

Evaluation: London Fostering Achievement Programme

November 2014 – October 2015

The Rees Centre at the University of Oxford and the Centre for Child and Family Research, Loughborough University evaluated the London Fostering Achievement Programme.

The consortium commissioned to deliver London Fostering Achievement brought together The Fostering Network and Achievement for All. The programme aimed to improve educational outcomes for children in care in London. It covered generic foster carer training on education, masterclasses, direct work with schools and education champions. Twenty nine of London's 31 Boroughs signed up for the programme.

Key Findings

- The generic training was well received. The mix of people attending (e.g. foster carers, teachers, social workers) was seen as the most valuable aspect, allowing people to better understand each other's roles. It was too basic for some of the more experienced attendees and its relationship to existing training was unclear.
- Examples were identified of carers challenging the allocation of Pupil Premium Plus and engaging young people in new activities as a direct impact of the Programme.
- There was a waiting list for masterclasses reflecting an appetite for this provision. The insights provided were much appreciated, in particular by more experienced carers for whom the generic training tended to update existing knowledge.
- 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 meetings of foster carer, teacher and child.
- In reading and maths, 45 pupils involved with the direct work in schools showed no greater progress 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. Attendance and exclusion showed no significant differences between those pupils in the schools involved and the others.
- The Education Champions had the most impact. They provided foster carers with information, direct support and increased their confidence. Being seen by foster carers as 'one of us' plus their experience in both education and foster care were thought to make the Education Champions successful.

Selected Recommendations

- Implement Education Champions more widely. The cost of implementing the Education Champions in every Borough in London or even every LA in England would be relatively low¹ and could be offset by savings from higher foster carer retention rates, less school exclusion and better progress.
- Give designated teachers the status needed (e.g. on senior leadership teams) to ensure appropriate priority is given to the needs of children in care.
- Make the timing and organisation of Personal Education Plan meetings sensitive to the needs of young people. They should neither identify their care status to their peers and school staff, nor require them to miss lessons.

¹ Education Champions were paid £15/hour and were employed for four hours a week

About the London Fostering Achievement Programme

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.

Generic foster carer training

A one-day workshop was completed in 33 groups by 1265 foster carers, social workers, teachers, and other professionals working with children across 29 London Boroughs between November 2014 - March 2015.

Masterclasses

Over 400 people attended one or more of four half-day training sessions to enable foster carers and others to explore one area e.g. attachment, special educational needs, resilience, in more depth.

Direct work with schools

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. Each school received support, over one year, from a coach who helped them to undertake a needs analysis and provided professional development for that school.

Education Champions

Two Education Champions, experienced foster carers often with education experience, were employed part-time in each of five Boroughs. They worked with foster carers on supporting educational needs, for example by 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.

Evaluation Report

The full report can be read and downloaded for free:

[London Schools Excellence Fund – Children in Care: Evaluation of The London Fostering Achievement Programme Final Report. London: GLA](#)

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Further Information

<http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk/research/education/evaluation-london-fostering-achievement-programme/>

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