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London Schools Excellence Fund – Children in Care

Evaluation of The London Fostering Achievement Programme Final Report

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Executive Summary

Background

Internationally, the educational outcomes of children in care are well below those of their peers[1]. In England in 2015, 14% of children in care achieved 5+ A*-C GCSEs or equivalent including English and mathematics, compared to 53% of the population who are not in care. Children in care were twice as likely to be permanently excluded and five times as likely to have a fixed term exclusion[2]. Only 6% accessed higher education compared to more than 50% of the general population. In London specifically, improvements seen in educational outcomes more generally have not extended to this group of children[3]. Most concerning is the evidence[4] suggesting that their educational experiences and outcomes contribute to later health outcomes, employment (22% unemployment rate) and involvement in crime (27% of those in prison have been in care).

In this context, in April 2014, the Mayor's London Schools Excellence Fund prioritised the education of children in care and allocated £500,000 to a programme of improvement. The overall aim was to improve the ability of carers and teachers to raise the educational outcomes of children in the care of London boroughs and attending educational settings in London. The main objectives for the programme given by the Greater London Authority (GLA) were to:

- improve the confidence and skills of carers to engage with London schools and make a positive contribution to the education of the children for whom they care;

- enrich the skills, knowledge and understanding required by designated teachers and schools to support children in care to succeed in school and work with carers to improve educational stability.

London Fostering Achievement (LFA), the consortium commissioned to deliver the programme, brings together the Fostering Network and Achievement for All. The programme that they developed had four components:

- **Generic Foster Carer Training**: Between November 2014 and March 2015 a one-day session was completed in 33 groups by 1265 foster carers, social workers, teachers, and other professionals working with children across 29 London Boroughs.
- **Masterclasses**: Over 400 people attended the four half-day training sessions during the period of the evaluation to enable foster carers and others to explore one area in more

[1] Flynn, R. J., Tessier, N. G., & Coulombe, D. (2013). Placement, protective and risk factors in the educational success of young people in care: cross-sectional and longitudinal analyses, *European Journal of Social Work*, *16*(1), 70-87.
[2] SFR 11/2016 Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities in England as at 31 March 2015, issued 24 March 2016.
[3] GLA/DfE (2014) The Mayor of London's Education Programme: Request for Proposals FOR London Schools Excellence Fund: Children in Care. London: GLA.
[4] Centre for Social Justice. (2015) Finding Their Feet: Equipping care leavers to reach their potential. London, Centre for Social Justice.

depth. These covered special educational needs, resilience, attachment and the impact of trauma and post 16 options.

- **Direct work with schools**: A programme in which all children in care on the roll at each of 25 schools (17 secondary, six primary, one special and one pupil referral unit) across nine boroughs were the target group for raising achievement. The school received support, over one year, from a coach who helped them to undertake a needs analysis (STEEP) and provided professional development for that school.
- **Education Champions**: Two Education Champions in each of five Boroughs were employed for four hours per week. They were experienced foster carers, often with education experience, who worked with foster carers to boost their confidence around supporting educational needs by, for example, attending meetings with them, working with them and their foster child at home on reading or maths or helping them to navigate the educational system.

Twenty-nine of London's 31 boroughs (Triborough treated as one) signed up for the programme: 19 for generic training only; four for direct work with schools, champions and training; five for direct work with schools and training; one for champions and training.

Methodology

This mixed methods evaluation involved a pre-training survey to all those who attended the training and a post-training survey 3-5 months later. Interviews were completed with eight young people in schools undertaking the direct work, their 15 social workers (both children's and supervising social workers), designated teachers and foster carers. In total 31 foster carers were interviewed including 15 in boroughs offering Education Champions and 12 who had undertaken the generic training. Nine of the 10 Education Champions were interviewed, 11 Virtual School headteachers and 13 senior local authority staff (fostering managers and/or school improvement managers) with managerial responsibility for the areas covered by the programme. Four coaches engaged in the direct work with schools and three leaders of the London Fostering Achievement consortium were interviewed. Evaluators attended three generic training sessions, two Masterclasses and one meeting of the Virtual School headteachers involved. Fourteen young people from two Children in Care Councils participated in focus groups in order to get a wider picture of educational issues of concern to those in care in London.

Attainment data received from Local Authorities (LAs) were analysed for 45 children in the 25 schools (secondary and primary) in nine boroughs engaged in the direct work with schools. Statistical comparisons were made with 652 children in care in schools in the same boroughs not involved over the year of the programme. Attendance and exclusion data from 58 children in schools engaged in direct work was compared to 977 children in care in schools not involved.

Key Findings and Conclusions

The LFA programme was ambitious in attempting to reach large numbers of carers and others and has been partially successful. Spreading input thinly across London may have reduced the capacity to have major effects in a short time, but longer-term effects are unknown at this time.

If the assumption was that young people were to benefit from any synergy across all four strands of the programme, giving complete choice to the participating LAs as to which strand(s)

they engaged in, may have reduced the chances of any benefit from the combined effects of two or three[5] of the strands.

Generic training: From the surveys and interviews it is clear that the generic training was well received and the mix of people (e.g. foster carers, teachers, social workers) was seen as a most valuable aspect of the programme as it enabled them to better understand each other's roles. Participants commented in particular on the value of hearing from a care experienced young person. They mainly commented positively on the following:

- Knowledge of the different professionals available to support children in care's education, most notably the Virtual School head.
- Knowledge of the services and support that is available to support children in care's education.
- Knowledge and use of the Pupil Premium Plus and Personal Education Plans (PEPs).
- Confidence in their own skills and empowerment to support children in care's education.

In the interviews with other professionals, examples were identified of carers challenging the allocation of Pupil Premium Plus and engaging young people in extending their activities, although the survey had suggested limited impact on respondents' behaviours. Both the post-training survey and the interviews suggested that the generic training was too basic for some of the more experienced attendees and may have provided limited added value to the established Local Authority training offered.

Masterclasses: Over 400 people (not all foster carers) attended Masterclasses and there was a waiting list for two of them reflecting an appetite for this provision. From the post-training survey and the interviews, foster carers and others provided positive feedback on all but one Masterclass and this one seems to have been presented less well. The insights provided were much appreciated, in particular by more experienced carers for whom the generic training tended to update existing knowledge.

Direct work with schools: From the interviews with young people, foster carers, teachers and senior managers in local authorities the impact of the direct work with schools was mixed. Positive feedback was given on the value of the needs analysis, contribution of the coach and structured conversations (meetings of foster carer, teacher and child) though some carers seemed not to have been involved in these. There were several examples of specific schools in which it was raising awareness and beginning to change staff behaviour.

The attainment of 45 pupils showed no greater progress in reading and maths for pupils in the schools involved in the direct work when compared to 652 children in care in other schools in the same boroughs. In writing however, pupils in schools involved with the direct work made more progress compared to those in schools not involved. Attendance and exclusion showed no significant differences between those pupils in schools involved in direct work and those in schools not involved. Young people who were being supported by the direct work in schools reported that social workers tended not to provide sufficient support for education.

[5] The Masterclasses were not a LA-based strand in the way that the other three were.

Education Champions: From the interviews with foster carers, social workers, teachers, senior LA managers, the delivery team and the Champions themselves, the Champions emerged most strongly in terms of impact. They were reported to have provided foster carers with information, direct support and increased confidence. The Champions were modestly paid, part-time and seen by many as too thinly spread. Their success is attributed to their experience in both education and foster care, being seen by foster carers as 'one of us'.

There was some evidence that in at least three of the five boroughs with Champions, that the advice or direct intervention led to improvements for children. Examples were provided of foster carers being more assertive in accessing specific services and support in relation to the Pupil Premium Plus allocation and PEPs. Foster carers themselves reported however, that they were not confident that their views would be acted upon. Some carers felt that they had learnt things that will be useful with children in future placements as well as current ones.

Recommendations for policy and practice

- Future pan-London GLA programmes in education, particularly those of short duration (less than two years), should be specifically targeted either geographically or in terms of strands of innovation to maximise impact.

- Education Champions should be implemented more widely. The cost of implementing the Education Champions in every borough in London or even every LA in England would be relatively low[6] and could be offset by savings from higher foster carer retention rates, less school exclusion and better progress.

- Schools should consider:
  - Undertaking needs analysis, whole staff development, targeted discussions between carer, teacher and young person in relation to children in care, with the support of the Virtual School.
  - Giving designated teachers the status needed (e.g. on senior leadership teams) to ensure appropriate priority is given to the needs of children in care.
  - The timing and organisation of PEP meetings so that they are sensitive to the needs of young people and should neither identify their care status to their peers and school staff, nor require them to miss lessons.
  - Developing a positive school culture that supports sensitivity for children in care in the face of placement disruptions and continuity of schooling. Making exceptions to rules for the young person in care must be balanced with the young person's need to be treated equally.

- Target social workers with information and skills relating to education. This programme touched a few social workers in terms of changes to practice, but this depended on their choosing to attend the generic training/working with a young person attending a school involved in the direct work strand.

[6] Education Champions were paid £15/hour and were employed for four hours a week

Main Report

Background

Only 14% of children in care achieve 5 A*- Cs including English and maths at GCSE compared to 53% of children in the general population. Children in care are twice as likely to be permanently excluded and five times as likely to have a fixed-term exclusion[7]. Only 6% access higher education compared to more than 50% of the general population. In London specifically, improvements seen in educational outcomes have not extended to this group of children[8].

Most concerning is the evidence suggesting that their educational experiences and outcomes contribute to later health outcomes, employment (22% unemployment rate) and involvement in crime (27% of those in prison have been in care). However, a recent analysis conducted by the Rees Centre and the University of Bristol concluded that being in care appears to be a protective factor in the educational progress of these children when compared to those with similar characteristics who are not in care[9]. It seems likely, then, that it is children's experiences prior to coming into care that are associated with their lack of educational progress.

In order to address the poor educational outcomes of children in care, the English Government in 2014 made the Virtual School head[10] (VSH) role statutory and from April 2014, Pupil Premium Plus funding for children in care of £1900 was introduced, allocated through the local authorities. In this context, in April 2014, the Mayor's London Schools Excellence Fund prioritised the education of children in care and allocated £500,000 to a programme of improvement.

Aims and Objectives of the Programme

The Greater London Authority (GLA) gave the main objectives for the programme as:

- To improve the confidence and skills of carers to engage with London schools and make a positive contribution to the education of the children for whom they care.

[7] SFR 11/2016 Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities in England as at 31 March 2015, issued 24 March 2016.

[8] GLA/DfE (2014) The Mayor of London's Education Programme: Request for Proposals FOR London Schools Excellence Fund: Children in Care. London: GLA.

[9] Sebba, J., Berridge, D., Luke, N., Fletcher, J., Bell, K., Strand, S., Thomas, S., Sinclair, I., Higgins, A. (2015). *The Educational Progress of Children in care in England: Linking Care and Educational Data*. Rees Centre, University of Oxford, University of Bristol.

[10] The Virtual School head in England is a statutory role in each local authority and is the lead responsible officer for ensuring that arrangements are in place to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of children in care, including those placed outside the caring authority's boundaries.

- To enrich the skills, knowledge and understanding required by designated teachers[11] and schools to support children in care to succeed in school and work with carers to improve educational stability.

London Fostering Achievement (LFA), the consortium commissioned to deliver the programme, brings together the Fostering Network and Achievement for All. This consortium defined the overall aim as to improve the ability of foster carers and teachers to raise the educational outcomes of children in the care of London boroughs and attending educational settings in London. The objectives they set out for the programme were as follows:

- Increased foster carer confidence to engage with schools
- Increased knowledge of education, access to support and practical strategies
- Increased designated teachers' understanding of the specific needs of young people in care
- Higher aspirations for children in care reported by key audiences
- Teachers and foster carers report better relationships

The theory of change produced by LFA is shown in Appendix 1. They developed the programme to address these objectives through four components:

Generic Foster Carer Training: Between November 2014 and March 2015 the LFA programme delivered a one-day session to 33 groups of foster carers, social workers, teachers, and other professionals working with children, across 29 London Boroughs. The training covered the respective roles of the different professionals and carers involved, what makes a good Personal Education Plan and practical ways that foster carers can be engaged in children's learning. It was designed to bring together foster carers, social workers and school staff and add value to, rather than duplicate, what local authorities were already providing. The Education Champions (see below) contributed to these sessions.

Table 1: Breakdown of those attending the generic training sessions
(adapted from London Fostering Achievement)

Role	Number of Attendees	Characteristics
Foster carers	765	Very few kinship carers
School staff	128	Designated teachers, deputy head teachers and teaching assistants
Social workers	175	Mostly supervising social workers
Virtual School staff	55	Virtual Schools' staffing very variable
Other	142	Local authority (LA)_staff, Independent Fostering Providers' (IFP) staff, fostering panel members
Total	**1265**	

[11] All maintained schools in England are required to appoint a designated teacher to promote the educational achievement of children in care on the school roll.

Masterclasses: Half day training to enable foster carers and others to explore one area in more depth. The four Masterclasses covered special educational needs (attended by 116), resilience (attended by 89), attachment and the impact of trauma (attended by 141), and post 16 options (attended by 93). For each topic, experts provided input, and discussion and questions followed. Over 400 people attended Masterclasses; some attended more than one Masterclass. A sample programme is attached in Appendix 3.

Direct work with schools: A programme in which all children in care on the roll at each of 25 schools (initially 27 but two withdrew) across nine boroughs were the target group for raising achievement. The Virtual School heads in these nine boroughs identified and part-funded some schools who took part. The 25 schools included 17 secondary schools, 6 primary schools, 1 special school and 1 Pupil Referral Unit. Data from the Virtual Schools heads suggested there were 96 children in these schools who were looked after in both the Summer term of 2014 and at the end of the evaluation in Summer 2015. This work over one year (though for some schools a late start meant they were only involved for two terms), was led by an Achievement for All Coach and a nominated School Champion and included on average, four half day visits per term. Activity was determined by the particular needs of the school and included:

- The establishment of a cohort of all children in care in the school for tracking and monitoring
- Whole school training on the LFA programme covering leadership, teaching and learning, behaviour and well-being, and carer engagement
- Structured Conversation[12] training with a particular focus on foster carer engagement
- Structured Conversations with foster carers three times during the academic year
- Staff development on issues specifically related to children in care
- A full needs analysis to embed LFA priorities into the School Development Plan
- Completion of a STEEP[13] analysis to inform multi-agency action planning
- Work with the Virtual School head to create bespoke solutions for children in care in the context of the school

The materials generated by this strand of the programme including a Toolkit for Schools were subsequently placed on the LFA website[14] for wider use.

Education Champions: The Education Champions were experienced foster carers, often with education experience, who were recruited by the local authorities. There were two Education Champions in each of five Boroughs employed by the programme for four hours per week and paid £15 an hour. Different processes for identifying potential Champions were used in each borough. The Champions worked with foster carers to boost their confidence around supporting educational needs by, for example, attending meetings with them, working with them and their foster child at home on reading or maths, or helping them to navigate the educational system. Activity was determined by the particular needs of the local authority and included:

[12] Structured conversations involve mutual listening of carer, young person and teacher in order to identify learning needs and address these.

[13] STEEP analysis provides information that covers various aspects of Social, Technological, Economic, Ecological and Political factors of an environment - in this case, the school.

[14] http://www.londonfosteringachievement.org.uk/toolkit/

- Raising awareness of education through support groups and fostering events
- Providing one-to-one support to foster carers around education
- Supporting foster carers to access cultural trips and activities
- Co-facilitating training for foster carers and other professionals

The cohort of foster carers that the Education Champions were designed to support was described as 'hard to reach', consisting primarily of carers who were traditionally less likely to participate in existing structures of support. The Education Champions received support from the Fostering Network, regular team meetings, information and advice. The Fostering Network also offered professional development including 'training the trainer' sessions and motivational interviewing training.

