort

- 7,852 looked after children eligible for GCSEs in 2013

- 4,847 had been in care for 12 months or more continuously, of which:
  - 44.2% female
  - 78.8% White British
  - 51.3% first entered care aged 10 or over

- Looked after children are over-represented in indicators of difficulty:

	CLA for 12+ months	Non-care
SEN Statement	30.3	3.2
% of SEN with BESD	50.4	26.6
Attending PRU	12.3	1.1

How might these difficulties impact cohort performance?

	Ave. Key Stage 4 points*		Ave. Key Stage 4 points*
SEN Statement	199.1	No special need	368.0
Identified BESD	247.5	No special need	356.8
Attending PRU	105.3	Average across all school types	342.4

*Key Stage 4 points: 8 best GCSE, or equivalent; range of 0-464)

Therefore, CLA cohort statistics are significantly driven by identified special needs and their resulting school placements

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'Care Career' types

Career Type	Proportion of the cohort	
Entry aged 0-4	14.8	
Entry aged 5-9	30.2	
Entry as adolescent ('other reasons')	21.3	
Entry as adolescent ('abuse or neglect')	24.0	
Entry as unaccompanied asylum seeker	3.4	
Entry as 'disabled'	6.4	
Not in care (for comparison)		

'Care Career' types

Career Type	Proportion of the cohort	Average Key Stage 4 Points
Entry aged 0-4	14.8	217.7
Entry aged 5-9	30.2	229.0
Entry as adolescent ('other reasons')	21.3	185.5
Entry as adolescent ('abuse or neglect')	24.0	211.4
Entry as unaccompanied asylum seeker	3.4	232.7
Entry as 'disabled'	6.4	47.7
Not in care (for comparison)		**343.5**

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Placement history

- For the 4,847 who had been in care for at least the last 12 months:

    - 16.4% had been in care for under 2 years; 25.6% for 9 years or more;

    - 29.0% had been in most recent placement for under a year

    - 36.4% had always been in foster care; 3.0% always in kinship care; 3.5% always in residential care;

    - Fewer KS4 placements were foster care than at KS2 (59.6% vs. 70.2%), use of residential care increases (18.5% vs. 11.3%)

