

# 70 Strategies

To help looked after and previously looked after children and young people succeed in schools and education settings.

A resilience based toolkit.



## Foreword

### Welcome to the 70 strategies document.

I hope you find this a valuable tool in your work to improve the outcomes for looked after children.

Barnsley Council recognises the importance of listening to the lived experiences of children and young people in its care and seeks to use this narrative to improve its response to meeting their needs.

This document is the culmination of more than two years' work based on the outcomes of the Barnsley Council research project into the lived experiences of children and young people with prolonged school absences. The booklet seeks to identify, for all professionals working with young people, those needs that must be addressed in the school setting if each young person is to be able to feel safe, contribute to the school community and fulfil their educational potential. It pulls together recent research into meeting the needs of children and young people in care and provides a structure for professionals in partnership with the young person themselves to evaluate need and identify strategies to be explored to enable them to succeed. It is a signposting tool which points the reader to relevant websites, tools and advice of experts in the field.

Designed to help all those who support young people to develop the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding needed to offer high quality support and sensitive interventions, I hope you find it of value.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the officers involved in bringing this document together and I would particularly like to thank the young people who took part and who were brave enough to share their thoughts and feelings to make a difference to others.

**Mel John Ross**

Executive Director Children's Services  
Barnsley Council

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## Introduction

The Virtual School Team in collaboration with Barnsley Educational, Child and Community Psychology Service conducted research with a number of young people in care in Barnsley. The findings of this research has informed this toolkit to support practitioners in school.

Where possible, strategies are underpinned by psychology; positive in focus; draw on research evidence and aim to nurture resilience in young people in care.

Practitioners are able to assess areas of resiliency using the circle of resilience to make an informed choice about possible strategies to implement. Once a decision has been made regarding next steps, this can be recorded on the action plan using the template which encourages use of an assess-plan-do-review cycle.

## Research summary

In 2018, the Virtual School Team and Barnsley Educational, Child and Community Psychology Service (BECCPS) released the research:

*Giving a voice to young people in care: How young people in care in Barnsley talk about their journey through education and the implications for practice.*

The research explored the views of young people in care with extended school non-attendance regarding their journey through education. There was a positive-psychological focus; aiming to capture protective factors which enabled the young people to thrive in spite of adverse personal circumstances.

**Ten key findings from the research are outlined below:**

- Containing young people in school when home life is difficult even if undesirable behaviours increase around this time
- Providing key adult support to the young person
- Using flexible, inclusive school systems
- Giving the young person a voice
- Supporting transitions (particularly primary to secondary and secondary to adulthood)
- Ensuring high quality support in school through effective differentiation
- Considering the young person within the context of their family, peers and community
- Being aware of push/pull factors for school and working to pull the young person in through positive experiences and enjoyment of school
- Having high aspirations for the young person and helping them to believe in themselves
- Developing self-esteem, identity and resilience and supporting emotional wellbeing

70 strategies to help looked after and previously looked after children and young people succeed in schools and education settings – a resilience based toolkit, is seen as the next stage of the research project; using what we have learnt from the research, to develop advice and guidance for schools and practitioners. This project hopes to support schools and education settings in providing effective inclusion for the complex needs of young people in care; reducing extended school non-attendance; improving educational outcomes and nurturing resilience.

## Resilience focus

**Resilience is described by Dent and Cameron (2003) as:**

*'The flexibility that allows certain young people who appear to be at risk to bounce back from adversity to cope with, and manage major difficulties and disadvantages in life, and even to thrive in the face of what appear to be overwhelming odds'.*

Dent and Cameron suggest that success in school can enhance resilience. Therefore, facilitating a positive educational experience may be the key to overcoming the instability of placement and schooling for young people in care.

Many of the strategies in this toolkit are aimed at developing the resilience of the young person in care. Dent and Cameron (2003) refer to six areas of resilience that are outlined in the table below. These have been reworded in this toolkit for the dual purpose of enabling the key findings from research to map onto the areas of resilience more clearly and to bring to the fore the voice of the young people in care:

<b>Dent and Cameron's six areas of resilience</b>	<b>Toolkit six areas of resilience</b>
Positive values	I believe in me
Secure base	I feel secure
Talents and interests	I enjoy myself
Social competencies	I communicate
Education	I learn and achieve
Friendships	I have people I care about and who care about me

The six areas of resilience can be used as a means of assessment to determine how best to support the needs of the young people in care. This has been done through the circle of resilience.

## The circle of resilience

Each step of the circle has a colour: red, yellow or green

- **Red** means things are bad and either stuck or not changing 'yet'. Perhaps the young person is not accepting help or perhaps there is no one offering help.
- **Yellow** means that the young person and people around them are working on it/giving it a go and you are hopeful that things will get better.
- **Green** means that things are mostly ok. The young person and others are finding out what works and making some real changes.

