



family care associates



families@familycare

Educational Outcomes Report (2009-2010)

Family Care Associates Limited¹

and

Families@FamilyCare Limited

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¹ The Family Care Associates Ltd Group includes:
Family Care Associates Ltd Children's Homes (8), Dalepeak Ltd (Stamford House), Young Alliance Ltd (Lymefields), Families@FamilyCare Ltd (our Fostering Service) and Access School

Background

Family Care Associates Ltd, Dalepeak Ltd, Young Alliance Ltd and Families@FamilyCare Ltd (collectively referred to in this report hereafter under the generic label Family Care Associates Ltd) continues to promote the educational achievements of the young people with whom we work. This applies whether these children are placed within our own school or educated in the wider community. Children supported by Family Care Associates Ltd will fall into three broad groups. Those cared for in one of our children's homes, those placed with foster parents and those living at home with families in and around Shrewsbury but attending Access School. The significant majority of these children will be 'looked after'. We place the highest possible priority on education for all of our children who, by and large, both thrive and prosper educationally at a level far exceeding the disappointing norm for looked after children.

Looked after children are traditionally, if tragically, generally considered not to achieve their educational potential when compared with their non-looked after peers. Years of statistics make for disheartening reading as they catalogue the relative under achievement, poor attendance, high rates of exclusion and/or non-participation in education that contributes greatly to further depressing statistics for formerly looked after children in relation to adult homelessness, drug abuse, criminality and other indicators of social exclusion. This demoralising data has successively spawned the Quality Protects Initiative and the Every Child Matters Agenda which, in many respects, differ most significantly only in respect of the date that they were produced. We work from the basis that 'Every Child Matters' only if a key professional ensures that they can evidence that the child matters to them personally.

Looked after children are wonderfully 'average' insofar as they are every bit as able as any other cohort of children in Britain. What they sometimes lack is opportunity and consistency and perhaps an adult or group of adults prepared to challenge the stereo-types and champion their cause. In its own modest way Family Care Associates Ltd seeks to do so by prioritising and supporting 'our' children's education.

Methodology and Parameters

Throughout this document the term 'looked after children' will be used to represent all looked after children and young people in our care irrespective of whether they are looked after at home or looked after away from home.

Family Care Associates Ltd personnel continue to liaise with local authorities and other professional settings in order to help our children achieve and maintain high standards. This is achieved through normal review mechanisms within the social care and education fields but is supplemented by our Core Group System.²

Over recent years we have established a practice of reporting the educational outcomes of all their children and young people. The reader should note that many of the children referred to Family Care Associates Ltd and Families@FamilyCare Ltd have had disrupted education – in some cases never having established a pattern of regular school attendance or participated in nationally measured tests. We suggest that this is typical of all looked after children.

Although data is often used for the purposes of reporting outcomes at a local and maybe national level, the primary reason for us collecting data is to identify and meet the needs of the individual

² The Core Group System has been established for many years and is effectively a meeting of professionals (and where appropriate and permissible the families of looked after children) in a forum convened by Family Care Associates Ltd approximately every four to six weeks. It is specifically designed in an attempt to minimise 'drift' in planning.

looked after child. We do this in an effort to seek to ensure that however a child comes to be involved with our Company they can expect to be supported and encouraged to recognise their strengths and abilities by carers and teachers.

The publishing of information in relation to the educational outcomes of looked after children will be collected and collated from carers, schools and where appropriate other education professionals to ensure accuracy.

This report relates to the academic year 2009-2010 and not the financial year therefore making comparisons with non-looked after children easier and more relevant.

This report aims to provide evidence of meeting the following broader outcomes:

- The experience of being looked after has improved the educational outcomes of the children and young people
- An increase in educational achievements outcomes year on year for looked after children

There is evidence in some children's homes within the 'looked after' system that there is insufficient priority given to education; this has been catalogued over many years and is an indictment of the looked after children system. In the Family Care Associates Group of Companies we hope to prove that this need not be and in fact is not the case. We have the highest aspirations and expectations; no limit should be imposed on the capacity of the young people, children and learners to improve, develop and achieve. Whilst almost all the children and young people referred to our services have had, at best, a disrupted education we accept this as a reality to be overcome not an insurmountable impediment or worse still an excuse for limiting ambition. We have the highest aspirations and expectations; no limit in aspiration should be imposed on the capacity of the children and young people to improve, develop and achieve.