    - 17.3% had only had one placement; 10.2% had had 10 or more placements

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Number of placements & KS4 points
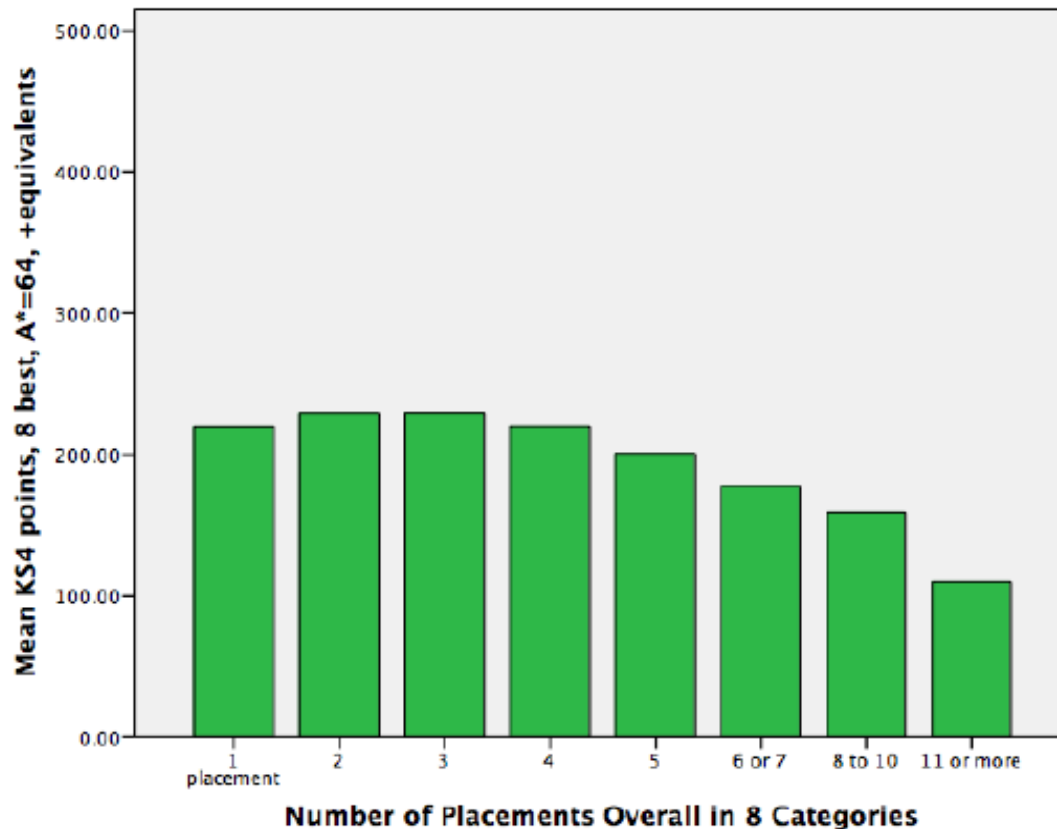
- BUT we are analysing this alongside other variables to get the full picture of what really counts
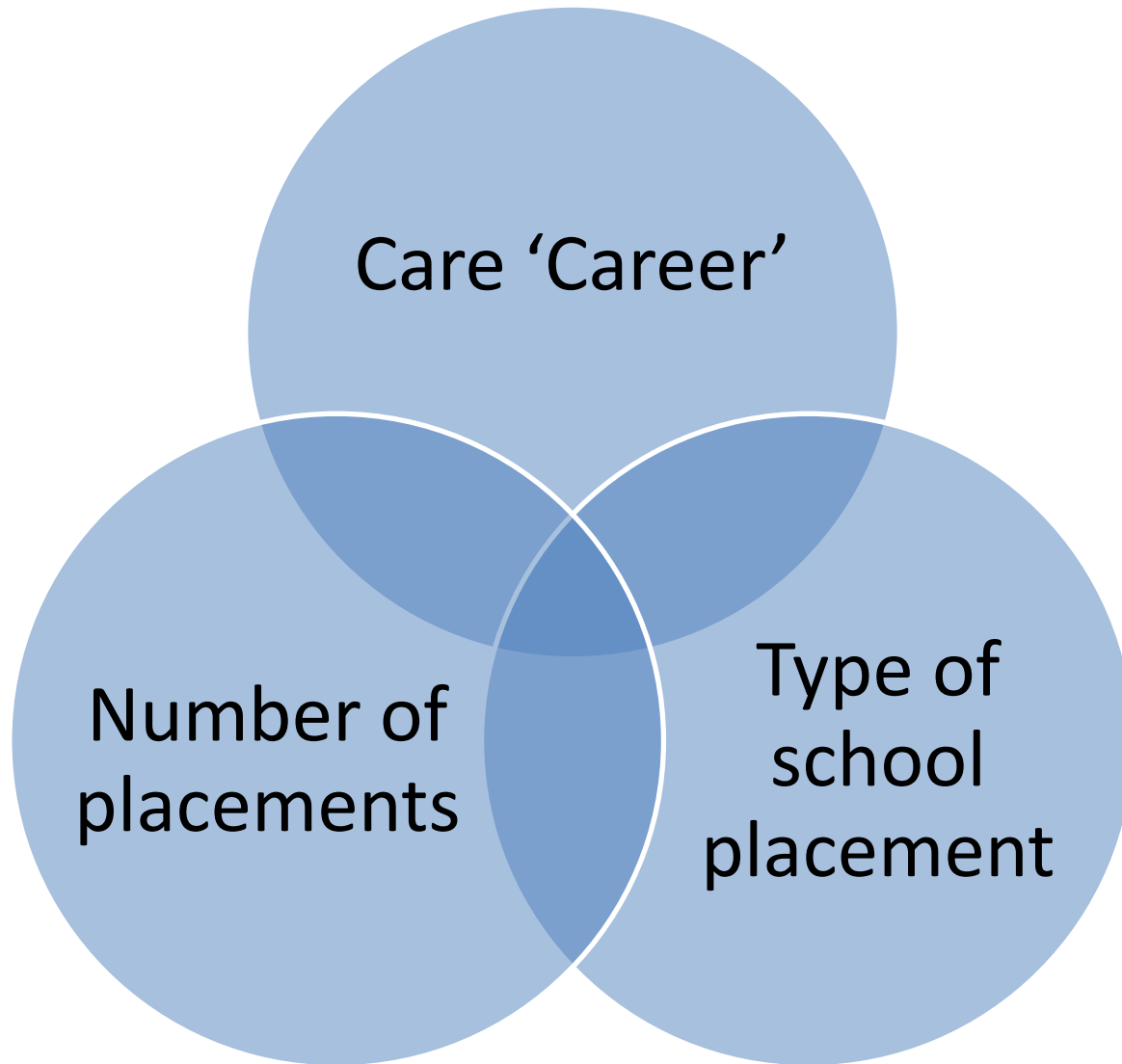
Questions & Comments?

