

CELCIS Education Forum – 12 May 2021

The feedback below was collected during breakout rooms at the CELCIS Education Forum. The views and opinions expressed are those of the individual and do not represent those of an organisation or service. Care has been taken to anonymise services and individuals where appropriate for privacy and confidentiality reasons.

Q1. What practices / initiatives / projects are you aware of that promote equity in education for care experienced learners?

Group A

- Training staff in residential homes in the Seasons for Growth Programme to support children and young people to cope with trauma and loss
- Identifying root causes for the issues / vulnerabilities that children are facing are crucial in making sure we provide the right supports at the right time
- Making sure that training / resources are shared with colleagues so that learning doesn't stop with training, or the one or two people from organisations that can attend the training session
- Fostering Network in Scotland: their Young Advocates project have been developing an online learning resource for educators in Scotland
- Provide high quality, professional learning to build capacity for all staff to make sure that all staff have access to materials that will support young people
- It's not enough to identify training / learning opportunities, but also thinking about how to implement these and importantly, how to make sure these are available to people that are important to children

Group B

- Primary engagement – targeted to learning communities with higher proportion of looked after children (focus on literacy and numeracy)
- Mentoring projects
- Care experienced outreach teacher for literacy
- Targeted support at key transition points
- Developing the Young Workforce projects to raise aspirations in primary school settings
- Earlier intervention to prevent gaps from widening – not waiting until it is there and too big, or much harder, to close
- Principle Teacher for care experienced pupils and family home school link worker in secondary
- Care experienced champions in each secondary school – teachers who take on the role of raising awareness of potential vulnerabilities, promoting and celebrating achievements of care experienced children and young people
- Holistic supports that look at wider opportunities not just tutoring – improving wellbeing to improve attainment
- Enhanced monitoring and tracking
- Post-school destination work – collaborating with 16+ partners / creating website with info for young people / parents / carers / professionals

Group C

- Good planning for transitions into adulthood – there can be a legacy of fragmented education and an impact of this. We need to provide a greater sense of predictability.
- Support children and young people at the earliest point to engage and feel safe with engaging with supports available to
- We talk about output or achievement gaps, but what are the input gaps?
- Secure attachments are crucial for all humans, but particularly for care experienced children and young people

Group D

- My school have a worker come in to work on social skills and relationships with young people, rather than attainment, but it definitely has a knock-on positive impact.
- We have mentors for staff around working with care experienced young people.
- Social workers seem to getting more open and knowledgeable about wider support available, we are beginning to see an increase in referrals.

- We need to get better at publishing opportunities. When our virtual head promotes something we get a much bigger uptake.
- We need to think really carefully about the criteria we set around opportunities to make sure that they are fully inclusive

Group E

- Specific bespoke programmes designed to create relationships and deal with the barriers e.g. a transition initiative (equity from presentation 'giving learners the support they need')
- Looking at a young person's trajectory rather than just results e.g. making sure they have post school options even if they don't get the grades they were hoping for

Q2. How do you, or might you, connect with other partners or agencies to improve educational outcomes for care experienced learners?

Group A

- Attending and engaging with professional forums and communities of practice is really important for sharing information
- Cohesion and collaboration is usually achieved through strong leadership at all levels of the system
- We need equity of opportunity within the system as well as for children and young people – we are all working to support children and young people, regardless of who we work for / where we work
- Thinking about the collective responses we can have to addressing issues / driving progress, rather than everyone working on their own or in silos
- Working with policy makers and decision makers to influence decisions to make sure they're informed by practitioners who work at every level of the system

Group B

- Sustainability for initiatives, how do we make sure that good and impactful initiatives are sustainable?