We have some key messages that we hope to achieve in Family Care Associates Ltd:

- Maintaining high aspirations for looked after children depends on a focused leadership. If we do not have ambitious visions and we fail to make corporate parenting a high priority then we are putting barriers up to prevent high standards of education. Corporate parenting is vital if we want our young people to succeed in education
- A clear and consistent focus on education is vital. This involves us continually tracking the progress of looked after children and holding all schools to account for it. We at Family Care Associates Ltd promote regular dialogue between schools and carers, ensuring that carers have the skills needed to support study and support transition to learning beyond the age of 16
- We acknowledge that, at times, some partners in the child's corporate parenting seem to struggle to fully undertake their responsibilities. If and when this happens then we as an organisation will advocate for children and if necessary agitate on their behalf to ensure that they receive the support to which they are entitled

Underlying Principles

“Looked after children should be given every opportunity to achieve their full academic potential, through promoting opportunities for learning within, and outside school”

As a minimum legal requirement, looked after children should be attending suitable education on a full time basis from the term following their 5th birthday until the last Friday in June in which they are to turn 16. The place where children receive education will be based upon their age, aptitude and ability and any special needs that they might have.

Looked After Children – Good Practice in Family Care Associates Ltd

Within Family Care Associates Ltd school (Access School in Harmer Hill), the key elements of our practice focus on the progress and development of the young people in our care. (Within the remainder of the Company’s settings these elements are simply replicated in terms of our carer’s expectations of the schools our children attend).

The elements include:

- Engaging our children in learning and taking responsibility for their learning
- Close monitoring of academic, social and personal progress
- The involvement of looked after children in learning outside the classroom and after school activities
- The swift early intervention if a problem emerges, such as with behaviour or attendance
- The successful engagement of parents and carers

We employ vigorous target setting and monitoring of all pupils and our school has recently focused on Key stages 3 and 4. Whilst we do all we can to encourage high levels of attendance and acceptable behaviour we do not temper our ambitions for the children and young people’s educational progress. Personal and social targets are also monitored. We include the pupils and let them have a strong say in decisions about targets and their learning in their personal and educational learning plans.

Within Access School we include working with support from learning mentors and key teachers who concentrate on tackling underachievement and in particular their learning difficulties. This includes working closely to improve children and young people’s literacy and numeracy skills such as the use of precision teaching.

Whilst all of the above is easier to achieve within our own school we work with a range of residential and foster care staff who have proved to be totally committed to ensuring that no effort is spared in prioritising ‘our’ children’s educational needs.

Attendance

“There is a strong correlation between the amount of absence in school and the qualifications that pupils achieve” (Dept for Education and Skills)

Parents and carers are responsible by law for ensuring that all pupils receive a suitable standard of full time education and that includes looked after children.

The following table will evidence the attendance figures for the three settings that we provide within Family Care Associates Ltd³.

Access School Attendance (%)	Number of pupils
0-10	
11-30	
31-50	1 ⁴
51-70	
71-90	4
91-100	4

The table above is for the academic year 2009-2010 with 9 pupils on roll (the school intake only allows a total of 16 pupils).

Residential Care Attendance (%)	Number of pupils
0-10	
11-30	
31-50	
51-70	
71-90	4
91-100	5

Families@FamilyCare Attendance (%)	Number of pupils
0-10	
11-30	
31-50	
51-70	1
71-90	
91-100	11
Unknown	4 (data not available at the time of publication)

³ Please note that within the settings described earlier we care for a number of children who are either under compulsory school age or have left compulsory education

⁴ This child's attendance record is skewed by virtue of the fact that through an introductory period he was only expected to attend 3 days per week as he had no history of attending school and his family's culture at least condoned this

A complete breakdown of the exact percentages (by child/young person) is as follows:

Residential	Families@FamilyCare	Access
82.8	95.9	100
95	99	77
97.6	97.4	99
97.8	98.4	84
82.4	60	91
85	100	91
83	90.1	41
100	97	85
100	96.3	86
	99.5	97
	98.7	
	98	

As the tables show above most pupils had attendance rates comfortably above 80% and is divided between the 71-100% attendance bands. 48% of all pupils within our setting had been in the 91-100% attendance band and 29% of all pupils within our settings were in the 71-90% attendance band.