What (might) work …

- Education Endowment Foundation Toolkit

http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/toolkit/

- Considering the needs of Looked After Children:
  - Aspiration Interventions – how do we support carers to bridge the gap between aspiration and achievement
  - Supported work at home
  - Mentoring

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What (might) work … Aspiration

- Shown to have low impact for high cost in the EEF toolkit, most likely because most children don't have low aspirations.

- Cheung et al. (2012) and Flynn at al. (2013) found a correlations between the aspiration of the carers and attainment.

- How do we support carers in their aspirations for their young people and how do we as all professionals support young people in achieving those aspirations?

What (might) work … Support at home

- Not found to be particularly effective in primary children by the EEF but …

- Caregiver support at home had a positive impact on outcomes (Burley and Halpern 2001; Cheung et al., 2012 and Pears et al., 2010)

- Can have particularly positive impact on girls in transition when carers are involved. (Pears et al. 2012).

- How can carers be supported by schools to support work at home?

What (might) work … Mentoring

- EEF: low impact for moderate cost – might be dismissed.

- 'Handbook for Youth Mentoring' (O'Hara), suggests there may not necessarily be academic gains but the ability of the mentor to build relationships can be highly beneficial if they persevere.

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What (might) work … One-to-One tuition

- Berridge (2009) both self-esteem and application to study improved.

- Other studies showing positive impact (Flynn et al 2012, Liabo, Gray and Mulchay 2012 and Forsman & Vinnerljung 2012).

- The same challenges as mentoring are likely to apply (consistency, relationships etc.) (Britner et al.,2014)

What (might) work … Collaborative learning

- Comes out strongly in the EEF and backed up in relation to LAC through Slavin (2010).

So …

- Avoid placement disruption – quality of school and carer understanding/relationship?

- Avoid Key Stage 4 moves - is the change REALLY necessary?

- Seek a consistent plan that everyone, including the young person, is signed up to

- How can the team around the child support these?

Could you do things differently?

- How could you structure carer involvement
  - Tuition outside the school day in the carer's home
  - Paired reading supported at home
  - Joint carer, social worker and school training

Questions & Comments

How you can be involved

- Express interest in being involved in future possible research projects;

- Come along to lectures, seminars/webinars;

- Join the Rees Centre mailing list and receive newsletters 5 times/year: rees.centre@education.ox.ac.uk

- Web: http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk/;

- Comment on the Centre blog – or write for us;

- Follow us on Twitter: @ReesCentre

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Challenging our own thinking – Knowledge Claims

- Reading at home with foster carers has a positive impact on outcomes

- Reducing exclusions increases the educational outcomes for looked after children

- A joined up consistent approach is essential in improving the educational outcomes for looked after children

- 'Ordinary care' provides an the basis for successful interventions

- Children and young people with input into their care plan will achieve better outcomes

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How can you contribute?

- The Virtual School Handbook
  - Identify the best practice and use it
- The DIY Evaluation Toolkit
  - Bring rigour to decisions about what to do and the evaluation of how it worked
- Professional networks
  - bring designated teachers together with social workers and carers and establish a joint learning enterprise; talk to your teaching school alliance

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