



LAKESIDE
SCHOOL

**Designated Teacher
&
Becoming an Attachment Aware
School**

Looked after Learners in Hampshire

839 LAC statutory school age
457 (54.5%) boys

Reasons for coming into care:

- * 298 (35.5%) abuse and neglect
- * 226 (26.9%) family dysfunction

What does this mean for our work in school?...

- * .56.1% of LAC statemented for SEN are for BESD
- * 14.32% of LAC have had at least 1 FTE
(National Average is 11.36%)



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Why Looked After Children underachieve

5 Key Reasons

- * Their lives are characterised by instability
- * They spend too much time out of school
- * They do not have sufficient help with education if they fall behind
- * Primary carers are not expected or equipped to provide sufficient support and encouragement for learning and development
- * **They have unmet emotional, mental and physical needs that impact on their education.**

(“A Better Education for Children in Care” The Social Exclusion Unit,
September 2003)



Life Chances

- * Between a quarter and a third of rough sleepers have been in care
- * Young people who have been in care are twice as likely to be teenage parents
- * A quarter of adults in prison spent some time in care as a child (83% with no qualifications)
- * 60% of care leavers not in education, training or employment at 19 had no GCSEs on leaving care.



The Role of the Designated Teacher (DT)

Must be a qualified teacher

Wherever possible should be a school senior leader.

In 2008 the role of the DT on each school staff became statutory through the Children's and Young Person's Act.

Have an 'enhanced' toolkit of options to help support the learning of CLA – all that would be done for all children plus those few things more.

The DT plays a crucial role in ensuring that the CLA has a positive experience of school and is at the centre of all action to improve educational attainment.



What is in the statutory guidance? Principal Duties of the DT

Lead responsibility for helping school staff understand the things which affect how CLA learn and achieve

Inform and influence the content of CLA's PEP and PEP meeting.

Work effectively with others inside and beyond the school in order to support the child's learning.

Ensure that the child has access to extra learning support directly linked to principle need(s).

Promote a culture of high expectations



The role of the governing body

- The governing body must ensure that the designated teacher undertakes appropriate training (section 20(2) of the 2008 Act).
- As a minimum governors must consider an annual report from the designated teacher
- The governing body and school leadership team should consider the report and act on any issues it raises so as to support the designated teacher and maximise the impact of the role.



The role of the designated teacher in developing the personal education plan (PEP)

- All looked after children must have a PEP as part of their overall care plan. The PEP should be sent to the designated teacher when the child becomes looked after or joins the school.
- The PEP is a shared document which includes the information that everyone needs to help their conversations, planning and the delivery of strategies required to make sure the child gets the support and provision needed to succeed.
- **The designated teacher leads on how the PEP is used as a tool in school to make sure the child's progress towards education targets is monitored.** S/he makes sure that it is updated and available in time for the local authority review of the child's wider care plan. For each statutory review of the care plan the PEP must include:
 - any new information about progress towards education targets since the last PEP review
 - information about what has not been taken forward.
- The designated teacher has a key role in helping looked after children make a smooth transition to their new school or college, including making sure there are effective arrangements in place for the speedy transfer of information.

The relationship of the designated teacher to others beyond the school

The designated teacher has a key role in making sure there is a central point of initial contact within the school who can manage the process of how the school engages with others (e.g. social workers, virtual school heads), works in a joined up way and minimises disruption to the child's education.

The designated teacher should make sure that:

- there is an agreed process in place for how the school works with others in focusing on how everyone contributes to promoting the child's educational achievement;
- school policies (e.g. around Home School Agreements) are communicated to social workers and carers;
- the school does everything possible to maximise educational stability for the child, especially by finding ways of sharing information through the PEP and in providing advice to the local authority about the impact of disrupting education.