The following will provide reasons why some attendance is lower than the norm:

- Pupil is a school 'refuser'
- Part time education

Throughout our company from the results above attendance is generally of a high standard.

Exclusions

Family Care Associates Ltd seeks to ensure that all their young people have the best start in life and wants them to succeed. We want all our young people to become to become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors, responsible citizens and regular attendance is a key to this.

For some of our young people, life presents particular challenges which can distract from learning. They may not be motivated by learning opportunities or there may be other barriers entirely beyond their control which prevent them from fully engaging with education. Non attendance at school may be an indicator of issues or difficulties a child is experiencing. The impact on non attendance in school and non learning can significantly increase the likelihood of young people leaving school and not going onto further education, employment or training. We at Family Care Associates Ltd strive to ensure that all our young people have the opportunity to thrive in their education setting.

We like to promote positive behaviour and build relationships thus improving behaviour in school. Nationally, looked after children are six times more likely to be excluded from school than most of the non-looked after population.

At Family Care Associates Ltd we try to promote positive behaviour therefore reducing the fact that our young people may be excluded for whatever reason. Sometimes though, exclusions are unavoidable but we believe that it is important to support pupils that have been excluded to maintain their learning whilst absent from school, thus enabling them to catch up with their learning on

returning to school and not become isolated whilst not attending. This mitigates against pupils struggling and feeling further disengaged from school, which can then lead to more absence from school. This is particularly important in the case of looked after children who are (statistically) more likely to be excluded and consequently may have experienced interrupted learning and may require additional tuition and support to enable them to make up lost ground.

Within Family Care Associates Ltd own school any decision to exclude a looked after child is always considered carefully and we liaise with multi agency partners wherever possible to come up with the best possible solution. Wherever possible, careful planning is put into place to ensure a smooth return in due course.

Within the context of promoting positive behaviour and improving relationships, exclusion from school should be a last resort where all other alternatives have failed.

Setting	Exclusion Rate for academic year 2009/2010 as a %
Access School	Throughout the whole school year and across all pupils the exclusion rate was 4.5%
Residential	3.8%
Families@FamilyCare Ltd	0%

In comparison the table below shows the national statistics for the years 2007-2009.

	Children Looked After Percentages			All Children Percentages		
	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009
Number with a Statement of Educational Needs	27.6	27.9	27	2.8	2.8	2.7
Number of permanent exclusions from school	0.7	0.5	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.1
Number who missed at least 25 days of school	13	11.9	11.5

Source: DCSF 'Special Educational Needs in England: January 2009. 'Permanent and Fixed Period Exclusions in England.

Attainment

At Family Care Associates Ltd, our aim is to narrow the gap between the achievement of looked after children and their peers.

'Promoting the educational achievement of looked after children: Statutory guidance for local authorities' 'Every Child Matters'

"In 2008, 14% of looked after children achieved A- C grades compared to the 65.3% of all children. Because looked after children achieve significantly poorer educational outcomes than all children it is a major priority of Government to narrow this gap."*

This is a major priority for us at Family Care Associates Ltd and we believe that we can improve the educational outcomes of our looked after children. Over the past academic year the hard work and determination from our young people has paid off and those that sat public examinations have achieved excellent results.

Access School

Pupil 1	Pupil 2	Pupil 3
WJEC Entry Level English (2)	GCSE English (E)	WJEC Entry Level Geography (2)
WJEC Entry level History (2)	GCSE Maths (D)	
WJEC Entry level French (3)	GCSE Science (E)	
WJEC Entry level Maths (2)	WJEC Entry Level Prep for life (2)	
WJEC Entry level Science (2)		
WJEC Entry Level Art and Design (2)		
WJEC Entry Level Geography (2)		

(Pupil 2 had only accessed education at Access School for one term and Pupil 3 completed Geography in Year 10.)

Residential

Pupil 1	8 GCSE's grades D and above
Pupil 2	4 GCSE's E and above
Pupil 3	9 GCSE's D and above

There were no young people within Families@FamilyCare Ltd who participated in public examinations this year.

Compared to past years, this year has been a resounding success for those young people who have undertaken their exams. Within Access School this is the first time that pupils have sat more than the core subjects within the curriculum.

