

Educational Attainment of Children Looked After

“Charlie”

This training tool is the intellectual property of Somerset County Council

Supporting Children Looked After to achieve their potential in Education – focus on Year 10 and 11

Introduction – Suggestion

- Set out the Corporate Parent responsibility across all agencies
- Local and national outcomes/performance re CLA – quiz or information

Ensure that the participants are sitting in multi-agency groups.

- **Activity 1** - Present “Charlie” ‘March 2014 - Year 11’ – short whole group discussion –
 - Are we worried about Charlie and his education?
- **Activity 2** – Present “Charlie” Background – under the surface to the whole group - small group discussion –
 - Are we worried about Charlie and his education?
 - How familiar is this scenario to you?
 - Feedback to the whole group
- **Activity 3** – Present “Charlie” the breakdown - to the whole group.
 - How familiar is this to you?
- **Activity 4** – In small groups “How can we support Charlie”
 - Feedback to the whole group
 - Share the Ideas/recommendations from Y10 and 11 case study 2014
 - These activities are based on one young person’s experience – other young people approaching GCSEs may have different needs. What other ideas do you have for supporting young people?
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“Charlie”

| March 2014 – Year 11 | | |
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| ‘Charlie’ is 16 years old and will take his GCSEs this summer. His predicted grades are 6 A to Cs plus a B Tech merit (also equivalent to an A-C, i.e. 7 A-C in total including English/Maths) | | |
| Charlie is living in a stable ‘placement’ with his Aunt and Uncle and their young family | Independent, Determined, Articulate | The Personal Education Plan is in place, is well written and has sufficient detail to be helpful to Charlie, his carers and the school |
| Charlie likes music, enjoys socialising | | March PEP – Charlie seemed to have overcome previous difficulties and was back on track to do well at GCSEs |
| Charlie had a good relationship with his Promise mentor but the mentor moved out of area. He did not want another mentor | | Charlie has plans to go to college – he has chosen his courses |
| Charlie wants to stay with his Aunt and Uncle until he is eighteen | | Charlie wants to be a plumber |
| CLA reviews the care plan and all is on track | Charlie likes free running | Charlie suggested nicotine patches to help him during a school trip |

| “Charlie” Background – under the surface | | |
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| Charlie has had periods of time in local authority care since the age of five | | Charlie has had a disruptive upbringing |

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| Charlie liked living with his Mother but there was a long history of repeated rejection by Mum | | Charlie has attachment <i>disorder issues</i> |
| Promise mentor states that Charlie has never felt wanted | | Charlie was an angry and was acting out when he was 11 – 13 |
| Charlie viewed his foster placements, other than the family placement, as ‘holding placements’ – he wanted to be back home and viewed carers as being paid to do a job | | Charlie describes Mum as having experienced anger and stress in the past |
| Previous carers met his physical needs but his emotional needs were not met – Charlie therefore chose to leave them | | There are difficulties in the placements due to Charlie’s drug use and the family carers are struggling – but no indication of major problems |
| Previous Male carer was ‘hard line’ | Taxi issues <i>inflexible</i> – he wanted to stay on after exams to see friends but not allowed by social worker– isolation from peers. | Charlie uses Cannabis and is addicted to Nicotine – he has declined help with drug use, denies he has a problem |

“Charlie” May 2014 The Breakdown

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| Charlie very angry at times of taxis to school; Charlie wanted a later taxi home – e.g. When he found out one morning that it was going to come at 2pm, as decided by social worker he was so furious he refused to sit an exam – possibly linked to need to be in control due to attachment issues | | Charlie worried about not having nicotine for the whole 2 hour period or more of an exam |
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| Charlie telling carers he was revising at friend's house | | School did not know about the last placement changes and the emotional impact these were having |
| Family placement broke down - drugs were found at home and carer had previously warned Charlie that this would end the placement | | Practical difficulties – transport to college made him late for an exam |
| Charlie went to Mum's pending a new placement but that broke down after a few days | | One exam – he did not understand the paper – so upset he left before staff could explain |
| Unable to live with Mum, this took him back to a very negative place, increased cannabis use and self-esteem through the floor | | Disengaged and not wanting to sit exams |
| Delay in clothes/possessions being transferred to new placement – Charlie very upset about this | | Schools subsequently arranged for the rest of the exams to be sat in a quiet setting – this worked well |
| Wrong mobile phone number on the file – for the child | Period with no allocated social worker | Taxi still turning up at the previous placement address |
| Charlie Achieves 2 x C, 2 x D, 1 x F, 1 x G and B Tech Pass | | |

| How can we support Charlie? | | |
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Ideas/recommendations from Charlie's case study

CSC

- Transport – consider a specific driver or support worker to make sure that there is consistency – agree taxi times with young people – ensure no lateness (avoiding reinforcement of low self-esteem and idea that they don't deserve taxis on time).
- Therapeutic work for CLA earlier in their care history
- No periods without allocated social worker in Y10 and 11 (even if cases thought to be "stable")
- Avoid change of social worker in Y10 and 11
- Make sure young people who need nicotine patches have these
- Ensure correct mobile numbers are on record

- Ensure rapid transfer of clothes/possession

Virtual school

- Add preparation for exams into year 10 and 11 PEPs (possibly need a prompt for this) e.g. revision, communication about exam timetable
- Produce checklists for work with Y10 and 11s for social workers
- Tracking and close monitoring of CLA Y10 and 11

Schools

- GCSE – years 10/11 – need a mentor and someone at the school who is aware of the history and can manage the stress and difficulties for the young person, the timetable, additional support re exams as stress can bring to the fore previous emotional distress and negative behaviours.
- Schools to arrange all exams in quiet settings

Carers

- Better foster carer training – to ensure opportunities to learn in depth about key areas, esp becoming more aware of attachment issues, emotional needs and the needs of teenagers
- Support and training for family placements

Multi-professional

- Year 10/11 additional meetings between professionals – planning for the two years – strategies to manage stress
- Social workers should notify the IRO as soon as they know the placement is breaking down.
- Paying attention to communication re timetables, transport, placements, and quickly reporting difficulties.
- Be aware of emotional needs – the stress of exams can produce emotional responses.
- Greater effort to avoid placement breakdown in Yrs 10 & 11, even where young people have crossed “red lines” (stress importance of keeping placements going until the end of GCSEs – young people may know the consequences of actions well, but being unable to think rationally)
- Ensure exam times are known by carers (relies on social workers telling schools of changes in care arrangements and schools getting timetables to the right people)