Lakeside School

7 LAC on Role

Some from out of county

Various interventions – Drums for attendance in English, positive impact

- Squash Racket and tuition – To drive down disruption, positive impact

Laptops, Mixed, not used anymore

Nimbles- locked education use only

Residential Trips, Positive impact

Vouchers for various shops, mixed impact

1:1 tuition in Literacy, massive impact

Support staff in lessons

ELSA

Tickets for football matches

Gym membership



Making a difference



- * “The education setting is probably the greatest opportunity we have, outside the family, to promote and maintain children’s well being.”
(Geddes, 2006)

The neuroscience of human development

■ Behaviour is the evidence that a brain is working

- * Understanding how brains develop and function helps us to understand behaviour
- * We can help children whose behaviour makes it more difficult for them to manage everyday life to develop new ways of using their brains – human brains are constantly developing and changing

■ More than 90% of what we now know about the human brain in terms of its development, structure and function has been discovered in the last twenty years

- * This neuroscientific research is now internationally accepted as robust enough to use in our practice in working with children and families



Building and maintaining healthy brains...

... involves developing connections between brain cells

- Baby brains form connections in response to what the adults around the baby are doing – attachment relationships build brains
- Rapid shaping and structuring of the brain continues through to the end of the third year of life, but the brain prefers existing neural pathways to developing new connections – repetition strengthens brains
- Although development slows down after early childhood, the brain is always producing new connections and does so most effectively when the brain is interacting with another human brain
- The brain is a social organ

Why does attachment matter in education?

- **Research shows that brains work best when people feel safe**
 - * The key to optimal brain function lies in regulation of stress hormones
- Brains develop in response to challenge
 - * The brain enables us to process and make sense of experience
- **Challenge leads to the production of stress hormones**
 - * **Healthy if regulated, toxic if unregulated**
- Toxic stress closes down key brain functions
 - * When brain function closes down people cannot learn well
- Humans are not born able to regulate stress
 - * Attachment relationships with adults are essential for children

If we flip our lid...

... the downstairs brain

- *instantaneous response*

- * Fight
 - * Remove the threat
- * Flight
 - * Remove self!
- * Freeze
 - * Infantilise to attract adult help
 - * Immobility, big eyes, smiles, perhaps incontinence

... and the upstairs brain

- *strategies and behaviours*

- * Aggression
 - * Safety through dominance
- * Absence
 - * Safety through concealment
- * Appeasement
 - * Safety through manipulation

... **SURVIVING** not thriving



Attachment and brain function

If for any reason we are unable to regulate stress we need access to an adult who will:

- Hold us in their own mind
 - * Mindful awareness
- Connect with us and self-regulate
 - * Co-regulation, soothing
- Stimulate our brain to integrated activity
 - * Co-learning, teaching
- This attachment relationship creates deep brain patterns for feeling safe
 - * Feeling safe enables our brains to function optimally throughout life



The impact of toxic stress

- Stress is essential for our survival
 - * Healthy (regulated) stress – day-to-day functioning
 - * Toxic (unregulated) stress – threat response – trauma
- Toxic stress reduces blood supply to key brain areas
 - * Totally unconscious and automatic survival response
 - * Flipping our lid speeds up reactions/switches off awareness
- Most children will experience toxic stress during childhood
 - * Children with secure attachment often recover spontaneously
 - * Three key factors: safety – relationships – narrative
 - * More vulnerable children need extra help to recover

Impairments of function after toxic stress

- Until they recover people affected by toxic stress struggle to:
 - * Self-regulate – stress, impulses, shame
 - * Process information accurately – make sense of the world around them or their own internal world of feelings
 - * Make and maintain relationships – understand and be interested in the world of others
- For children, these difficulties have an impact on the ability to learn and the ability to manage school
- In addition, those who live and work with the traumatised person may be affected by secondary trauma
 - * Attitudes and behaviour may change
 - * The network around the traumatised child may disintegrate

What stops traumatised children learning?