Twenty-nine of London's 31 boroughs (Triborough treated as one) signed up for the LFA programme:

- 19 for generic training only
- 4 for direct work with schools, champions and training
- 5 for direct work with schools and training
- 1 for champions and training

Aims of the Evaluation

The GLA commissioned the Rees Centre at the University of Oxford, in partnership with the Centre for Child and Family Research, Loughborough University to undertake the evaluation which began in July 2014. The evaluation was intended to provide:

- An assessment of any changes in the confidence and skills of foster carers to engage with London schools and make a positive contribution to the education of those in their care.
- Key messages and learning to assist foster carers, social workers, designated teachers, school senior leadership teams and fostering providers' (LA and IFP) managers to listen to children in care and develop greater coherence across services in order to improve their outcomes.
- Evidence of impact on pupils' attainment – in the specified timescale this was more likely to be measures of progress, reduction in exclusions and increases in attendance as proxies for subsequent increases in attainment.
- Support to ensure that the evaluation of outcomes is embedded and sustainable beyond the external evaluation.

Evaluation Questions

- How, and in what ways, has the intervention programme impacted upon children in care, foster carers, social workers, designated teachers, school senior leadership teams and managers of fostering service providers?
- Is there evidence of improved educational outcomes and well-being of children in care?
- What might be done to increase any benefit of the intervention, increase its cost effectiveness and secure its long-term sustainability?

Methodology

The methodology for this evaluation is fully described in Appendix 2.

Table 2: Methodology

Method	Aspect targeted	No. targeted	No. achieved
1. Questionnaires for carers/staff attending general training	LFA training	Pre-training: All Post-training: All	Pre-training: 864 (71% of attendees) Post-training: 100 (but 98 analysed 8% of attendees,)
2. Focus groups and telephone interviews with carers who attended general training	Direct work with schools, Education Champions, LFA training, Masterclasses	Max 36 Contacted 122	12 (10 individual, 2 in focus group)
3. Interviews with Education Champions and those receiving support from them	Education Champions	10 champions 30 foster carers	9 champions 15 foster carers
4. Interviews with children looked after (CLA) in selected LFA schools, their designated teachers, foster carers, child and supervising social workers	Direct work with schools, Education Champions, LFA training, Masterclasses	8-10 children 3* teachers 7 foster carers** 7 supervising social workers** 7 child social workers**	8 children 3 teachers 4 foster carers** 7 supervising social workers** 6 child social workers**
5. Focus group with London Fostering Achievement Coaches	Direct work with schools	***	4 coaches
6. Quantitative attainment data from boroughs undertaking the direct work with schools	Direct work with schools	9 boroughs. 96 children in LFA schools who were in care in Summer terms of both 2014 and 2015, plus those in non-LFA schools for comparison	9 boroughs. Attainment: 45 pupils in LFA schools (47% of target), 652 in comparators. Att/exclusions: 58 in LFA schools (60% of target), 983 in comparators.
7. Interviews with Virtual School heads	Direct work with schools, Education Champions, LFA training, Masterclasses	12 10 LFA boroughs 2 comparators	11 10 LFA boroughs 1 comparator
8. Meetings with senior Local Authority staff (i.e. Heads of CLA, School Improvement and Fostering)	Direct work with schools, Education Champions, LFA training, Masterclasses	12 max (optional) 10 LFA boroughs 2 comparators	7 boroughs 13 senior managers
9. Interviews with delivery teams	Direct work with schools, Education Champions, LFA training, Masterclasses	2	3 LFA leads
10. Focus groups with Children in Care Councils (CiCC)	Contextual for all interventions	4-9 2 didn't have fully established CiCC	2

* The 8 children came from 3 schools in which the designated teachers were interviewed
** 2 of the children shared a common carer, child and supervising social worker, hence 7 were targeted rather than 8
*** We had not planned to interview Coaches but when offered this opportunity, were pleased to do so

Evaluators attended three generic training sessions, two Masterclasses and one meeting of the Virtual School headteachers from boroughs involved in the programme.

The findings from the survey of those who attended the generic training have been integrated into the relevant sections of this report. A comparison between the aggregated responses provided in the pre-training and those in the post-training surveys was made, along with the findings regarding the impact of training on attendees. It was not possible to match up individual responses from the pre-training survey and post-training survey[15]; the findings presented here therefore make use of averages across the sample at the two time points. It is possible that those who chose to respond at post-training hold views that are not representative of the entire pre-training sample.

Some findings relate to all questionnaire respondents, while others to the subset of respondents who identified themselves as foster carers. Two respondents were excluded from the post-training analysis due to incomplete data, so this sample is limited to 98 respondents. Where fewer than the 98 had chosen to answer an individual question, this is indicated. These data need to be treated as indicative only as the post-training sample was small at 13% of those who responded in the pre-training survey

Key Findings

The London Fostering Achievement programme was seen by those involved as an important opportunity to address the:

- lack of progress made by children in care in schools
- poor engagement of foster carers in schools
- lack of integrated working between foster carers, social workers and school staff

These three key objectives are addressed throughout this report. The findings are reported under the four strands and followed by barriers and facilitators to the programme and limitations of the evaluation.

Generic training

The findings on the generic training are drawn from both the pre- and post-training surveys of those who attended training and the interviews of those who attended.

Understanding of the different roles associated with children in care's education

Central to the design of the London Fostering Achievement generic training was the attendance of a range of professionals at each session including foster carers and staff from both social care and education. The pre-training survey suggested that the attendees had a good level of

[15] The questionnaires were completed anonymously and while respondents indicated their role e.g. foster carer, these were no means of matching pre- and post-training responses.

knowledge of the different roles associated with fostered children's education prior to attending the training. For each role listed in the questionnaire, between 72% and 95% of respondents in the pre-training survey reported that they had heard of that role. The role that was least well known was the Virtual School head, with 72% of all respondents and only 64% of foster carers having heard of the role, prior to attending the training. For the small sample who responded in the post-training survey, this was 83% and 100% respectively.

Similarly, the respondents in the pre-training survey reported having high levels of confidence about how each of the roles support children in care with 80-96% of respondents reporting being 'very' or 'quite' confident about all but three of the roles given. Table 3 shows the percentage of all respondents and specifically of foster carers who selected 'not at all confident' in relation to these roles at pre- and post-training.

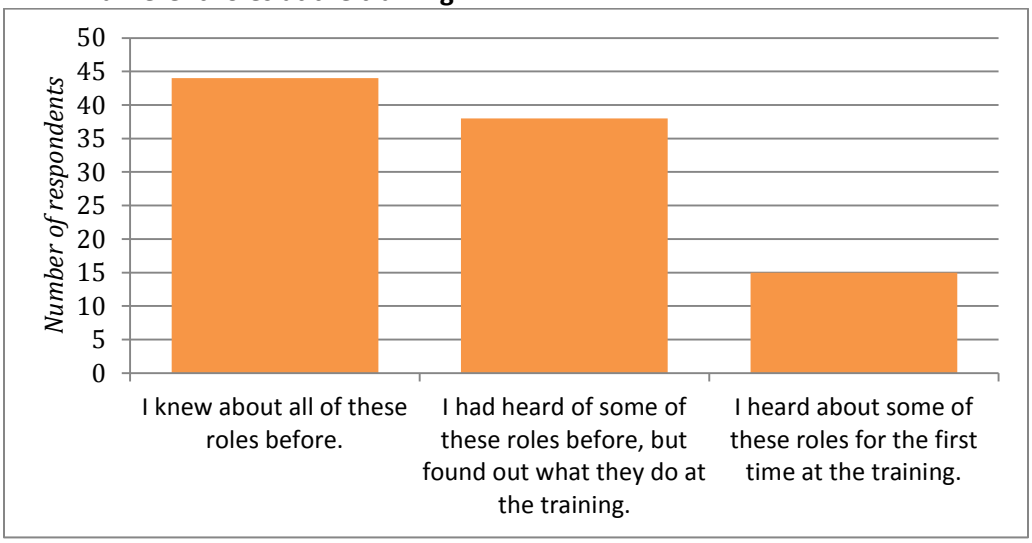
Table 3: Percentage of respondents selecting 'not at all confident' about the different roles associated with children in care's education

	All (%)		Foster Carers (%)	
Roles	Pre-training	Post-training	Pre-training	Post-training
Teaching Assistant	1.2	0.0	1.5	0.0
Special Educational Needs Coordinator	4.8	1.0	7.5	2.1
Virtual School Head	16.3	4.2	20.3	8.3
Learning Mentor	9.2	4.2	13.3	6.5
Designated Teacher for CLA	8.0	5.3	10.1	8.7
Foster Carer	0.4	0.0	0.4	0.0
Supervising Social Worker	1.5	1.0	0.8	0.0
Children's Social Worker	0.8	0.0	0.6	0.0

As Table 3 shows, very few respondents in the pre-training survey reported a lack of confidence about the roles that foster carers, social workers (both supervising and children's) and teaching assistants have in children in care's education. The roles that were least well known about were Virtual School head, learning mentor and designated teacher, and while the percentage who reported lack of confidence about these roles was lower in the post-training survey, it remained higher for these three roles compared to the other roles.

Figure 1 shows the respondents' post-training indications of whether they had heard about these roles at the training. Just over a third (38%) reported that although they had heard of the roles prior to the training, they had learnt about what the role was at the session. Sixteen per cent (15) of all respondents and 23% (11) of the foster carers, reported that they had learnt about some of the roles for the first time at the training. Whilst this suggests that the training might have had an impact on some attendees' understanding 16 respondents (21%), including 11 foster carers (23%), reported that the training had no impact on this understanding.

Figure 1: The number of post-training respondents who learnt about different roles at the training



Many of the foster carers who were interviewed reported that they felt more confident as a result of the training and some had a changed perception of their own role. They reported having learned about the different roles including the designated teacher and the Virtual School:

> *I really enjoyed the day because it was very relevant to me. The young boy I look after he's having a lot of trouble at school and keeps getting excluded and so it was very, very relevant …they put us into groups with a social worker, a designated teacher, teaching assistant and foster carers, so it was all set out really well, so yes it was very useful.*

Others interviewed described their increased understanding of the system and confidence to speak up following the generic training:

> *Maybe some carers are not as confident about speaking to schools when things are not going quite right, and you know I find it very valuable, and now all the other agencies involved even with the Virtual School, some people don't necessarily have a good understanding of what those people do, so the way the information was delivered was fantastic.*

Frequency of contact with different professionals

Respondents were invited to indicate how frequently they had contact with different professionals in the three months prior to completing the pre-training survey. Table 4 shows the proportion of respondents who reported contact with other professionals frequently.

Table 4: Percentage of respondents reporting that they contacted different professionals 'frequently' in the three months prior to completing the questionnaire

	All (%)		Foster Carers (%)	
Roles	Pre-training	Post-training	Pre-training	Post-training
Teaching Assistant	28.1	38.0	13.0	34.8
Special Educational Needs Coordinator	28.0	32.3	14.8	20.8
Virtual School Head	17.3	19.6	11.8	8.3
Learning Mentor	16.7	17.2	15.5	6.3
Designated Teacher for CLA	32.3	35.5	12.2	25.5
Foster Carer	60.2	44.3	37.5	26.5
Supervising Social Worker	65.2	59.6	78.8	72.9
Children's Social Worker	70.9	70.2	73.9	71.4

As shown in Table 4, the frequency of contact between the respondents and educational professionals, including teaching assistants, special educational needs coordinators and designated teachers for children in care was higher in the post-training survey. Foster carers reported less contact with Virtual School heads and learning mentors following training, but far more contact with social workers.

Foster carers interviewed reported experiencing a range of contact with the various professionals in addition to the scheduled statutory processes, such as the Looked After Child Review and supervision. The most frequently cited reasons for having contact with the different professionals was to find out how their fostered child or young person was doing at school, to discuss any concerns they may have (most often associated with behavioural difficulties and exclusions) and to access advice and support. The relationships with school staff were presented as varied, with some foster carers reporting that they see teaching assistants regularly, for instance when they go to collect their fostered child from school, and others reporting that contact was made 'as needed'. The type of contact with different professionals appears to be varied, although face-to-face, email and telephone contact were all frequently cited.

Impact of the training being multi-professional

The respondents in in the post-training survey were asked about the extent to which the delivery of training to a range of professionals impacted on a series of factors, by scoring each factor from -2 (not helpful) to 4 (very helpful), where 0 = neither helpful or unhelpful. A summary of the mean scores for each factor is shown in Table 5.

In general, the respondents in the post-training survey reported that the multi-professional training approach was helpful to their own understanding about different types of roles that exist to support foster children's education and helped them to get a better understanding on fostered children's education. From the interviews, foster carers valued coming together with social workers, teachers and others, but criticised the lack of social worker attendance.

Table 5: Mean scores of the extent to which the training impacted on a range of factors

	Mean score				Number of respondents reporting neither helpful or unhelpful	
	All	*n*	Foster carers	*n*	All	Foster carers
Your understanding about different types of roles	3.06	*88*	3.08	*48*	8	4
Your understanding of the PEP	2.79	*87*	2.94	*48*	13	6
Your understanding of the Pupil Premium Plus	2.83	*86*	2.98	*47*	10	2
A different understanding on fostered children's education	2.85	*86*	2.94	*47*	6	3
Feel more part of the team around the child	2.61	*87*	2.69	*48*	11	3
Understanding of the key issues effecting fostered children's education	2.78	*86*	2.81	*47*	7	4

Confidence in supporting children in care's education

Overall, the post-training survey and interviews suggest that the LFA generic training had a positive impact on attendees' knowledge of the system for supporting children in care's education. The post-training survey asked respondents to score the extent to which the training sessions had impacted on their understanding of the support available for children in care's education, with -5 being 'extremely negative change', 0 'no change at all' and 5 being 'extremely positive change'. Seventy-four respondents (including 46 foster carers) answered this question. In general, the training had a positive impact on foster carers' knowledge. However, more than a quarter of the foster carers (27%) reported that the training had no impact on their knowledge.

The respondents were invited to indicate how much they knew about Pupil Premium Plus.

Table 6: Percentage of respondents with different levels of knowledge about Pupil Premium Plus

	All (%)		Foster carers (%)	
	Pre-training	Post-training	Pre-training	Post-training
Has not heard of it	21.1	2.6	29.4	4.1
Has heard of it, but I don't know what it is	10.9	5	11.3	8.2
Knows what it is, but have not been involved in allocating it	24.8	29.5	23.1	26.5
Knows what it is and though I have not been involved in allocating it, I know how it is allocated	16.9	26.9	15.8	26.5
Knows what it is and I have been involved in allocating it	26.3	35.9	20.4	34.7

Table 6 suggests that respondents in the post-training survey not only had a greater knowledge of Pupil Premium Plus following training, but also had more involvement in allocating it for the

children they support. This finding is supported by the interviews with those foster carers who had received support from the Education Champions who reported specific benefits including working with the school to allocate, or re-allocate, the Pupil Premium Plus. These carers also reported learning about Personal Education Plans (PEPs) which some had not previously known about, possibly because they had not yet had a long enough placement to be invited to one.

The respondents in the pre- and post-training surveys were invited to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements primarily associated with understanding the system for supporting children in care. Table 7 suggests that overall, respondents in the post-training survey had greater understanding of general ways of supporting children in care's education than those in the pre-training survey. Most notably, 86% of all respondents and 90% of foster carers reported that they understood delegated authority in the post-training survey.

Table 7: Percentage of respondents reporting to 'strongly agree' or 'agree' with the following statements about general support for children in care's education

	All (%)		Foster Carers (%)	
Statement	Pre-training	Post-training	Pre-training	Post-training
I understand delegated authority	77.6	85.9	78.0	89.8
I know who I need to talk to about different aspects of a young person's education	91.8	93.9	91.3	89.8
I feel up to date on how my foster child is doing at school	83.8	82.7	88.8	93.9
I feel I make an important contribution to my looked after child's educational attainment	86.9	92.3	90.2	95.9
I feel I make an important contribution to my looked after child's educational aspirations	87.6	94.9	90.2	98.0

The carers interviewed confirmed that the coverage of delegated authority was very important:

> *They spoke to something that I have a great interest, is delegated authority. I always heard delegated authority but I didn't know what it meant because in my opinion yes, they say I have delegated authority but in reality I have to ask everything I do, even if I cut the child's nails to social services. So it's not like … so what is it? And just being able again to have this dialogue during the training, gave me an opportunity to go back to social services and say, can we redefine what delegated authority is?*

The respondents were asked a series of questions to ascertain their levels of confidence in **specific** ways of supporting their children in care's education, by stating whether they were only 'somewhat confident', or 'not at all confident' about those factors. The findings are summarised in Table 8.