How we can increase flexibility in the curriculum to support looked after children

Within Family Care Associates Ltd own school we understand that not all pupils will achieve public examination success and sometimes we have to be flexible within the curriculum to meet the needs of the young people with whom we work. We ensure that curricular arrangements are suited to the

individual with a specific route to that child's chosen vocation. We will collaborate with other providers including appropriate work experiences and work based learning routes. We liaise regularly with Connexions where learning pathways required study out of school.

Within our setting it also involves education and carers working in partnership to participate in study-related, cultural and sport activities as well as extra curricular activities that will engage our children out of school.

The table below shows GCSE and GNVQ equivalent for looked after children nationally who have been looked after from years 2007-2009.

	Children Looked After Percentages			All Children Percentages		
	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009
Number in Year 11						
Number who sat at least one GCSE or equivalent	67.7	68.8	71.1	99.5	99.1	98.8
Number who obtained at least:						
1 GCSE A* to G	63.7	65.6	68.2	98.9	98.6	98.9
5 GCSE A* to G	43.1	43.4	44.3	91.7	91.6	92.3
5 GCSE A* to C	12.6	13.9	14.8	62	65.3	70

Source: DCSF statistical First Release 'GCSE and Equivalent Results in England 2008/09 (Revised). Includes all schools.

Having researched company wide it has been found that most of our young people are involved in extra curricular activities which encourages confidence building and exploring social relationships out of school. Such activities include the following:

• Football	• Rugby	• Cricket	• Youth Club
• Boxing	• Beavers	• Taekwondo	• Scouts
• Gymnastics	• Cadets	• Swimming	• After School Clubs
• Tennis	• Horse Riding	• Dancing	• Golf

Across all of the Company's services it is pleasing to note that when most recently inspected by Ofsted the significant majority of settings was judged '**Outstanding**' with all others judged '**Good**' under the heading '**Helping Children Achieve Well and Enjoy What They Do**'. This, we hope, may be seen as evidence of our determination to support children in finding their area(s) of ability and interest(s) – be that academic or otherwise - and ensuring that they have the opportunity to participate in it (or them) and then whenever possible excel.

Conclusion

Children who are looked after (both at home and away from home) need individually tailored support to get the best from their education. Providing appropriate support is an important function of the corporate parent local authorities and their service provider partners.

We need to emphasise the need for agencies and professionals to work together. Failure to do so can and commonly has resulted in poorer outcomes for looked after children and young people.

This report not only emphasises the need to concentrate on the support from the educational setting to improve the educational outcomes of looked after children, but the need to work closely with the corporate parents. There are a number of important messages. The first is the importance of excellent communication between agencies and professionals, particularly between schools, carers and social workers. The ‘failings’ in social care that have attracted public attention and scrutiny consistently over recent decades has one consistent comment in each enquiry. It tends to be stated along a parameter characterised at one end by “Communication could and should have been better” and at the other by “There was a systemic breakdown in communication that led to.....” We make no direct comparison to the often tragic cases that lead to public enquiries but the message is clear that we all have a collective responsibility to communicate well. The second point that we would wish to emphasise is the imperative for all involved professionals to be aware of the needs of all looked after children, including their educational needs. The standards that we should seek for looked after children must be no less than those we would expect for our own children, the expectations should be every bit as high as an ‘average parent’ should have and finally, if it’s everyone’s job to be a Corporate Parent then there is a danger that no-one will take the responsibility – make it yours.

We are immensely proud of the efforts of our children who, often despite a range of difficulties and negative experiences, ‘perform’ beyond the expectations of their looked after cohort and we see our role as giving them the chance to do so. Our foster carers, residential and family placement staff together with educationalists accept their responsibility to promote and champion the needs of the children and young people with whom we work and we are by no means embarrassed that we try to ‘make a difference’.

There still is and always will be barriers for those children who are looked after. Education will always be an issue for children within the ‘care system’ and within Family Care Associates Ltd we hope to break down these barriers. There are many elements of good practice and these are highly transferable, but focus ambition for children, clarity of purpose and a robust follow through are required if there is to be a transformation in educational outcomes. We have to be committed in our roles to deliver this. We need to ensure that our children and young people have access to high aspirations, stable relationships and adults who take the time to listen to children and young people. We need to provide care, education and support to enable these most vulnerable children and young people to succeed – as they can and do.

Miss V White
Head Teacher, Access School

1 October 2010