■ Regulatory disorders – challenging behaviour

* Stress

- * Hyperarousal: panic, rage, aggression, impaired memory, etc. ...
- * ... or dissociation: switched off, avoidant, controlling, etc. ...
- * ... or alternating between these

* Impulse

- * Impaired ability to manage or account for behaviour
- * Not able to benefit from discipline based on rewards and sanctions

* Shame

- * Hypersensitive to criticism or praise...
- * ... or apparent lack of remorse
- * ... or both

What stops traumatised children learning?

■ Processing disorders – impaired understanding

- * The world around them
 - * Difficulty making sense of sensory information: hot or cold, hungry or full, tired or energetic, comfortable or in pain (or locating where in the body any pain might be)
 - * Misunderstanding or misrepresenting everyday events and experiences
- * Their inner world
 - * Difficulty making sense of feelings in self or others
 - * Not able to put feelings into words

What stops traumatised children learning?

■ Social function disorders – social exclusion

- * Understanding others
 - * Difficulty with empathy: processing incoming information about the emotional state of other people
 - * Reduced motivation, and ability, to engage positively with others
- * Anhedonia
 - * Loss of the capacity for joy
 - * Reduced or impaired ability to remember joyful experiences
- * Feelings of worthlessness
 - * Difficulties with self-esteem
 - * Global sense of shame triggered by minor events

Recovery and resilience

- Children recover and develop resilience through building and strengthening new connections in the brain
- Brain connections develop through:
 - * Relationship – mindful co-regulation and mindful co-learning
 - * Iteration – experience repeated over and over again
- Relationship – attachment aware settings
 - * Safe and trusted adults are emotionally available and reliable
- Iteration – three cyclical phases of recovery – nine outcomes
 - * Stabilisation – feeling safe/feeling supported/feeling understood
 - * Integration – self-regulation/emotional processing/narrative
 - * Adaptation – social skills/joy in living/self-esteem

The continuum of recovery

- Children with secure attachment
 - * Often recover spontaneously from toxic stress experiences
 - * Three key factors: safety – relationships – narrative
- More vulnerable children
 - * May need this plus extra help from the adults around them
 - * Three phases: stabilisation – integration – adaptation
- Children with complex or developmental trauma
 - * May need all the above plus therapy / extra resources / managed environment
- Recovery from toxic stress injuries builds resilience

What helps traumatised children to learn?

- 1 Safety first: soothing hyperaroused children
- 2 Engaging: stimulating interest and teaching about trauma
- 3 Trusting and feeling: learning connectedness
- 4 Managing the self: regulating impulse and regulating the body
- 5 Managing feelings: choices and emotional processing
- 6 Taking responsibility: making sense of the world we share
- 7 Developing social awareness: learning self-control
- 8 Developing reflectivity: promoting self-esteem
- 9 Developing reciprocity: learning that life can be joyful



(1) Safety must come first: creating a safe space at home and at school

Attachment-related ideas

- * Provide and sustain a relaxing environment
- * Ensure that adults set the emotional tone
- * Encourage and enable the child to turn to adults for soothing
- * Bring relaxation into the awareness of the child and encourage practice
- * Discourage dependence on high stimulus activities

Trauma-related ideas

- * Stay aware of the child's fear
- * Think first of the physical environment
 - * Balance between soothing and stimulating
 - * Simple changes can help – lighting, sound ...
- * Use self appropriately to deal with a terrified flight animal
 - * Voice, gestures, expression
 - * Remember that adults are frightening

(2) Helping the child to engage with us: stimulating interest and teaching about trauma

Attachment-related ideas

- * Provide appropriate environmental stimulation for adults and children
- * Use storytelling and activities requiring use of the imagination
- * Encourage expression of experience and development of emotional intelligence
- * Help the child to notice parts of themselves that observe and protect them

Trauma-related ideas

- * Learning about the effects of trauma is part of recovery
 - * Everyone around the child can contribute to this
 - * Each child needs us to learn how to teach them what they need to know
- * Stories and metaphors are powerful tools for teaching about surviving overwhelming events
 - * Folk tales, literature, poetry, drama, television