Table 8: Percentage of respondents reporting to be only 'somewhat confident' or 'not at all confident' with specific ways of supporting children in care's education

	All (%)		Foster Carers (%)	
	Pre-training	Post-training	Pre-training	Post-training
Helping a child or young person with homework	26.4	15.4	18.2	18.3
Talking to a child or young person about their educational attainment	10.2	2.6	11.2	2.0
Preparing for a PEP meeting	26.1	14.1	22.9	10.2
Attending a PEP meeting	16.3	10.4	11.8	4.2
Knowing what support and services are available	36.2	24.7	36.9	29.2
Talking to a class teacher about a young person's education	10.1	3.8	7.5	4.1
Talking to a child or young person about their aspirations	7.3	5.2	6.5	4.1
Contributing to a PEP meeting	15.9	3.9	13.2	4.2
Contributing to decisions about a child or young person's education	21.8	10.4	19.1	8.1
Discussing education at a CLA meeting	14.0	9.1	11.7	6.3
Confident that your views and ideas are included in a child's PEP	23.2	17.9	22.0	20.4

Overall, the analysis suggests that the respondents in the post-training survey were consistently more confident about specific ways of supporting children in care's education than those in the pre-training survey, with the exception of foster carers in relation to helping with homework. A third of the foster carers and a quarter of all respondents in the post-training survey reported lacking confidence in knowing what support and services are available, and a fifth of foster carers and nearly a fifth of all respondents were not confident that their views would be included in the child's PEP. This provides an important indicator of priorities for future training.

When asked in the post-training survey to rate the impact that the training had on their confidence in contributing to decisions about a fostered child's education, the mean score for all respondents (77) was 1.8, and for foster carers (47) was 2.3. Foster carers reported an increase in confidence in contributing to discussions about their fostered child's education but no change in the level of confidence about these contributions being acted upon.

Foster carers' contribution to children in care's aspirations and attainment

The respondents in the post-training survey were asked whether the training had impacted on the extent to which they believed foster carers contributed to children's educational aspirations and attainment. As shown above in Tables 7 and 8, foster carers in the post-training survey reported being more confident about the contribution they make to fostered children's educational attainment and aspirations following the training. When asked to rate the impact that the training had on their confidence that foster carers contribute to fostered children's aspirations and attainment, about two thirds of all respondents and just over half of foster carers, reported an increase in this confidence.

Foster carers activities to support the education of their looked after child

Both the pre- and post-training surveys asked the respondents how frequently they had undertaken a range of activities discussed at the training in the three months prior to completing the questionnaire. Table 9 summarises the responses.

Table 9: Percentage of respondents reporting the following activities 'almost always' or 'frequently' in the last three months

	All (%)		Foster Carers (%)	
	Pre-training	Post-training	Pre-training	Post-training
Talked to your foster child about school	79.5	71.4	87.2	79.2
Attended school functions	72.2	60.3	80.6	72.9
Talked to my supervising social worker about my fostered child's education	72.7	53.1	62.0	65.3
Helped my fostered child with their homework	62.0	48.4	69.0	57.1
Talked to my fostered child about their aspirations	71.9	66.1	80.1	72.3
Read with my fostered child	59.7	50.0	66.7	59.2
Talked to my fostered child's teacher	67.3	70.3	72.6	75.5
Talked to my children's social worker about my fostered child's education	67.0	60.9	72.7	67.3

The findings of the analysis suggest that there has been little difference between the frequency of activity undertaken between the pre- and post-training surveys. Indeed, in some cases, the post-training respondents reported undertaking some activities less frequently than those who completed the pre-training survey. Foster carer respondents in the post-training survey were more likely to state that they talked to their supervising social worker and their child's teacher about their education. While foster carers in the post-training survey reported being more confident about discussing the child's aspirations and attainment with them (Table 8), they did not report higher frequencies of actually talking to them about school.

The post-training survey asked about whether they had made any changes to their practice since attending the training. Of the 45 respondents who completed this question, four gave answers of 'not applicable at this time'. Of those who did report changes, the most frequently cited changes were:

- Having more awareness of the roles of other professionals and contacting them more frequently (7)
- Understanding what support and services are available and accessing them (5)
- Helping the fostered child with homework and talking to them more about school (but Table 9 suggests there are many to whom this does not apply) (4)
- Involving children and young people in making decisions about their support (4)

Eight respondents reported that they had not made any changes as a result of the training, three of these because they did not currently have a child at school in placement.

A few of the carers who were interviewed reported on ways in which children had benefitted from their subsequent contact with school and influence over the ways in which the Pupil Premium Plus was allocated:

> *As a result I have a very strong say in what happens to the monies for both the children I have in my care. It has been possible for me to be quite influential there and I didn't realise I could.*

One carer came out of the training feeling very inspired and went home to talk to the young person about her aspirations and how they could build a path to reach her goals. This same carer used her new knowledge to get the child put into a booster class for maths and to attend a homework club which she felt had increased the child's confidence and her positive attitude towards learning.

Groups who benefitted most from the training

The training was seen by more experienced carers interviewed as most useful for new or less confident carers, with some stating that they already knew a lot of what was covered. A designated teacher similarly suggested that perhaps it was particularly helpful for new foster carers who did not know their way around the system, or new headteachers who similarly didn't have all the information they needed. This focus on newer carers seemed to be confirmed by some LAs' decision to put their usual training on hold for the year while the programme was running: "We said that our training for foster carers this year is essentially the Fostering Network's training."

Some carers suggested that the quietest, least confident carers would never be able to advocate effectively for their foster children and that those who had attended the training were more interested in education than the 'average' carer.

Extent of added value or overlap with current training offered

The relatively few social workers interviewed who had attended the generic training valued the bringing together of social workers, foster carers, education and Virtual School staff. One designated teacher commented:

> *…it was really well presented. It was interactive. I think it's always good to talk to other people of different disciplines. And the presentations were very good. The anecdotal sort of evidence was very positive. …there wasn't a lot of the information that I didn't know because I've been in this game for a long time. But what was useful as always is meeting other designated teachers, heads of schools, where they were very new to the whole idea. Foster carers who didn't know that they had the ability to go and talk to the school.*

Beyond bringing carers together with designated teachers and some other professionals, it remains less clear what the generic training offered that was beyond that provided by some LAs previously. One Virtual School head reflected the views of many others when she commented:

> *Well, the training was good. The only problem was it was very similar to what we deliver. And I think it is so hard to get people in, that actually I'm not sure… the one*

really good thing about it was that it was delivered by the champions[16] and I think that did bring a different aspect to it, definitely.

The carers had found the chance to hear from a young care leaver especially valuable:

I would say the most helpful bit was the young man. That's the bit which has stayed in my head, to a degree everything else has just paled into insignificance because that was a real life, this is what's happened to me up until now and the various aspects of his life story which he could identify with in a sense with some of the young people we've had or do have and it's a case of maybe we should try that alternative approach in doing things.

It seems that in some LAs the previous training did not have as strong a focus on education as that provided in this programme and did not always provide an input from a care leaver. While established foster carers are involved in the 'usual training', the Champions had a more significant role in this training.

Masterclasses

Masterclasses were a less significant strand of the overall programme in both scope and reach, having been attended by over 400 people which is less than a third of those attending generic training. Findings about the Masterclasses are drawn from the interviews with carers, social workers, children in care, Virtual School heads, senior LA managers and the delivery team. Of the 31 foster carers who were interviewed, four had attended Masterclasses, making our evidence base for the impact of these limited.

Three carers had attended the SEN Masterclass which focused on the new Education and Health Plan. Two had found this helpful: one because she had little prior knowledge and another because she works in SEN as well as being a carer, so it was relevant. One carer was disappointed with the lecture style delivery and stated that the information provided is freely available anyway and professionals who attended this session were also critical of the presentational style and content. One carer attended the Attachment and Trauma Masterclass and felt that it had improved their understanding of trauma in an educational context and reassured them that there were experts out there who could advise on other techniques. Five carers knew about the Masterclasses but did not attend due to location, work commitments or lack of perceived relevance. Three of the carers who were interviewed were not aware of the Masterclasses - one adding that she would have been interested in attending some of them.

Of the 13 social workers interviewed, none had attended Masterclasses. One designated teacher had attended the Masterclass on attachment and trauma which was well received, and was aware of foster carers who, following attendance at this event, were reading around the subject in order to help them to manage challenging behaviours. Virtual School staff and other professionals who attended Masterclasses saw them as aimed at carers rather than at themselves.

[16] The contribution of the Education Champions to generic training sessions varied from session to session.

Direct work with schools

The findings on the impact of the direct work with schools draws on the quantitative data received from the nine boroughs engaged in this strand of the programme, interviews with young people in the schools involved, their designated teachers, foster carers and social workers (both child and supervising), interviews with Virtual School heads, senior LA staff, the LFA coaches and the LFA delivery team. The direct work with schools involved a tailored programme developed from elements of the Achievement for All framework which was run in 25 schools: 17 secondary, six primary, one special and one pupil referral unit. According to data received from the Virtual School heads, 96 children looked after attended these schools in both Summer 2014 and Summer 2015. Direct work was delivered from September 2014 to July 2015. Any benefits of the direct work with carers, schools, and local authority staff is likely to take some time to be transferred to the children in care, so the evaluation is limited to an assessment of any initial impact on young people and schools.

Nine boroughs provided quantitative data on the attainment, attendance, absences and exclusions of all school-aged children in care who were in their care (whether educated in or out of borough) for two time points. Time 1 was the 2013-2014 school year, and Time 2 was the 2014-2015 school year, during which the LFA programme took place. Attainment data were taken from the summer term in each of those years, and represented either Key Stage test/GCSE results (in Years 2, 6 and 11), or teacher assessments. Attendance, absence and exclusion data were drawn from the portion of the school year during which the young person was on the school roll and in care; although for the majority of children this meant the data covered the whole school year, for some who had entered care after the start of the school year this was the point at which data began to be collected. Two time points of attainment data were available for 45 children (47% of the target sample in schools involved in direct work), while 60% of the target sample had two time points of data on attendance, absences or exclusions.

Attainment data

Table 10 shows the distribution of young people across school types, year groups and genders, for whom attainment data were provided by the nine boroughs for both Summer 2013-14 and Summer 2014-15. The table shows that for Years 1-3 (highlighted), we received data only for children in care who attended schools that were not involved in the direct work. It is possible that young people's progress in Years 1-3 is somehow different from the progress made in the higher year groups. The statistical analyses that follow on attainment therefore compare the 45 pupils in the schools involved in direct work against two separate comparison groups:

1. All looked after pupils in Years 1-11 of schools not involved in direct work and who had two years of data (*N* = 652)
2. Only those looked after pupils in Years 4-11 of schools not involved in direct work and who had two years of data (*N* = 535).

Table 12 below shows that the analyses on attendance, absence and fixed-term exclusions included much larger samples.

Table 10: Numbers of young people with 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 attainment data in schools involved with the direct work and those schools not involved, by school year and gender

	School involved in direct work		School not involved	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Year 1			5	6
Year 2			18	25
Year 3			42	21
Year 4	0	2	28	21
Year 5	4	2	24	20
Year 6	1	0	29	33
Year 7	3	1	54	38
Year 8	3	1	38	27
Year 9	6	2	36	33
Year 10	5	4	40	27
Year 11	6	5	48	39
Total	28	17	362	290

Attainment data were provided either for English (overall), or for reading and writing (separately), as well as for mathematics. Because overall English results were in the minority, and to allow for easier comparison with Achievement for All's own records, any overall English scores were assumed to hold for both reading and writing, and the analyses focused on these separate skills, alongside maths.

Table 11 shows the points system used to convert National Curriculum levels, GCSE grades and teacher assessment ratings into scores that would allow for easy comparison across time and educational settings. Where individual pupil records contained ratings that were not represented in the table (which occurred in a very small number of cases), this was classed as missing data.

Table 11: Conversion table producing attainment points score

Level	Points	Level	Points	Level	Points
1	9	7A	47	EL1	4
1C	7	8	51	G-	14
1B	9	8c	49	U	0
1A	11	8b	51	P8	6
N	15	8a	53	P7	5
2	15	A*	58	P6	4
2C	13	A+	54	P	3
2B	15	A	52	P5	3
2A	17	A-	50	P4	2
3	21	B+	48	P3	1
3C	19	B	46	P2	1
3B	21	B-	44	P1i	1
3A	23	C+	42	P1ii	1
4	27	C	40	P2i	1
4C	25	C-	38	P2ii	1
4B	27	D+	36	P3i	1
4A	29	D	34	P3ii	2
5	33	D-	32	W+	5
5C	31	E+	30	WA	5
5B	33	E	28	WB	3
5A	35	E-	26	WC	1
6C	37	F+	24	W	3
6B	39	F	22	W-	1
6A	41	F-	20	1S	9

6	39	G+	18	1T	7
7	45	G	16	S2	5
7C	43	EL3	12	S1	3
7B	45	EL2	8		

In the points scoring system used here, one level of progress is equal to 6 points. Pupils would be expected to make one full level or 6 points of progress over 2 school years, or one sub-level of progress (2 points) over every 2 school terms. We would therefore expect the average pupil in our sample to score 3 points higher at the end of 2014-2015 than they had scored at the end of 2013-2014.

Looking first at attainment, a comparison of end-of-year results in 2014-2015 showed significantly higher scores in reading, writing and maths for young people in schools involved in the direct work in comparison to those who were not. When the comparison was against all children in care in schools not involved in direct work, the difference was significant for all three subjects:

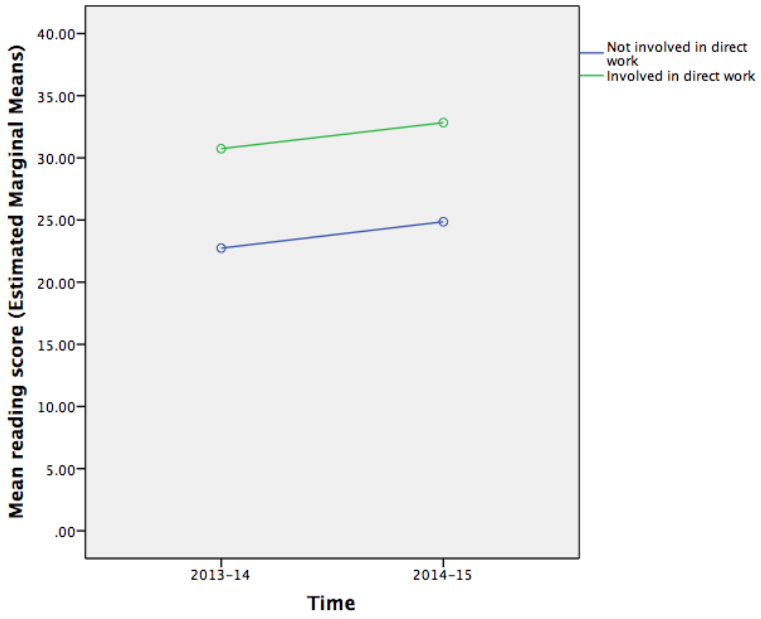
- For reading, children in schools involved with the direct work scored a mean of 32.80 compared to 24.80 for those in schools not involved, $t(665) = 4.79$, $p < .001$
- For writing, children in schools involved with the direct work scored a mean of 32.43 compared to 24.24 for those in schools not involved, $t(664) = 4.78$, $p < .001$
- For maths, children in schools involved with the direct work scored a mean of 33.02 compared to 24.16 for those in schools not involved, $t(678) = 5.10$, $p < .001$

Using comparison group data from Years 4-11 only made little difference to this pattern: children in care in schools involved with the direct work still showed significantly better scores in all three subjects, *ps* = .001.

However, a comparison of the change in scores in each subject from 2013-2014 to 2014-2015 between pupils in schools involved with the direct work and pupils in schools not involved showed that the difference between groups also existed at the first time point. Pupils in schools involved with the direct work were already getting better results than their peers before the programme started, and there was no indication that the pupils in schools involved with the direct work made better progress, since progress for both groups was roughly equal (i.e. there was no interaction effect).