Group C

- A forum where the focus is solely on opportunities for care experienced children and young people. Not what is going wrong for them, just positive opportunities for them.
- Relationships between services are crucial and it should be recognised that sustaining relationships takes time
- Relational, trauma informed approach to working with care experienced children and young people (and all young people) show love and care to young people
- Systems-approach to planning and implementing change
- Creative curriculum – working with partners to enhance curriculum offer
- Listening to and valuing what care experienced children and young people say so that we can shape services and opportunities based on what they want to improve outcomes as well as data and research
- Working with social care and schools to identify who our children and young people are including – looked after, currently, previously, child protection, adopted, edge of care
- Actively taking time to find out what is out there for care experienced children and young people and build relationships with partners so young people get access to all of the opportunities on offer – key role of people working to improve outcomes

Group D

- I work in widening access and my colleague has brought together the third sector organisations who are also doing so much work in school. All these things are happening but not everyone knows about it – the group is called 'The Gathering' and its really good for sharing information about what services are out there and to share and support each other.
- Teachers don't always get the opportunity either at university, or when they're qualified, to understand trauma and the impacts of the reasons that trauma exists. We need to share learning around this. And involving the young people themselves – their voices can't be lost in this conversation!
- There are a lot of good agencies out there, but they aren't always joined up! There can be both gaps and duplication.
- Education and Social Work sectors don't always communicate very well – some local authorities do it better than others but it would still benefit from improvement. For example, social workers often don't know about what educational funding is available so they don't know that support is out there to refer children and young people to.
- Kinship Care services talk to social work, but we struggle making the link into education services. Whenever we hear about opportunities on our social media for example, they get a lot of traction, its just about finding ways to make sure these opportunities and funding etc are actually fed down to the families and not just get lost in professionals inboxes.

- There can be a gap in a focus on colleges. It can be heavily focussed on schools and higher education, and further education and college (which is where a lot of our young people are) can get lost.
- We need more support for young people who are not technology savvy – we seem to presume that all young people seem to know their way around technology but they might not. Some young people don't have access to a device or if they do they might not know how to use it.
- Providing a young person with a device is not equity. They might be equal to others, but if they don't know how to use it, or don't live in an environment that's conducive to learning, then this isn't equitable.

Group E

- Everyone felt that this was one of the fundamental part of the work. Multi agency working is key but it is hard to do consistently and maintain and changes because sustaining good relationships takes time and time isn't always available
- Particular different challenges in different local authorities. It's important to know your geography and demographics to understand the local context.
- Working with families as core business for all including schools it's not an appendix or the job of other agencies.

Q3. What do we need to be saying and doing differently in education to promote equity for care experienced learners?

Group A

- We need to remember that we know / have a lot of things already and don't always need to be reinventing the wheel or doing new things.
- Bringing people together to share ideas, talk through issues being encountered and to share and shape solutions is so important
- There needs to be more understanding of trauma and how this can impact on children

Group B

- How to get young people genuinely involved in planning and telling us what works for them?
- Looked at enhanced monitoring and tracking to identify beyond looked after on SEEMIS – e.g. adopted children, child protection or families and children in voluntary social work arrangements
- Youth workers – how are we working well together?
- More focus on what are the positives / good things happening for individuals; not always just on troubles / difficulties
- Show love
- Corporate parenting raising awareness across a whole service or whole area
- Asset based approach – building on success where we find it (as well as addressing barriers)
- Language – how do we talk about our children and young people? Is it always as positive as it could be?

Group C

- Change the pot, not the flower
- Opportunities for all group in school – no one falling through the gaps
- Transitions are key
- No hard to reach learners, just hard to reach services

Group D

- We need to change how we capture data and progress. We had a young person of 14 who came to us with a reading age of 4, and within a year he had a reading age of 8. This is a huge achievement for him, but it is missed in data etc, as that just seems him as still being 'behind' – what about his progress? It gets lost. We need to measure progress too and make sure we can tell young people's stories.
- The transition in mainstream from primary to secondary school is a huge area of difficulty for young people. We need to have more targeted approach in high schools and to continue a nurturing approach, it shouldn't stop in primary school.

- There is a lot of focus on closing the attainment gap, but we need to consider the child poverty rates that are so huge behind this. If children are hungry for example, they aren't going to be able to focus on learning even if they want to. This issue is wider than the school environment only.

Group E

- We need a nuanced understanding of data and how to articulate these nuances
- The importance of data and metrics while not the only thing, we need to be able to measure impact and tell young people's stories
- We need to make sure we use all data available to understand children's experiences and journeys e.g. wellbeing, access to other activities etc.