For reading, there was a significant effect of time point, with scores increasing between Time 1 and Time 2 in both pupils in schools involved with the direct work and pupils in schools not involved, $F(1,648) = 13.24$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .020$. There was also a significant effect of school status, with pupils in schools involved with the direct work doing better than their peers at both time points, $F(1,648) = 24.98$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .037$. There was no interaction effect: Figure 2 shows the similar progress made between groups on this measure.

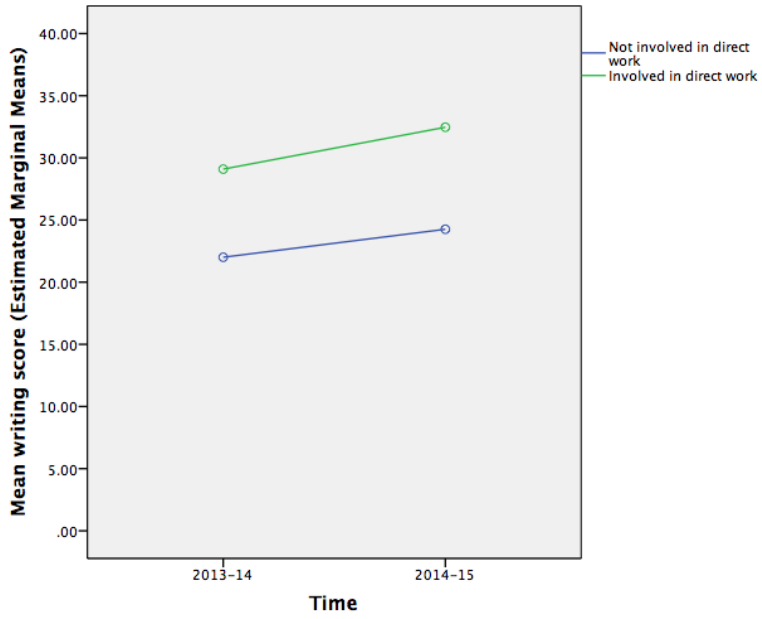
Figure 2: Progress on mean reading scores from 2013-2014 to 2014-2015, by 'involved in direct work in schools' status



Using comparison group data from Years 4-11 only made little difference to this pattern: time and school status still showed significant main effects, *ps* < .01, and there was no interaction effect.

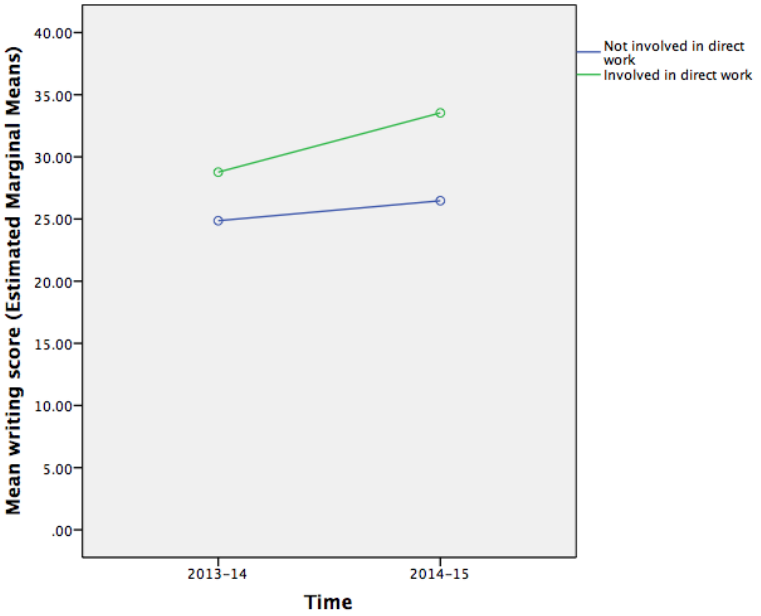
For writing, there was a significant effect of time point, with scores increasing between Time 1 and Time 2 in both pupils in schools involved with the direct work and pupils in schools not involved, $F(1,645) = 28.24$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .042$. There was also a significant effect of 'involved in direct work in schools' status, with pupils in schools involved with the direct work doing better than their peers at both time points, $F(1,645) = 21.91$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .033$. There was no interaction effect: Figure 3 shows the similar progress made between groups on this measure.

Figure 3: Progress on mean writing scores from 2013-2014 to 2014-2015, by 'involved in direct work in schools' status



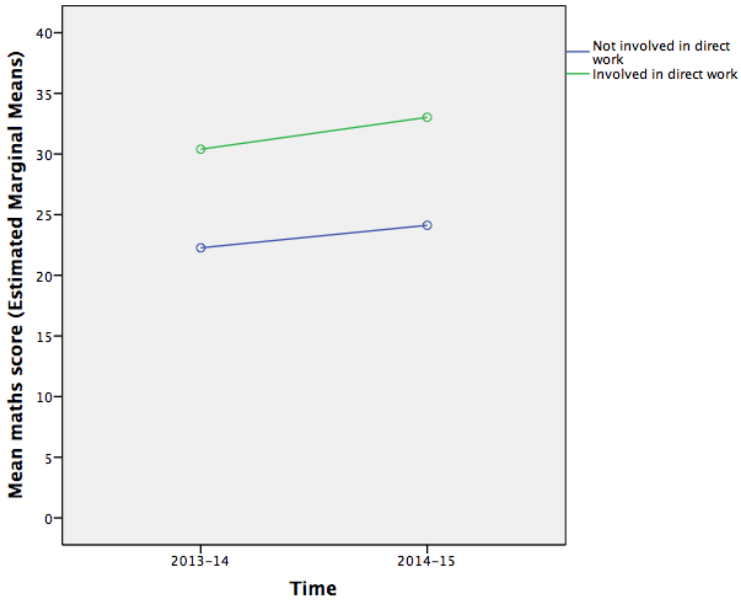
Using comparison group data from Years 4-11 only made no difference to the main effects: time and school status still showed significant main effects, *ps* < .01. However, restricting the analysis to these year groups produced an interaction effect, $F(1,466) = 4.69$, $p = .031$, $\eta^2_p = .010$. As Figure 4 shows, although young people in schools involved in the direct work began with higher writing scores than their peers, they also made greater progress over time.

Figure 4: Progress on mean writing scores from 2013-2014 to 2014-2015, by 'involved in direct work in schools' status (Years 4-11 only)



For maths, there was a significant effect of time point, with scores increasing between Time 1 and Time 2 in both pupils in schools involved with the direct work and pupils in schools not involved, $F(1,664) = 15.19$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .022$. There was also a significant effect of 'involved in direct work in schools' status, with pupils in schools involved with the direct work doing better than their peers at both time points, $F(1,664) = 24.67$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .036$. There was no interaction effect: Figure 5 shows the similar progress made between groups on this measure.

Figure 5: Progress on mean maths scores from 2013-2014 to 2014-2015, by 'involved in direct work in schools' status



Using comparison group data from Years 4-11 only made little difference to this pattern: time and school status still showed significant main effects, *ps* < .05, and there was no interaction effect.

Overall, the analyses suggest that there were differences between the pupils in schools involved in the direct work and those in schools not involved in direct work in reading, writing and maths scores at Time 1, and that both groups made similar progress in reading and maths between Time 1 and Time 2. When comparisons were restricted only to those in Years 4-11, pupils in schools involved in the direct work made better progress in writing than pupils in schools not involved.

There are a number of factors that could be contributing to these findings. The interviewees reported that in a few schools engaged in direct work, some changes in attitudes and behaviour of staff and their relationship with foster carers had occurred. It might be expected that these would take longer than a year to be reflected in children's progress. Schools signing up to the direct work might be more interested/engaged than those schools not doing so. Some of the 25 schools involved in the direct work were already involved in AfA by summer 2014 (though not focusing previously on children in care) and initial gains might have occurred prior to the Time 1 measure. This was tested out by re-running the analysis on the smaller sample of young people in schools that were new to the variant of AfA in the LFA programme in 2014 and no significant differences were apparent.

Attendance, absence and exclusion data

Because most local authorities provided their data on attainment separately from their data on attendance, exclusions, and absences, the sample sizes available for analyses differed and were larger. The maximum sample was used in each case. Table 12 shows the distribution of young people across school types, year groups and genders, for whom data on attendance, absences and exclusions were provided by the nine boroughs. As with the attainment data, the table shows that for some year groups (in this case Years 1-4, highlighted), we received data only for children in care who attended schools that were not involved in the direct work. The statistical analyses that follow on attainment therefore compare the 58 pupils in the schools involved in direct work against two separate comparison groups:

1. All looked after pupils in Years 1-11 of schools not involved in direct work and who had two years of data (*N* = 983)
2. Only those looked after pupils in Years 5-11 of schools not involved in direct work and who had two years of data (*N* = 743).

Table 12: Numbers of young people with attendance, absences and exclusions data for 2013-14 and 2014-15 in schools involved with the direct work and those schools not involved, by school year and gender

	Schools involved in the direct work		Schools not involved	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Year 1			38	25
Year 2			25	28
Year 3			35	23
Year 4			36	30
Year 5	1	0	36	30
Year 6	0	1	30	32
Year 7	1	4	54	34
Year 8	3	2	53	37
Year 9	3	1	55	57
Year 10	10	9	88	58
Year 11	18	5	107	72
Total	36	22	557	426

Data were provided on the number of permanent exclusions, the number of possible school sessions missed due to fixed term exclusions, the percentage of possible sessions missed due to

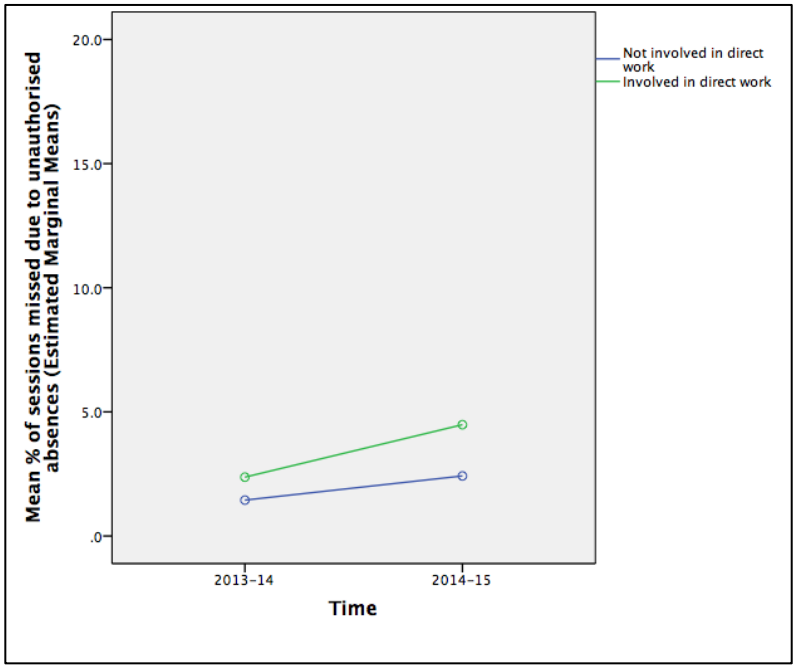
authorised absences, and the percentage of possible sessions missed due to unauthorised absences.

There were too few permanent exclusions in the sample for analysis and these data are therefore not reported. Local authorities differed in whether they entered a zero when a child had had no fixed term exclusions, or whether they left the cell blank; there was therefore a large amount of missing data for this variable, but this is likely to represent a substantial number of zero exclusions.

Pupil attendance, absences and fixed term exclusions in 2014-2015 for pupils in schools involved in direct work compared to those in schools not involved showed that there were no significant differences between groups on these measures. This held whether the comparison was against all children in care in schools not involved in direct work, or using comparison group data from Years 5-11 only.

In a comparison of the change in attendance, absences and exclusions from 2013-2014 to 2014-2015 between pupils in schools involved in direct work and all children in care in schools not involved in direct work, the only significant effects were related to the percentage of possible sessions missed due to unauthorised absence. For this outcome, there was a significant effect of time point, with unauthorised absences increasing between Time 1 and Time 2 in both schools involved in direct work and schools not involved, $F(1,1036) = 6.32$, $p = .012$, $\eta^2_p = .006$. The effect of status approached significance, with pupils in schools involved in direct work having a higher percentage of unauthorised absences than their peers at both time points, $F(1,1036) = 2.97$, $p = .085$, $\eta^2_p = .003$. There was no interaction between time and direct work in schools status, meaning that both groups increased in unauthorised absences over time, but not at significantly different rates. These results are illustrated in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Changes in the percentage of possible school sessions missed due to unauthorised absences in 2013-2014 to 2014-2015, by 'involved in direct work in schools' status



Using comparison group data from Years 5-11 only made no difference to the main effect of time, p = .016. However, restricting the analysis meant that the main effect of school status did not even approach significance, and there was still no interaction effect.

Overall, the analyses suggest that there were no differences between pupils in schools involved in direct work and their peers in 2014-2015 in terms of attendance, absences, or fixed-term exclusions. Both pupils in schools involved in direct work and those in schools not involved had similar increases in the percentage of unauthorised absences between Time 1 and Time 2.

Young people's experience of the direct work with schools

As predicted, the year-on-year data showed only a limited impact of the direct work with schools on children and young people's attainment, absences, and exclusions. These data were only intended to provide a proxy measure of potential longer-term benefits of the programme, and the interviews with young people, their teachers and foster carers give a more positive picture of the direct work with schools. In general, the eight children from three of the schools involved in direct work who were interviewed were positive about the support for education that they received from carers, commenting that their carers attended parents' evenings and had regular contact with school. With one exception, they were also positive about support from school and all identified 'someone special' in school (not necessarily the designated teacher). All but two attended their PEPs though resented missing lessons to do so, and one had missed the PEP because he didn't wish to miss the lesson. No young people mentioned any specific aspect of the direct work in schools but one did notice changes since New Year 2015, about the time that it was implemented in the school. Teachers in the school were more supportive and showed greater interest in her work and well-being:

> *…all of a sudden in the New Year she [a subject teacher] was helping me more, like being more supportive, actually coming to my table to actually tell me what to do and make sure I understand.* (YP, Year 12)

In addition, her social worker asked her about her schoolwork whenever they had contact. Another noted that the carer had become more interested in school. In one school that had engaged very positively with the direct work, the designated teacher reported that:

> *On the two terms that I've done… all children for English and maths are on target or above target, in fact we only had one that was, well English, maths and science, only one that was below.*

Designated teachers noted the huge challenges that faced these young people outside of school that acted as barriers to their attainment and progress and on which the school could have little effect. For example, one designated teacher noted that one young person in year 12 had lost a grandparent to whom they were very close and another had experienced a placement disruption and become generally demotivated as a result. These circumstances are typical of the experiences of young people in care reported elsewhere in research (e.g. Gibbs et al., 2004[17]) and the influence these events have on their capacity for educational progress (Darmody et al., 2013[18]; Sebba et al., 2015[19]).

Unsurprisingly, the young people were not clear which aspects of their experiences related to the LFA. We can only begin to address this through triangulating with other sources of data. Some spoke very positively about the support they received from school:

Interviewer: *…the designated teacher at the school… what do you think her role is in the school?*

Young person: *I think her role in the school is to make sure that foster children are just as normal as all the other children, and to be on their side just in case they have a problem.*

Interviewer: *And does she succeed in that role, like how do you find working with her?*

Young person: *I find her really good. She helps me to get what I need, like if I don't have something she'll help me get it [he went on to give an example of her getting him a laptop].* (YP, Year 10)

Another young man from the same school identified another teacher (middle manager, rather than the designated teacher) as helping him and suggested that this had increased since the

[17] Gibbs, I., Sinclair, I. and Wilson, K., 2004. *Foster placements: Why they succeed and why they fail*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

[18] Darmody, M., McMahon, L., Banks, J. and Gilligan, R. (201) *Education of children in care in Ireland: An exploratory study.* Dublin: Office of the Ombudsman for Children.

[19] Sebba, J., Berridge, D., Luke, N., Fletcher, J., Bell, K., Strand, S., Thomas, S., Sinclair, I., Higgins, A. (2015). *The Educational Progress of Children in care in England: Linking Care and Educational Data*. Rees Centre, University of Oxford, University of Bristol.

direct work with schools was introduced (though he did not identify it as such), saying "He gives me more advice and he has patience with me more than last year". However, he reminded us of the real challenges remaining in the education of children in care when he went on to say that he chooses not to go to his PEP meetings and the carer is reported by the school as being defensive, taking comments about the young man as criticism of her parenting and sometimes walking out of meetings.

All the young people valued having someone 'special' in school who they could turn to, often but not always the designated teacher. Support was also provided through explaining things that had not been understood, reassurance, reviewing progress, planning to achieve goals, accessing extra-curricular activities and extra one-to-one tuition, particularly in English for those young people for whom English was not their first language.

Schools capacity and expertise to address the needs of children in care

It was suggested by a designated teacher that the biggest impact on schools had been on the relationships between schools and carers, though the same message was not picked up from the foster carers. Six foster carers reported that they did not feel that teachers and schools had sufficient knowledge of the needs of children in care or had misunderstood their behaviour to the detriment of their education. For instance, four foster carers reported that 'special allowances' were made for children who had fallen behind, rather than encouraging the children to achieve the best they can, albeit "with the best intentions". One young boy was allowed to spend much of his time in primary school asleep, rather than exploring ways in which he could participate in class. These foster carers reported that while the very particular needs of children who have been maltreated need to be acknowledged, children and young people need to be worked with to engage them in education so as to mitigate against any negative educational impact of their pre-care experiences.

The greatest impact on schools seems to have been on raising the awareness within the staff team. One school was already doing a great deal of work with children in care prior to becoming involved in the direct work. All children at this school have an individual academic review three times a year but the children in care reviews used to be done by the designated teacher alone, whereas now the form tutors attend as well. The designated teacher had always held what they considered to be the equivalent of 'structured conversations' but previously hadn't labelled them as such. This school benefits from the input of two psychotherapists so is less dependent on the very stretched services of the CAMHS. There are also catch-up, after-school clubs in many subjects for all children though the designated teacher noted that it was more difficult to get the children in care to attend these. She attended the generic training offered by LFA and was surprised by the lack of awareness of foster carers there about Pupil Premium Plus and PEP meetings and felt confident that both the young people and foster carers in her own school knew all about these even if they do not always attend.

The communication between this school and the foster carers has been significantly increased by the direct work with schools, for example through the school holding two lunchtime meetings for foster carers at which the foster carers have:

> *… been asked what is it about the school that would make things better for them. So although most of them feel that the school is actually very supportive, there are very basic things like having homework emailed home, which next year I'm going to try and*

get all the teachers to do. So it's emailed to the carers, so the carers can have access to it, because a lot of the children in care aren't good at recording their homework, for instance. But that applies to a lot of children.

The other issue that arose at this meeting was a view from foster carers that other parents restrict their children from contact with the children in care outside of school because of perceptions about their behaviour. Following the session that some of them had attended on attachment (Masterclass), they also felt that the services were not always flexible enough to meet the needs of young people who might have attachment disorders or be affected by trauma.

The designated teacher in one school noted that some of the children in care had very challenging behaviour but once other staff had become involved as mentors to them in the programme, the young people might go and see their mentor rather than coming to the designated teacher, which spread the workload.

Through the interviews, two schools reported particular progress in relation to the direct work. The designated teacher from one had worked hard to get a wide cross-section of staff to take on mentoring roles for the nine children in care in the school. The coach had led the STEEP analysis which had been very helpful, in particular in highlighting the issues relating to well-being as well as academic progress. The young people interviewed all commented positively on the support they had received from teachers including help with English, equipment, and support for emotional challenges. Staff awareness of the children in care and the direct work in schools programme had grown and with it there was greater interest from staff in participating:

…[through] word of mouth and people talking about it and raising awareness of the programme …and they know we're rolling it out for next year…[name of coach] came in on our INSET in September to talk about the programme to all the staff …and sort of people couldn't wait to sign up for it… I'm a member of SLT, so the Senior Leadership Team here are aware of the programme and I update them on it… we can see clearly the progress that they have made academically [from the data].

A senior local authority manager reported on the impact of the direct work in another school, attributing its effect to the quality of the coach:

That's been very successful because the coach has been excellent, very knowledgeable, very keen to engage the school, very keen to engage the virtual school... So, she very much, from the very beginning, set out the programme; the school were very receptive to the Achievement For All philosophy around structured conversations, the STEEP analysis, engaging foster carers... it has focussed them on not just children in care [who were reported to have progressed], but vulnerable children, generally. It's given them an additional tool to be able to use in terms of the whole framework around structured conversations around PEP meetings, and conversations with parents and carers. So, I think it's added value…

One designated teacher was clear of the way in which the structured conversations had benefitted the young person:

…it's the engagement of the carers, it's finding out what the carers want because we know there's difficult relationships between the carers and the looked after child sometimes and …the Achievement for All programme has given the mentors ideas of how to ask the questions… a young girl had said to the carer, "Well you never asked me what I think about something"…so it seems like the carer and the child hadn't had that type of conversation before but it was only through the programme and the mentor asking these types of questions for her structured conversation that a few things had come out for the best… improving the relationships between the two of them.

And from the same teacher:

…we've got quite a few in Year 10 who are now going to Year 11, because… teachers they'd offered them some after-school revision which had been extremely difficult to get them to engage in beforehand but because they knew they were going to be doing specifically one-to-one with their mentors, one or two of them came …after school to have this extra tuition so that worked well… I think one of our mentors did a home visit which the carer was extremely pleased about.

One designated teacher interviewed from a school involved in the direct work in a borough with Champions and generic training was unaware that the school was involved in LFA as a member of the senior management team had led the work.

The carers and social workers of the young people interviewed who were in schools engaged in the direct work in schools component were mainly unaware of it. While social workers did not generally attend the STEEP sessions though they were invited, the carers might have been expected to know more about it through the structured conversations but it is possible that they were not clear that these were part of the LFA programme.

The branding offered was important in encouraging foster carers to come into school as noted by a designated teacher:

I think what a huge difference for me is actually having encouraged the parents, the carers, to come in and have their voice heard, which they didn't do before because there wasn't a hook to hang it on and the kids didn't want to be singled out as being different. But because this is Achievement for All, and it's been sold under that as your voice is really important, that's made a huge difference.

One carer reported increased activity from the school in terms of contact. She knew about the generic training and Education Champions but had not been involved with them herself. Another suggested that she had received more contact with the school, including calls to follow up when the child hadn't attended, getting him a laptop and reporting on his progress.

Some of the senior managers interviewed raised the question of whether the direct work in schools component (and indeed other interventions) are likely to be effective in schools that have been identified as weak and might not have the capacity to take on initiatives. They suggested that policies and staff development are relatively easily provided but changing practice, in particular so that children in care benefit, is much harder.

In four local authorities in which 12 senior managers were interviewed (school improvement, fostering and VSH), senior local authority staff posed the question of whether the direct work with schools component has a distinctive contribution to make to children in care or whether as an intervention for vulnerable children it makes a contribution to them as a subset of this group. Moreover, it was less clear what the role of the Virtual School team is in schools engaging in this component, as some senior managers thought there was considerable overlap between the support provided by the Virtual School team and that provided by the coaches. The Virtual School teams saw their role as developing good practice in schools and identified schools who were making excellent provision for young people in care without using the direct work with schools offered through the LFA.

Education Champions

The findings on the impact of Education Champions are drawn from the interviews with carers, Education Champions, young people in the schools involved in the direct work strand in boroughs who also had Champions, designated teachers, social workers, Virtual School heads and local authority managers. Senior managers and Virtual School heads noted that the programme did not define the role of the Education Champions but that LAs were seen as best placed to decide on the role, according to where the Champions could make a difference. Within the scope set out by the LA, Champions were encouraged to develop the role for themselves. They emerge from the evaluation as a very successful part of the programme, being seen positively by foster carers, local authority managers, social workers and designated teachers.

Ways in which the Education Champions worked

They tended to work through two main avenues:

- Attendance at existing support groups and coffee mornings for foster carers
- One-to-one support for carers on specific issues, e.g. advice on PEP meetings

Where regular foster carer support groups were running, the Education Champions were reported in several LAs to have attended all or most of these, making sure education was on the agenda and offering support, mentoring and advice. Considering there were only 10 Champions and that they were contracted for four hours a week, they seem to have reached a huge number of carers. In at least two LAs, they developed activities for foster carers to undertake with the children in their care. They provided training and workshops; identified and organised trips to various activities and attractions that could be utilised to engage children in different types of educational activities, such as galleries and museums, and provided ideas of activities and questions for the young people during the outing. They developed educational activities that foster carers and children could undertake together; led awareness raising activities, such as attending supervising social work team meetings; and conducted a needs analysis of the gaps in provision for children in care. One Education Champion also reported that they attended the PEP meetings with foster carers.

Fifteen of the 31 foster carers interviewed had had contact with Education Champions and viewed them extremely favourably, describing them as “knowledgeable”, “passionate”, “inspiring”, “approachable”, and “easy to get along with”. The support offered was generally highly regarded, and no recipients had any negative feedback about the individuals involved in the programme. Of central importance to both the Education Champions and the foster carer

recipients, was the unique status of the Education Champions as both foster carers and 'staff'. Interviewees were of the view that the shared understanding between the Education Champions, and those they had contact with, was essential to the role. The Education Champions were characterised as listening to and understanding other foster carers' concerns and experiences from a position of sympathy rather than judgment.

The prevalence of the use of groups by the Education Champions suggests that utilising existing mechanisms is an essential part of the role. However, given that the Education Champions have a particular remit to work with those foster carers that are not engaged with existing support mechanisms, it suggests that the Education Champions may not be have been accessing the hard to reach foster carers as much as intended. The Education Champions themselves reported that the one-to-one work had been less utilised than they had initially hoped. Only three of the Education Champions reported that foster carers were identified by the local authority and referred on to them.

Champions had made carers aware of the need to further support young people who are doing well, when previously they may have focused on difficulties and children who are underachieving. They taught carers to be more proactive regarding their foster child's education. There were many positive comments from carers and other professionals about the way the Champions worked with carers. They did not 'tell people what to do' but provided peer support.

In one borough a key improvement target for children in care was to improve attainment in maths at KS4 because although one-to-one tuition had been employed the progress being made was insufficient. Hence, it was decided to involve the Education Champions in supporting foster carers in a maths project to raise basic skills and self esteem, and help the carers accept that maths was not as complicated as some people suggest. The Virtual School head described it:

> *…the programme is called Fifteen a Day… because the idea was the foster carers would spend 15 minutes a day working alongside the student, not going to be teaching but be engaged equally in the activities. The programme would be… for adults and children. Working together on the pages in this workbook… Each page has sums, some games, some dice games, a race around the clock game, space to write their tables, timed tasks, in all, 20 pages… The staff at the Virtual School produced a list of students they thought would benefit from doing this… at the moment 10 are doing it… we feel our foster carers should give some time every day to education and this is one of our key aims for next year.*

One child achieved a 3A in maths having been predicted a 3C, representing an additional two terms of progress above expectations. This LA hopes to continue with the Champions and with the project.

Increasing the knowledge and confidence of foster carers

Seven foster carers reported that while they felt confident to contribute to discussions around their fostered child's education, they did not think that their views were consistently acted upon. They reported that they did not think they were treated as equal members of the team around the child and this was borne out in practical ways, such as not being included in the circulation of PEP meeting minutes. One foster carer reflected that "Before I was dithery

because I didn't really know what I wanted, and I wasn't listened to. But now I am clearer and more confident and I know what I am thinking is valid".

The Education Champions were described as a key source of information about the support and services available. Even those foster carers who described themselves as very well informed reported that the Education Champions had given them new information, or more clarity. This empowered foster carers to carry out their role of ensuring children in care had the support and services they need. As one recipient said "The more information we have, the more empowered we are to help the young people".

The Education Champions gave carers a better understanding of the purpose of the PEP meetings, what they should achieve, who should be there and how they should be run. Practical suggestions included ensuring foster carers are clear about what they would like to get out of meetings with teachers and social workers prior to the meeting, and communicating that in a clear way, along with making best use of the 'cc' function on emails to ensure that the right parties are included in all communications. These practical ideas were highly valued by the foster carers, especially those who had previously felt intimidated by school and other educational settings or less confident. These foster carers reported feeling more confident to engage in, and contribute to PEP meetings as a result. For instance, one foster carer reported "because of the information and advice I have received I now ask for things [in PEP meetings] I wouldn't have asked for before".

Impact of Education Champions on provision for children

Ten carers reported that the support and services being offered to the young person, either by the wider education system or from the foster carers themselves, had been changed with significant outcomes for the child following their contact with the Education Champions. This was in part a result of the increased knowledge and confidence gained, and in part due to the direct support of the Education Champions with particular issues. Five foster carers reported that the information provided by the Education Champions had resulted in them going back to the school to discuss how the Pupil Premium Plus might be re-allocated for their fostered young person. The foster carers reported that these funds had subsequently been used for a range of educational input including personal tutors, music and swimming lessons. One carer had been inspired to sign the child up for a dance class that had transformed her confidence and engagement in school. The school had commented on the difference in the child. One Education Champion suggested using magazines to engage a young person in reading. This strategy had been successful and the young person, who had previously been disengaged in traditional 'academic' environments, was pursuing an application on to a hair and beauty course.

Overall, Education Champions have gone some way towards increasing foster carer knowledge of the education system, improving foster carers' confidence to meaningfully engage with schools but the interview findings suggest that carers remain unconvinced that their views are often acted upon.

Views of the Education Champions

The Education Champions were overwhelmingly positive about the support and training offered by the London Fostering Achievement team. They described it as very efficient and responsive to requests for information and the training and materials provided were considered to be extremely useful. The Education Champions reported finding the opportunity to meet together useful to share ideas and work through challenges, and valued the way that the London

Fostering Achievement team had facilitated those opportunities. The Education Champions were clear about the need for support from senior managers from both Children's Services, and the Virtual Schools. It was evident that the experiences of the five areas were quite varied and a lack of engagement from senior managers from one or other of these key agencies was identified in three areas

The Education Champions were of the view that they were able to act as a 'bridge' between foster carers and other professionals, assisting those other professionals to understand the specific challenges of fostering, and informing foster carers of the different roles undertaken by education and social care staff. One of the key challenges identified by the Education Champions was the lack of take up of one-to-one support. This was due to lack of engagement from front line staff at agencies who may have otherwise referred suitable candidates for support. In one of the local authority areas, the Education Champions had experienced some push back from front line practitioners. They were asked not to deliver a particular seminar by a team because it was thought to come within their remit and not the remit of the Education Champions.

Overall, the Education Champions were positive about the extent to which they were able to utilise existing structures. The local Foster Carer Associations were identified as essential mechanisms for informing foster carers about the role and avenues for offering further support. Nevertheless, it may be advantageous to consider alternative avenues through which those foster carers who do not attend these groups, may benefit from Champions.

Longer-term sustainability of Education Champions

Senior managers expressed an on-going commitment to the Education Champion's role beyond the life of the programme. For instance, three local authorities were considering continuation and one local authority had already committed to continuing the role:

> *…so we will continue with Education Champions. …we will be recruiting two Education Champions that will be paid by the local authority, …to be more focused in supporting individual carers to support children. So, for example, it might be that we get Education Champions who have a particular specialism in supporting children learning to read, or with maths, or with unaccompanied minors, or SEN, or something like that.*

Other LAs reported being approached by LAs from further afield not in LFA inquiring about the Education Champion model with a view to piloting it in their own area.

Percentage breakdown of costs

The overall London Fostering Achievement budget was £500,000. The approximate breakdown of percentage costs for each of the four strands in shown in Table 13.

Table 13: Percentage breakdown of costs by strand

Area	Percentage of overall costs
School Analysis and Support	31%
Education Champions	25%
Training	24%
Set-up costs	20%

As can be seen in Table 13, the Education Champions made up 25% of the overall programme costs and seemed to have the clearest positive outcomes over this one year of the programme. It is possible that over a longer period the outcomes for the other strands, in particular the direct work with schools might look different but on the basis of this one year only, the Education Champions look to be the best value for money.

Barriers to progress in the project

Knowledge about the programme: Communication about the project to all who might have benefitted was a significant challenge. Those who contributed to the evaluation, tended to know more about the strands of the programme which they had accessed. So, for example, designated teachers knew more about direct work with schools and less about the generic training, Education Champions or Masterclasses. Some foster carers recalled the generic training (though not all who were interviewed that had attended did so) and most of those in boroughs with Champions knew about the Champions. Most of the 31 foster carers interviewed had not heard about the direct work with schools and some of those with children in those schools either mentioned coaches or mentors but did not recall having been directly involved in any activities themselves. It seems possible that they did not identify some activities such as the structured conversations as part of the programme.

Only the Virtual School heads and a very few senior local authority (LA) managers knew about all programme strands in which their borough was involved. Fostering managers knew more about the generic training and Champions, while the school improvement managers knew about the direct work in schools. This may reflect the continuing unhelpful separation of services in some local authorities rather than anything to do with the programme. An example of a highly integrated children's services model is given in case study 4 in Appendix 3.

Staff turnover: Most of the LA senior managers and professional staff, particularly in social work, had experienced rapid turnover of personnel and it was not unusual for the person who committed the LA to the LFA programme to have moved on. This seems to have been a major barrier to implementation. In one LA a delay in recruiting Education Champions led to later implementation of this strand, and one school reported that they had not attended the relevant meeting because no one was in post. Social workers were also identified as having rapid turnover, young people in particular were very critical of the lack of support for their education, citing the frequent changes of social worker as one reason for this.

Cultural barriers in schools: There was evidence of cultural barriers in schools providing major challenges for the designated teacher in developing consistently positive attitudes towards pupils in care. One designated teacher illustrated an issue often mentioned by Virtual School heads and teachers when suggesting that the direct work in schools had challenged the staff but that there were limits on how much change you could expect from what was offered:

> *…they've [the staff] all had to attend a session that [the coach] presented. Did they all take it on board? I doubt it… Not everybody understands what it's like to have a breakdown of a home situation then go into a placement that breaks down, to have seven changes of social worker, because it's outside their experience. So they won't*

relate to that. And unless the student specifically tells them, but even then they can't process it. "Well, I'm sorry you've had a bad day but, you know, my job is to teach you".

Similarly, foster carers who were interviewed suggested that many school staff don't really understand what the young people have been through and the impact that has on their learning. But they also acknowledged that this needs to be balanced with the young person's right to confidentiality, and several of the young people interviewed expressed a preference for staff and pupils (except the designated teacher and closest friends) not to know that they were in care. One young person did not want to tell her peers (except for her best friend) in school that she was in care as she had seen some children in care in previous year groups being negatively 'judged' by their peers. However, the social worker and independent reviewing officer would call her on her mobile in lessons, thus revealing her situation and leading to her getting her phone confiscated.

One young man doing his GCSEs said it had taken seven months for anyone to realise he had problems in maths and when he asked for help he was told off for being rude. The lack of communication between social workers and teachers was also noted by other young people:

…the teacher has concerns, they can message the social worker and, like, they can … the social workers can put something in place to help the child. So, like, say, when it comes to Year 11 or Year 10, they're not stressing around struggling because they don't know this equation.

She also felt that some teachers 'care too much' and that they irritated her by compromising her privacy. While there was evidence of strong support for children in care in this school, she identified individual teachers who she described as patronising and others who she felt picked on her. In large secondary schools, consistency of attitudes towards children in care will be harder to achieve.

Placement changes: This same young person had experienced several placement changes during secondary school, but at her insistence had managed to stay in the same school. This meant a very early start, a long journey across London and often receiving detentions for being late or having her bursary (£100 per month paid to Year 12 and 13 young people in care) cut for not achieving 90% attendance. She also felt that the way in which these changes were handled increased the disruption to her education:

…being in care and having problems got in the way [of my education] because every single time I moved a placement it was during a school day… slap bang like 12:00 for example I will be in English, I am getting called out of the lesson, my social worker will suddenly be outside, I will be like 'What is going on?' She is like 'Oh you can't stay in your placement anymore'…Everyone else is in their English class like 'Oh what is going on with [name]…I am there telling them to F off, you know, just trying to focus? Hearing bad news, trying not to cry, because there is like a window through the door and they will see me crying… Every single time I move to a placement it just disrupted my school life. (YP, Year 12)

Facilitators of improved outcomes

This section draws on the interviews with young people and local authority senior managers and focus groups with two Children in Care Councils. Young people in particular, provided far-reaching comments on what facilitated their educational progress, remarking on wider contextual conditions that impact on their education.

Having high aspirations of the young people themselves plays an important part in their success in the educational system. Their motivation is likely to have facilitated their capacity to benefit from any extra support from the programme. One young person acknowledged her own role and that of her birth family in this:

> *Who inspires me? Who drives me? I guess I'm quite driven myself because from a young age my family were like education is the way forward, so that's something that's stayed with me. But my social workers and my foster mum they push me as well. But generally I'm quite ambitious myself, it's just like support [from them]* (YP, Year 11)

The young people interviewed were in general very motivated and with high aspirations including channelling some of their own experiences of being in care into helping others:

> *And I realise I really fight for justice. I think that there is a lot that needs to be done in this world for people to actually feel like their rights are theirs and not just taken away from them. Because the government do so much stuff that I really don't agree with and then however much we try to protest and whatever it just doesn't work. So yes, I thought that being a Barrister and being able to fight for people's rights and justice in Court would probably be really good for me because I actually enjoy doing that already*. (YP, Year 12)

Supportive designated teachers: All but one of the eight young people interviewed had a very good relationship with the designated teacher and saw this as contributing significantly to their behaviour and progress. The eighth had formed a strong relationship with another middle manager in school and so sought less support from the designated teacher. One young person reported spending 1-2 hours once a week with her designated teacher with whom she had a really good relationship:

> *…if a teacher is bugging me... because I have anger management issues, so if a teacher is bugging me and like if I know I am about to flip I will just storm out of the class and come straight up here [to the DT's office]. But obviously if another student is in here it is a bit chaotic …And I am not going to be storming down [name] High Street fuming trying to get help… But yes, yes it works. (YP, Year 12)*

One designated teacher noted that she had more time to support the children in care and to liaise with the social workers as she didn't have any regular teaching commitment. A second one also identified that being full-time for safeguarding and children in care was a major factor in what could be achieved with adequate time allocation. Both these designated teachers were reported by the young people in their schools to be very supportive with specific examples given to illustrate this.

Providing effective support for learning: Young people seemed to benefit from a range of support. Having someone who took an interest in their education was important:

> *I go to my foster mum first for most things because I see her every day. I know she's [designated teacher] there, she's willing to help me, so she's an option that I could go to, but I don't exercise it…* (YP, Year 9)

Having a secure base provided by a foster carer was also critical:

> *…when I wasn't in care at school I was in the middle set, bottom set. I didn't go to school that much, I was late all the time, which was equally my fault and equally my mum's fault, so we both share the blame. But since going into foster care I'm in the top set for every subject, I'm getting As and A*s and I'm just doing progressively all round well. So just having a good base has really helped me*. (YP, Year 11)

But in many of the examples earlier in this report it is clear that teachers, in particular designated teachers, often provide support through regular contact, a physical base out of class when a young person cannot cope in a lesson, or act as a bridge between the young person and other teachers who are less aware of the emotional challenges that the young person is facing.

School and social workers providing stability: Placement disruption was a major barrier to learning but school continuity mitigated against this even if only partially:

> *I was very reluctant to move schools and especially since my current placement is …people were quite on me to change …My social workers and then my foster mum because she was just thinking for me it's an hour journey to get here, because I do a lot with school and stuff she was just wondering about that. I'm busy with other activities, so it cuts into my time… Because I was doing my GCSEs early I felt like if I left I wouldn't be able to get it done and then I've already got a solid base here. It would just feel weird to change.* (YP, Year 11)

There were other examples of teachers trying to provide stability and continuity in the face of multiple placement changes. Some senior local authority managers noted the importance of prioritising school stability when placements disrupted.

Influence of foster carers and young people in education decisions: Of the eight young people interviewed from schools engaged in the programme, six had attended their PEP meetings. One young woman did not attend as she felt that her foster carer represented her views but that she was more likely to be listened to on requests for direct curriculum and teaching support (e.g. one-to-one tuition) than for extra-curricular activities. She felt it was helpful that her carer attended but did not contribute significantly to her education. The other one who did not attend stated that he didn't do so as he did not want to miss the lesson. A young person who did attend was more positive about the contribution of the PEP beyond resources:

> *Yeah, of course, because they help me like find a way, you know, help me to the direction, so help me like so I know which direction I need to go*. (YP, Year 11)

Ten young people from one of two focus groups with Children in Care Councils reported having influenced the way the Independent Reviewing Officers[20] work and they redesigned the review meetings for children in care. This group had met with the Chief Executive recently and education of children in care was one of the topics covered in the meeting. They told him:

> *…that because everyone has got Oyster Cards they are expected to use the buses, but sometimes it can take an hour or over an hour to get to school but if it works out quicker to use the train, then social services or foster carers should spend that bit of money if it reduces that travelling time.*

They also emphasised the need for the services to listen to what they have to say, complaining that often decisions were already made.

Some limitations of the evaluation

Any evaluation of an intervention, in particular one that is not a randomised controlled trial, will always give rise to difficulties in attributing changes to all or part of the programme. Schools and local authorities in this case were involved in multiple initiatives, exacerbating this challenge further. In this particular evaluation, respondents had different understandings and experiences of the four strands of the programme. Despite attempts to provide definitions at the start of the interviews, the relevant terminology (e.g. Masterclass) was differentially interpreted and it is possible that perspectives provided in interviews related to different elements of the programme or activities that were not part of the programme at all. So for example, one respondent told us that in the school "…they use AFA and not London Fostering Achievement."
Several carers had difficulty remembering the training, partly due to the time gap between attending the training and being interviewed. Some carers had attended other training concerning education (via the fostering provider and the Virtual School) and could not always remember what they had learnt where.

Some sample sizes achieved as summarised in the methodology table at the start of this report, were disappointingly low. This applies in particular to the survey of those who attended the training since we had aimed to get most of the 864 in the pre-training survey to respond in the post-training survey, instead of which after several follow ups and other strategies adopted to increase responses we only achieved 100. In addition, some of these did not answer all the questions, reducing the sample further. For this reason no statistical analyses on these data have been reported. Foster carers who attended generic training, who were in boroughs which had Education Champions or who were fostering young people in school involved in the direct work were also under-represented, since we interviewed 31 of them instead of the 73 targeted. Carers for the focus groups specifically asked us to come back to them after the summer holidays when their availability would be better but a limited number were willing to be interviewed when re-contacted. Feedback from the Champions (via the Fostering Network) suggests that foster carers were very reluctant to be interviewed by evaluators. Many of the Champions were trying to engage with people who don't traditionally access services, hence the

[20] Independent Reviewing Officers are people who chair reviews for children living in children's homes or foster care.

appeal of peer support. Loughborough University researchers and the Rees Centre team attempted a number of different approaches to engage carers with varying degrees of success, but the numbers achieved were disappointing.

The commitment of LAs and VSHs in particular was critical in getting access to the schools, young people and local authority staff and also to the quantitative data on attainment. The VSHs gave their time generously in providing data, arranging for colleagues to be interviewed and being interviewed themselves. Despite best efforts there were still some discrepancies in the quantitative data between that provided from different sources which meant it could not all be included in the analyses.

The individual children in care interviewed were not typical due to self-selection. Four out of the eight interviewed were unaccompanied asylum seekers and seven were well-motivated high achievers. Possible explanations suggested by foster carers and social workers for the progress made by these young people included learning the language. This explanation is supported by the findings of the quantitative analyses, which for all but writing show similar progress for pupils in schools involved in the direct work and those in schools not involved. Motivated high achievers are evident in this population but were they to be as prevalent as in our interview sample, it is unlikely, even when special educational needs has been controlled for, that the educational outcomes would be as they are.

Conclusions

The LFA programme was ambitious in attempting to reach large numbers of carers and others (as specified in the programme brief provided by GLA) and has been partially successful.

Spreading input thinly across London, in particular generic training, Masterclasses, school interventions and the Education Champions, seems to have reduced the capacity to have major effects in a short time, but longer-term effects are unknown at this time.

If young people were to benefit from any synergy across all four strands of the programme, giving complete choice to the participating LAs as to which strand(s) they engaged in, reduced the chances of benefitting from the combined effects of two or three[21] of the strands. The programme was intended to address several needs simultaneously by changing school attitudes towards the needs of children in care, foster carers' understanding and confidence of the education system and the relationships between foster carers, schools and social workers. The fact that most LAs committed to one or two of the three strands meant that the potential for the added value of addressing the same overall aim of improving children's progress from all three angles was reduced.

Generic training was well received and the mix of people was seen as the most valuable aspect as it enabled them to better understand each other's roles. From the survey and interviews foster carers reported that they had gained:

[21] The Masterclasses were not a LA-based strand in the way that the other three were.

- Knowledge of the different professionals available to support children in care's education, most notably the Virtual School head
- Knowledge of the services and support that is available to support children in care's education
- Knowledge and use of the Pupil Premium Plus and PEPs
- Confidence in their own skills to support children in care's education

These findings are supported by the data gathered through the interviews with the recipients of support from the Education Champions, who reported that the key areas of impact were on their knowledge of the support and services available and their own confidence. Increased confidence largely related to having knowledge, information and new understanding including of the role of the Virtual School, and an awareness of the support available from Champions. While foster carers reported that they felt more confident in contributing to discussions associated with children's education following training, significant numbers of foster carers still lacked confidence in knowing what support and services are available, and a fifth of foster carers and nearly a fifth of all respondents were not confident that their views would be included in the child's PEP.

While there was some evidence that the training had impacted on the way that the respondents interacted with other professionals, the survey found that the training had little impact on respondents' behaviours associated with improving young people's education. In the interviews, however, foster carers and others identified examples of carers challenging allocation of Pupil Premium Plus and engaging young people in extending their activities.

Questions remain over whether the generic training was too basic for experienced people and what added value it provided over and above the established LA training offered to, in particular, new or less confident foster carers.

Masterclasses were generally well received by carers and others. The small proportion of the overall carers in London that could attend was raised as an issue in some LAs, though over 400 people (not all foster carers) attended these and there was a waiting list for two of them, reflecting an appetite for this provision. The insights they provided were much appreciated, in particular by more experienced carers for whom the generic training tended to refresh and update existing knowledge. The Masterclass on SEN was seen as least useful, but this was as much to do with the style of presentation as with the content.

Education Champions emerged most strongly In terms of impact. Foster carers and others reported that the Champions had provided information, direct support and increased confidence, which for some young people led to improved support or specific provision. Some evidence that in at least three LAs, the advice or direct intervention from Champions led to improvements for children. The Champions were modestly paid and part-time and seen by many as too thinly spread. Their success is attributed by interviewees to their experience in both education and foster care, being seen by foster carers as 'one of us'.

Other impact on carers can be summarised as follows:

- As a result of the training and/or Education Champions, many carers reported changed perceptions including realising the importance of their role in education, the need to be pro-active and feeling more confident.
- Carers identified how their learning from training could be used in practice including, for example, using their knowledge to influence practice in schools – particularly in relation to spending Pupil Premium Plus for the benefit of the children in their care.
- There was evidence of the learning being embedded – some carers felt that they had learnt things that will be useful in the future as well as to current placements.

Social workers

The young people interviewed provided examples of inappropriate approaches by social workers to engagement in school, including disrupting lessons when placements changed and lacking understanding of the importance of continuity of schooling. One of the boroughs demonstrated how social workers can be very effective in their work with other services and in relation to planning placement changes that do not disrupt school, though these ways of working did not emanate from LFA.

Direct work in schools

Analyses of school data showed no greater progress in reading and maths for pupils in schools involved in the direct work when compared to pupils in other schools. However, pupils in schools involved with the direct work made more progress in their writing compared to those in schools not involved. Direct work in schools appears to have raised awareness and is beginning to change staff behaviour but is not yet reflected in children's progress in general, except in writing. Some young people are benefitting from the increased awareness of their needs in the way others interact with them.

The direct work with schools and young people conducted as part of the programme might have been expected to produce more immediate effects. The attainment, attendance, absences and fixed-term exclusions of pupils in schools involved in the direct work should continue to be compared to those of their peers in schools not in the programme in order to determine whether any benefits of this strand of the programme emerge later.

The real benefits may only be seen in the longer-term since they require culture change in schools, local authority fostering services and senior management. Perhaps there is a minimum critical mass needed for this programme for children in care. In one school while there were 13 pupils in care last year there were only three this year, and the investment of resources and staff commitment seems considerable given there is no economy of scale.

Recommendations for policy and practice

- Future pan-London GLA programmes in education, particularly those of short duration (less than two years), should be specifically targeted either geographically or in terms of strands of innovation to maximise impact. Any training offered across London is unlikely to be sufficient in volume to cover every foster carer so each LA will still need to run some training.

- Future training, and indeed current training offered by LAs and IFPs should prioritise developing carers' understanding of educational roles such as the Virtual School, designated teacher and learning mentor. It should also aim to increase foster carers' confidence in knowing what support and services are available.

- Education Champions should be implemented more widely. The cost of implementing the Education Champions in every borough in London or even every LA in England would be relatively low[22] and would be offset by savings from higher foster carer retention rates, less school exclusion and better progress. Their time commitment, pay and role specification should all be considered carefully.

- Schools should consider:
  - Undertaking needs analysis, whole staff development, targeted discussions between carer, teacher and young person and target setting in relation to children in care, with the support of the Virtual School.
  - Giving designated teachers the status needed (e.g. on senior leadership teams) to ensure appropriate priority is given to the needs of children in care.
  - The timing and organisation of PEP meetings so that they are sensitive to the needs of young people and should neither identify their care status to their peers and school staff, nor require them to miss lessons.
  - How the views of foster carers and young people contributed in the PEPs and through other contact can more often be reflected in decisions and subsequent action.
  - Developing a positive school culture that supports sensitivity for children in care in the face of placement disruptions and continuity of schooling. Making exceptions to rules for the young person in care must be balanced with the young person's need to be treated equally.

- Target social workers with information and skills relating to education. This programme touched a few social workers in terms of changes to practice, but this depended on their choosing to attend the generic training/working with a young person attending a school involved in the direct work strand. Case Study 4 in Appendix 3 provides one example of effective integrated working in the best interests of children in care but this practice was already established prior to LFA. This integrated children's service in which the leadership models a strong commitment to the education of children in care, could provide the basis for further interventions.

[22] Education Champions were paid £15/hour and were employed for four hours a week

Appendix 1: London Fostering Achievement Theory of change

Outcome	Outputs	Indicators	Baseline data collection	Impact data collection
☐ Increased foster carer confidence to engage with schools	☐ Half-day training sessions offered to every London borough ☐ A minimum of four masterclasses offered across London on key educational topics ☐ Ten foster carer Education Champions offering peer support and advice to other foster carers in five boroughs	☐ Change against baseline survey including in depth interviews ☐ 70% of participants who respond report positive change ☐ The extent to which interviewees feel able to contribute to decisions regarding their fostered child's education, for example Personal Education Plans (PEPs)	☐ Baseline survey pre-training to all foster carers who book a place at a London Fostering Achievement session ☐ Will explore the extent to which foster carers feel able to engage with school and other settings regarding children in care's education ☐ Will explore the extent to which foster carers feel able to contribute to decisions regarding their fostered child's education	☐ Post-training survey to all foster carers who attended a London Fostering Achievement session ☐ Focus groups with 15-20 foster carers who receive the training offered to London boroughs only about support and interaction with schools, designated teachers and social workers to verify other data collected ☐ A focus on key indicator of confidence, includes measure of participation in PEPs ☐ Will explore the extent to which practice has changed since completing the training and which areas of practice have changed ☐ 40 in-depth interviews conducted with Education Champions, teaching staff, Heads and Virtual School Heads and foster carers in receipt of support from Champions
☐ Increased foster carer knowledge of the education, access to support, training and use of practical strategies	☐ Half-day training sessions offered to every London borough ☐ A minimum of four masterclasses offered across London on key educational topics ☐ Ten foster carer Education Champions offering peer support and advice to other foster carers in five boroughs	☐ Change against baseline survey including in depth interviews. Action against follow up action points, agreed in training ☐ 70% of participants who respond report positive change ☐ Foster carers' knowledge of the education system, including support and services that are available for children in care ☐ Interviewees' knowledge and confidence regarding the role of foster carers in the education of the children and young people they care for	☐ Baseline survey pre-training to all foster carers who book a place at a London Fostering Achievement session ☐ Will explore knowledge and understanding of the role of foster carers in the education of children and young people they care for	☐ Post-training survey to all foster carers who attended a London Fostering Achievement session ☐ Focus on key indicator of knowledge and specific measure of follow up actions made by participants ☐ Focus groups with 15-20 foster carers who receive the training offered to London boroughs only about knowledge and understanding of the education system ☐ 40 in-depth interviews conducted with Education Champions, teaching staff, Heads and Virtual School Heads and foster carers in receipt of support from Champions
☐ Increased designated teacher understanding	☐ Half-day training sessions offered to every London borough ☐ A minimum of four masterclasses offered	☐ Change against baseline survey including in-depth interviews ☐ 70% of participants who respond report positive change	☐ Baseline survey pre-training to all designated teachers who book a place at a London Fostering Achievement session ☐ Will explore knowledge and	☐ Post-training survey to all designated teachers who attended a London Fostering Achievement session ☐ A focus on key indicator of understanding

Outcome	Outputs	Indicators	Baseline data collection	Impact data collection
	across London on key educational topics		understanding of the role of foster carers in the education of children and young people they care for	
☐ Higher aspirations for children in care reported by key audiences	☐ Half-day training sessions offered to every London borough ☐ A minimum of four masterclasses offered across London on key educational topics	☐ Change against baseline survey including in depth interviews ☐ 70% of participants who respond report positive change	☐ Baseline survey pre-training to all professionals who book a place at a London Fostering Achievement session	☐ Post-training survey to all professionals who attended a London Fostering Achievement session ☐ Individual interviews with 15-20 foster carers / residential workers of those children in care interviewed ☐ Telephone interviews with sample (c.10) social workers of the children in care interviewed on their understanding of the education system, experience of the intervention and coherence of team working
☐ Teachers and foster carers report better relationships	☐ Half-day training sessions offered to every London borough ☐ A minimum of four masterclasses offered across London on key educational topics ☐ Ten foster carer Education Champions offering peer support and advice to other foster carers in five boroughs	☐ Change against baseline survey including in-depth interviews. ☐ 70% of participants who respond report positive change ☐ Views and experiences of the relationships between foster carers and education	☐ Baseline survey pre-training to all teachers and foster carers who book a place at a London Fostering Achievement session	☐ Post-training survey to all foster carers who attended a London Fostering Achievement session ☐ Focus on key indicator of knowledge and specific measure of follow up actions made by participants ☐ Focus groups with 15-20 foster carers who receive the generic training only about knowledge and understanding of the education system ☐ 40 in-depth interviews conducted with Education Champions, teaching staff, Heads and Virtual School Heads and foster carers in receipt of support from Champions
☐ Accelerated pupil progress and achievement in reading, writing, and maths	☐ Evidence-based framework developed with 27 schools in London, working closely with Virtual Heads to improve outcomes for	☐ Average APS for target group in reading, writing and maths ☐ 3+ APS progress in reading, writing and maths ☐ A focus on individual and cohort progress in reading, writing, and	☐ Data collected on attainment and progress for LAC in AfA schools on aggregate at the start of the programme.	☐ Comparative secondary data analysis of attainment and progress between LAC in AfA schools on aggregate and all LAC in London LAs as collected at the end of Yr 1. ☐ Some national comparison may be possible depending on NPD access.

Outcome	Outputs	Indicators	Baseline data collection	Impact data collection
	children living with foster families	maths		
☐ Improved attendance	☐ Evidence-based framework developed with 27 schools in London, working closely with Virtual Heads to improve outcomes for children living with foster families	☐ % Average attendance for target group ☐ Increase in attendance, baselined from the previous academic year ☐ Focused on quantitative data from schools	☐ Data collected on attendance for LAC in AfA schools on aggregate at the start of the programme.	☐ Comparative secondary data analysis of attendance between LAC in AfA schools on aggregate and all LAC in London LAs as collected at the end of Yr 1. ☐ Some national comparison may be possible depending on NPD access.
☐ Reduced exclusions	☐ Evidence-based framework developed with 27 schools in London, working closely with Virtual Heads to improve outcomes for children living with foster families	☐ Number of days lost through exclusions for target group ☐ Number of pupils excluded for target group (current term) ☐ Reduction in permanent and fixed-term exclusions for children in care ☐ Focused on quantitative data from schools	☐ Data collected on exclusions for LAC in AfA schools on aggregate at the start of the programme.	☐ Comparative secondary data analysis of exclusions between LAC in AfA schools on aggregate and all LAC in London LAs as collected at the end of Yr 1. ☐ Some national comparison may be possible depending on NPD access.
☐ Greater carer engagement	☐ Evidence-based framework developed with 27 schools in London, working closely with Virtual Heads to improve outcomes for children living with foster families	☐ Improvement in foster carer engagement ☐ A specific qualitative analysis (with guidance for consistency) from schools		☐ Individual interviews with 15-20 children in care drawn from the schools Achievement for All are targeting ☐ Individual interviews with 15-20 foster carers / residential workers of those children in care interviewed ☐ Telephone interviews with sample (c.10) social workers of the children in care interviewed on their understanding of the education system, experience of the intervention and coherence of team working

Appendix 2: Evaluation methodology

1. Questionnaires for carers attending general training

Questionnaires were circulated to all attendees of the training at two time points: prior to the training (referred to as 'pre-training') and 3-5 months (depending on when the training was completed) following attendance at the training ('post-training'). The questionnaires explored:

- The extent to which foster carers (and other relevant stakeholders) feel able to engage with school and other education settings regarding children in care's education
- The extent to which attendees feel able to contribute to decisions regarding their fostered child's education, for example Personal Education Plans
- Attendees' knowledge of the education system, including support and services that are available for children in care
- Attendees' knowledge and confidence regarding the role of foster carers in the education of the children and young people they care for
- The impact of the London Fostering Achievement programme on the above areas

Sample: A total of 864 pre-training surveys were completed. This amounts to a response rate of 71% from the total number of training attendees. At the time of follow-up, 100 questionnaires had been returned (a response rate of 7% of the original attendees and 12% of the pre-training participants). The survey respondents by role are shown in Table 14. Foster carers constituted the largest proportion of respondents across both surveys (60% at pre-training and 50% atpost-training), followed by Designated Teachers for Children in care in pre-training (10%) and in post-training (7%). The respondents who selected 'Other' in the questionnaire included operational level managers, Head or Deputy Head teachers of both virtual and mainstream schools, Educational Psychologists, and educational support workers, such as Learning Mentors, along with Family Support Workers and other kinds of case workers.

Table 14: Questionnaire respondents by role

	Pre-training		**Post-training**		**Total**	
Role	***n***	**%**	***n***	**%**	***n***	**%**
Foster Carer	*520*	60	*49*	50	*569*	59
Supervising Social Worker	*68*	8	*4*	4	*72*	7
Children's Social Worker	*40*	5	*2*	2	*42*	4
Designated Teacher for CLA	*85*	10	*7*	7	*92*	9
Independent reviewing Officer	*4*	0.4	*0*	0	*4*	0.4
Other	*136*	16	*16*	16	*152*	16
Not stated	*11*	1	*20*	20	*31*	3
Total	***864***	**100**	***98***	**100**	***962***	**100**

2. Focus groups and telephone interviews with carers who attended general training

The evaluation also explored the LFA training through focus groups and interviews with a subsample of foster carers who had attended. We aimed to recruit up to 36 carers for this part of the evaluation. Invitations were sent to carers across nine of the ten boroughs who ran the training and who were also involved in the direct work in schools and/or Education Champions strands of the programme. The purpose of these focus groups was to explore in greater depth the perceived impact of the LFA training on carers, as well as their knowledge and experience of the other strands of the programme.

Because of difficulties with availability of foster carers, only one focus group took place, while the others were rescheduled and then rebooked as individual telephone interviews. These took place between September and October 2015; because carers had attended the training at different times, this meant that the interviews took place anywhere from six to 11 months later. The questions posed covered:

- Any impact that the LFA training had on the carers, specifically around:
  - how they work to support young people's education
  - developing their knowledge and/or confidence in dealing with schools and other professionals in relation to young people's education
- Any impact that the other three strands of the programme had, either directly on the young person or through key adults
- The key factors that either facilitated or inhibited the success of the programme

Attendants at the LFA training sessions were asked to provide contact details for the evaluation; 122 foster carers provided email addresses and were contacted requesting participation in follow-up interviews.

Sample: In total 12 of the carers approached consented to participate in either a focus group or an interview (a 10% response rate and 33% of the intended sample size). Two of the carers were interviewed together face to face, while the remaining 10 carers were interviewed by telephone.

3. Interviews with Education Champions

Ten foster carers were employed for four hours per week in five pilot boroughs as Education Champions. These champions began working between October and November 2014 with the aim of improving outcomes for children in care, through engaging and working with foster carers. Semi-structured interviews took place between July and September 2015, approximately 10 months after the Champions were in post. The interviews were conducted either face to face or on the telephone to explore:

- How the role of the Education Champion was delivered in each of the five boroughs
- The impact that the Education Champions had on foster carers, with particular attention paid to foster carers':
  - knowledge of the support and services available for children in care
  - confidence

    - ability to contribute to decision making (for example in Personal Education Plans)
    - engagement with schools and other educational provision
- The key factors that either facilitated or inhibited the implementation of the Education Champions component of the programme

All of the Education Champions were invited to participate in the interviews. The cohort of foster carers in receipt of support from the Education Champions was described as 'hard to reach', consisting primarily of carers who were traditionally less likely to participate in existing structures of support. Consequently, it was agreed that the invitation to participate in the evaluation should come from the Education Champions themselves, who already have an existing relationship with the foster carers and could reduce any concerns that foster carers may have had in participating in the evaluation.

Sample: In total nine of the Education Champions and 15 recipient foster carers participated in the interviews (representing response rates of 80% and 50%, respectively). The participants represented a wide range of fostering experience and circumstances. The Education Champions had been foster carers for between 2 ½ and 20 years. On average the Education Champions had been carers for just over nine years, with only two reporting that they had been carers for five years or less. The recipients had been fostering for between one and 27, or an average of just over 10 years. Five foster carers who had received support from the Education Champions had been fostering for five years or less, and two reported that they had been fostering for 27 and 28 years respectively. All of the foster carers interviewed were fostering for local authority fostering services, although one reported that they had previously fostered for an independent provider. The sample also represented a wide range of types of placements. These are summarised below:

Table 15: Type of placement offered

	Number and proportion of the sample			
	Education Champions		**Foster Carer recipients**	
Type of placement	***n***	**%**	***n***	**%**
Short term	2	25	7	47
Long term	4	50	1	7
Respite	1	13	-	-
Unaccompanied minors	1	13	1	7
Teenagers	-	-	3	20
Babies	-	-	2	13
Range of placements	-	-	1	7
Total	**8**	**100**	**15**	**100**

The participants were caring for a total of 31 children and young people, with 12 of those placed with the Education Champions and 19 placed with the recipients. Four of the recipients reported that they were caring for sibling groups and three recipients did not have children placed with them at the time of the interview. The children were aged between seven and 18. Four of the children placed with the recipients were unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

4. Interviews with CLA in selected AfA schools, their Designated Teachers, foster carers, and social workers

27 schools in nine boroughs were expected to receive targeted support from Achievement for All under the LFA programme. One school never started and another started late in the programme, so a total of 25 schools received full support from coaches. The focus of the AfA work was on the approximately 100 children in care who were on the school roll across these schools. Of the 25 schools which received support, 11 were new to coaches and 14 were existing AfA schools (though they may not have chosen to focus on children in care until now). Of the original 27 schools, 18 were secondary, 7 primary, 1 special school and 1 pupil referral unit. Cohort sizes of children in care in these schools ranged from one to 20.

This part of the evaluation method focused on a subsample of 10 children and young people identified from the schools involved in the direct work in two of the four boroughs that also had Education Champions. Individual interviews were conducted with the young people to assess their experiences in schools, both in relation to the direct work as well as their thoughts about what made a difference to their educational progress.

In addition, we spoke to the key adults connected to the young people, namely: their Designated Teacher; foster carers/residential workers; children's social workers; and foster carers' supervising social workers. These interviews were conducted either face to face or on the telephone and explored:

- Awareness and engagement of key adults with direct work in schools
- Any impact that the direct work in schools had, whether directly with the young person, or in terms of a noticeable change in school staff or the relationship between the school and the key adults
- Any impact that the other three strands of the programme had, either directly on the young person or through the key adult
- The key factors that either facilitated or inhibited the success of the programme

Twelve young people were invited to participate in the interviews; their key adults were approached only once the young person's consent was gained.

Sample: In total eight of the young people approached consented to participate in the interviews (a 67% response rate and 80% of the intended sample size). Because some of these young people attended the same schools, they were linked to three Designated Teachers, of whom three agreed to participate (a 100% response rate). Two of the young people lived with the same set of carers, meaning that seven sets of carers were approached to participate; four of these gave their consent and took part in interviews (a 57% response rate). All seven of the carers' supervising social workers took part (100% response rate), and six out of the seven children's social workers were interviewed (a response rate of 86%).

5. Focus group with coaches engaged in direct work with schools

This part of the evaluation method was an addition to the original plan. A focus group of was conducted with four coaches working with schools in this programme to assess what they had expected at the outset, what impact they thought the direct work in schools had, what had gone particularly well, what least well and where did they think this work would go next.

Sample: Four AfA coaches participated in the focus group

6. Quantitative attainment data from boroughs involved in the direct work with schools

The work conducted with schools is intended to promote greater educational success, including academic achievement and attendance. Schools return data to AfA to enable the monitoring of children's progress; this is in addition to the data collected routinely by Virtual Schools. Looking at changes in attainment, absences and exclusions from the end of the school year prior to the start of the LFA programme to the end of the first year of the LFA programme (i.e. changes over the first year) would allow us to identify any initial benefits of this strand of work.

Individual pupil-level data were requested directly from Virtual School heads, and AfA provided the evaluation team with their own data; this enabled cross-referencing of the coding scheme used for attainment data, as well as identification of any gaps in either the AfA or Virtual School records. The original plan identified two comparison groups:

- All non-children in care targeted by direct work in the 25 schools
- All children in care in the nine boroughs in schools not involved in the direct work

This would have enabled us to address the questions of whether:

- Direct work in schools had greater or less impact on children in care than on other children in the 25 schools
- Direct work in schools had a significant effect on children in care (over and above what all children in care receive)

However, for data protection reasons, we were unable to access data on non-children in care in schools participating in the direct work.

Sample: All nine boroughs involved in the direct work in schools returned data, which amounts to a response rate of 100%. Virtual Schools provided attainment data for two time points - baseline and follow-up, for 45 children in care in the schools engaging in direct work (representing 47% of the 96 children in care in those schools at both time points) and 652 children in care in schools not involved. They also provided data on attendance, absences and exclusions for 58 children in care in schools engaging in direct work (60% of those in care at both time points) and 977 children in care in schools not involved. Some boroughs only began collecting data on attendance, absences and exclusions in 2014-2015.

7. Interviews with Virtual School heads; and

8. Interviews with senior Local Authority staff (i.e. Heads of School Improvement and Fostering)

Virtual School heads are responsible for promoting the educational progress of children in care in their local authority, but educational progress is also a priority for corporate parents. As such, Virtual School heads and senior staff in the local authorities were expected to be aware of the programme and its perceived impact. In addition, they could provide valuable contextual information, for example on the prioritisation of educational engagement of children in care, use of Pupil Premium Plus, evidence of Children in Care Council recommendations being acted upon, evidence of less fragmentation of services, plans for sustainability, issues relating to cross-authority collaborative agreements for children in care placed outside of the area, and ideas for

possible roll-out of the programme. These areas were explored in separate meetings with the Virtual School heads and with focus groups of staff within each local authority.
In addition to the ten boroughs using direct work in schools and/or Education Champions, two boroughs were identified to act as comparators in terms of contextual information that could represent 'business as usual'.

Sample: Virtual School heads and senior LA staff from all ten participating boroughs were interviewed, representing a response rate of 100%. No full participation agreement was received from either comparator borough; however, one of their Virtual School senior teachers participated in an interview.

9. Meetings with project delivery teams

Meetings were conducted with those providing the interventions and will also be conducted with the Greater London Authority programme team to assess how far the programme had met their original expectations, what they felt had gone well (with examples), what less well, and what they felt should happen next. These discussions explored each of the four strands of the programme.

Sample: Three managers were interviewed; two who lead on three of the strands and one who leads on the fourth strand.

10. Focus groups with Children in Care Councils

Children in Care Councils exist in most local authorities across England, and represent the views of those in care and care leavers. The Councils offer a forum by which the voices of care-experienced young people can be heard in matters of local policy. As such, the Councils offered an opportunity to examine the perceptions of care-experienced young people on educational priorities and practice, providing valuable contextual information. In addition, awareness of the Council members around the different strands of the LFA programme could be assessed.
The aim was to recruit Councils from between five and seven of the ten boroughs involved in direct work in schools and/or Education Champions under the programme.

Sample: Of the ten boroughs, two did not have a fully established Council meeting set up; others did not provide confirmation of consent. Of the four focus groups set up, two were completed.

Appendix 3: Sample Masterclass Programme

LONDON
FOSTERING
ACHIEVEMENT

The impact of attachment and trauma on learning

Date: 6th July 2015

Venue: Keyworth Building, London South Bank University, SE1 OAA

Masterclass objectives

To provide foster carers and other professionals with:

- More information on relational and developmental trauma
- Knowledge of how attachment and trauma can impact on education

Agenda

9.30	Registration and refreshments	
10.10	Introduction	Daniela, Fiona and Ahmed to host
10.20	The impact of trauma and attachment on learning	Dr Emma Gore Langton
11.20	Coffee break	
11.40	Workshop slot – Options A or B+C	
12.40	Lunch	
13.20	Workshop slot – Options A or B+C	
14.20	Panel question and answer session	
14.50	Thank you and close	

Workshop A Attachment in the classroom, Bernadette Alexander [2 hours]

Workshop B Transitions, Dr Karen Treisman [1 hour]

Workshop C Storytelling and Attachment or alternative topic – Joan Moore [1 hour]

Appendix 4: Case Studies

Case Study 1: Direct work with Schools, School A, Borough A

School A in borough A reported particular progress in relation to the direct work in school. The designated teacher had worked hard to get a wide cross-section of staff to take on mentoring roles for the nine children in care in this secondary school. The coach had led the STEEP analysis which had been very helpful and the young people all commented positively on the support they received from teachers including help with English, equipment and support for emotional challenges. Staff awareness of the children in care and the programme has grown and with it greater interest from staff in participating:

> *…[through] word of mouth and people talking about it and raising awareness of the programme and then we had a member of staff that left and somebody else stepped in very quickly so that was quite good to know and they know we're rolling it out for next year…[name of coach] came in on our INSET in September to talk about the programme to all the staff …people couldn't wait to sign up for it. And obviously I'm a member of SLT, so the Senior Leadership Team here are aware of the programme and I update them on it…we can see clearly the progress that they have made academically [from the data].*

The designated teacher reported that:

> *… all children for English and maths are on target or above target, in fact we only had one that was, well English, maths and science, only one that was below.*

The designated teacher noted that some of the children in care had very challenging behaviour but once other staff had become involved as mentors to them in the programme, the young people might go and see their mentor rather than coming to the designated teacher which spread the workload.

> *I think the programme has reached further into the staff, into the school to make them aware of the needs and the difficulties that the children in care face and they'd never attended a PEP review, didn't know these things existed, you know*

The STEEP analysis in particular, was seen as very helpful in encouraging reflection and identifying gaps in provision not only in academic progress but also in other factors relevant to the young people's learning such as their wellbeing. Overall the relationship between carers and the school was seen as particularly strengthened by the direct work in school:

> *…it's the engagement of the carers, it's finding out what the carers want because we know there's difficult relationships between the carers and the looked after child sometimes and …there's been some interesting conversations had because the Achievement for All programme has given the mentors the ideas of how to ask the questions… a young girl had said to the carer, "Well you never asked me what I think about something"…so it seems like the carer and the child hadn't had that type of conversation before but it was only through the programme and the mentor asking*

these types of questions for her structured conversation that a few things had come out for the best… improving the relationships between the two of them.

Foster carers with young people at this school confirmed that having attended the generic training they felt much more confident about contacting the Virtual School staff. Another carer suggested that she had received more contact with the school including calls to follow up when he hadn't attended, getting him a laptop and reporting on his progress.

…we've got quite a few in Year 10 who are now going to Year 11, because… teachers they'd offered them some after-school revision which had been extremely difficult to get them to engage in beforehand but because they knew they were going to be doing specifically one-to-one with their mentors, one or two of them came to their mentors after school to have this extra tuition so that worked well…I think one of our mentors did a home visit which the carer was extremely pleased about.

Case Study 2: Sheryl, Year 12, School B, Borough B

Sheryl was in Year 12 when interviewed, and highly motivated to succeed, with very high aspirations for the future. She wanted to work for MI5 but has now decided that she wants to be a human rights barrister:

> *I thought that being a barrister and being able to fight for people's rights and justice in Court would probably be really good for me because I actually enjoy doing that already.*

She demonstrates many of the characteristics observed of the wider population of children in care though she seems both more aware of the challenges and to have adopted effective strategies to address most of them. Her mother, despite being unable to look after her, made clear the importance of education and encouraged her to do well at school. She struggles with managing bouts of anger but the anger management support she was offered she felt to be useless:

> *And Social Services actually got me an anger management therapist in about year eight. And she just said "Oh yes when you are angry walk away" teachers don't accept that. But that was the only thing she could say to me…If the therapist can't help you, what are you going to do?*

Sheryl attends a school highly committed to children in care and that engaged with AfA in a borough that had Education Champions and engaged in generic training. However, she described incidents in school of teachers not respecting her wish for others not to know she is in care (there are fewer children in care in Years 12 and 13 than there were up to Year 11), being picked on and patronised by teachers. She had experienced three changes of foster care placement since Year 9 when she entered care and described insensitive handling by her social worker on these occasions:

> *…being in care and having problems got in the way [of my education] because every single time I moved a placement it was during a school day… slap bang like 12:00 for example I will be in English, I am getting called out of the lesson, my social worker will suddenly be outside, I will be like 'What is going on?' She is like 'Oh you can't stay in your placement anymore'…Everyone else is in their English class like 'Oh what is going on with Sheryl…I am there telling them to F off, you know, just trying to focus? Hearing bad news, trying not to cry, because there is like a window through the door and they will see me crying…Every single time I move to a placement it just disrupted my school life.*

She noticed better support in school from January 2015 with teachers taking greater interest in her needs and progress:

> *…all of a sudden in the New Year she [a subject teacher] was helping me more, like being more supportive, actually coming to my table to actually tell me what to do and make sure I understand.*

Her social worker has also shown more interest in how she is getting on at school whenever they speak though this might be coincidental since the social worker has not participated at all

in any aspect of the programme. However, Sheryl still feels overall that she is doing worse in her A-level subjects than she was previously:

> *…I used to be so intelligent. I was getting As in science in year eight, I was so clever. But that is because my mum would not let anything slip. She was horrible to me but at least she let me do the work… I was so brainy… Ever since care it all dropped. I went to a B grade student. There is nothing wrong with Bs, I am not saying that, but I used to be A*…So yes I am definitely doing worse. I am not doing awful but in comparison to when I was not in care I am doing detrimentally awful.*

In further discussion with the interviewer (who is a care leaver), Sheryl agreed that maybe the decline in her progress coincided with her last change of placement – New Year 2014-5 and that this had destabilised and demotivated her more generally. This was confirmed by the designated teacher, Sheryl's social worker and the supervising social worker, who all considered the placement disruption to have had a major effect on her engagement in school.

Case Study 3: Education Champions, Borough C

The two Education Champions in Borough C were both foster carers but also have a background in teaching. Evidence emerged from the foster carers in the area as well as senior managers that they had significant impact. As active members of the local Foster Carer Association they had immediate access to foster carers and were able to explain their role and what they could offer which included support for how foster carers could undertake 'educational' activities with the children such as museums and modelling. A senior manager in the LA described the activities as "very practical, down to earth, such as showing number lines and how to go through maths with children".

Another manager noted that they had been successful in "drumming up support on their level", including involving carers who would not have previously participated:

> *You've either got ones that are really keen and will come to everything, or you've got ones, especially in the support groups in the evening, they've got lots of problems, maybe exclusions and all that kind of stuff, so they'll come because they're anxious...*

A foster carer described how these Education Champions had organized a couple of trips …during which they showed foster carers:

> *…how to walk around and talk about things and how learning is not just in a classroom, so that was really good. They also did a trip for foster carers …to somewhere new that no-one had been and talked about what it is to be new to something and that it's a bit scary.*

Another foster carer also reported that the Education Champions had been supporting foster carers on PEPs and the Pupil Premium which some carers find difficult. They have helped the foster carer to articulate the child's needs more clearly and confidently in the PEP meeting so that the child is actually getting their individual needs met. These Education Champions were also involved in all the foster carer support groups.

One foster carer recounted how the Education Champion had made an enormous difference to the child she was fostering. The child was having trouble at school finding it very difficult to concentrate. The champion explored possible activities outside of school with the foster carer that would help the child to focus and identified a form of dance/martial art which the child started doing. This gave the child the opportunity to act out what they were feeling and the foster carer described it as having been really good:

> *it's all about …calming your inner self down and being in control of your body and also it's got a musical element to it as well and it's quite rhythmic. But it's been brilliant, absolutely brilliant and there's been a marked improvement in the classroom, but we think well that definitely is helping, because it's improving the concentration …so it's enabling the child to really focus and just think about where they are …rather than having all this other stuff going on in their head. So yes it's been brilliant, yes.*

And without the Education Champion, the carer would not have identified this.

Case Study 4:Integrated children's services, Borough D

One borough in which three heads of service and the Virtual School Head were interviewed stood out for their completely integrated children's services. The social care and education staff sit together and work together and those interviewed identified this as emanating from the Director who they described as 'passionate' about children in care and mentions the borough's responsibilities to these children in every staff meeting:

> *We've got a very integrated model here in terms of the way that we all work together that's led by our DCS. I've worked in other places where there's much more of a "silo" model where teams work in isolation… where you've got social care here and education here and also in terms of you've got your social worker over here, but you've got your foster carers over there… We all sit, together, actually, with all the ADs and the DCS all sit together and then that's kind of modeled throughout the rest of the service and the expectation is that everybody is … we're one service.*

The service is integrated at every level from senior manager to front-line workers. Teachers are expected to treat foster carers with respect and to know about social care and social workers to know about education (whereas in general LA managers observed that social workers had limited understanding of education). One senior social care manager in this borough stated:

> *We have a kind of different expectation of our social workers, so education is their business and it's a priority for them and they know that and we model that in the way we work hand in hand with [name of VSH]. [VSH] attends my staff meetings and presents around the education aspects... Again, social workers know [VSH] by sight and by name and will just go and find her or find members of the team when they've got an education issue that they are dealing with or need some advice… there's lots of joint work, lots of joint meetings.*

Decision-making about children in care reflects this integrated thinking. The head of fostering noted that decisions around any proposals for moving placements aren't considered without the VSH being involved. This manager described this approach as "part of our DNA really". The Virtual School head talked about making sure that any educational placement for a looked after child is good or outstanding and the right one for the child, and that there is no delay. Most days the Virtual School head has to negotiate with a headteacher to try and get a child into their school. There have been no permanent exclusions of children in care in the borough for six years and fixed-term exclusions have halved over the last two years.

The borough has an active Children in Care Council and invites them to set the LA managers challenges. A recent challenge set by the young people was to increase one-to-one tuition and it was agreed that this should be offered to every year 6, year 10 and year 11 child in care and the challenge was met.

An apprenticeship scheme is established in the borough and posts are ring-fenced for young people in care, who then take responsibility for partnership and support the young people in care to express their views to the borough. These apprentices are themselves mentored and they also provide training for social workers and others in the borough.

One of these senior managers from this LA attended the LFA generic training and noted that the foster carers all knew the head of the Virtual School by name. They commented that they could tell it was an established relationship by the banter that went on and the Virtual School head knew the name of every child that was placed with them.