## The circle of resilience

I have people I care about and who care for me

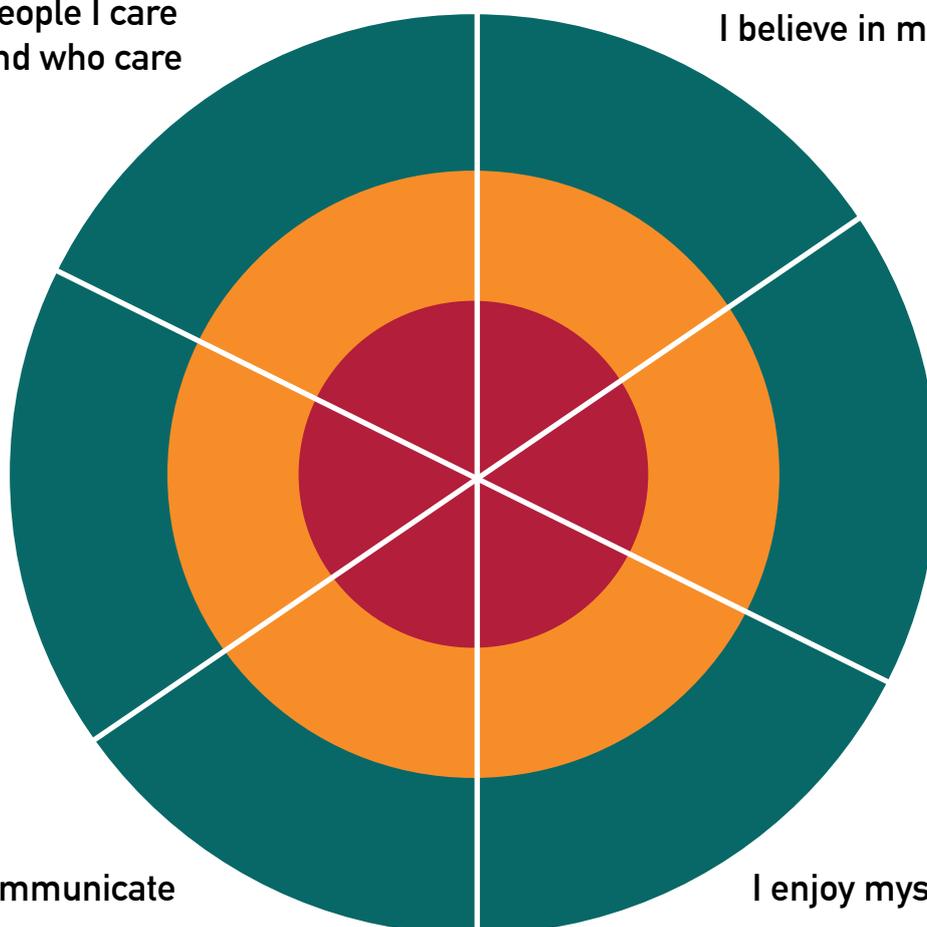
I believe in me

I learn and achieve

I feel secure

I communicate

I enjoy myself



The circle of resilience can be completed with the young person. Together you can look at different aspects of the young person's resilience in life and decide which colour step they are on. This will help you to work out what needs to happen next to improve things. It can be used as an evaluative tool to review the success of the strategies implemented.

The prompts in the table below give indications of what it might 'look like' on each step for each areas of the circle of resilience (i.e. what a person might be thinking or feeling):

Area of resilience	Red	Yellow	Green
I believe in me	'I am no good'	'I'm not all bad, Mrs (name) says I am really good with the animals at the farm'	'I can be helpful and caring. I'd like to work with animals or kids when I'm older. I think I'd be alright at something like that'
I feel secure	'I have no one I can talk to'  'I have nowhere I can go to feel safe'	'Sometimes I use my pass to go to (place) when I feel angry'	'I know that I can talk to (name) when I have a problem'
I enjoy myself	'I hate school'	'I don't mind Art and DT'	'I enjoy school'
I communicate	'Nobody even listens to me or cares what I think'	'They ask me what I want but I don't really know what I want, I just know what I don't want'	'We do person centred LAC Reviews now, so I usually get to say what I think about stuff'
I learn and achieve	'I can't even do maths'	'I can't do it yet but (name) is going to do these 20 minute maths things with me and reckons I will be ace at my times-tables after'	'I get it now, I'm good at times-tables'
I have people I care about and who care about me	'Most of the people in my year aren't very nice'	'I sit with (name) in Science and she's ok'	'I have a couple of friends in school now and we meet up at break and dinner'

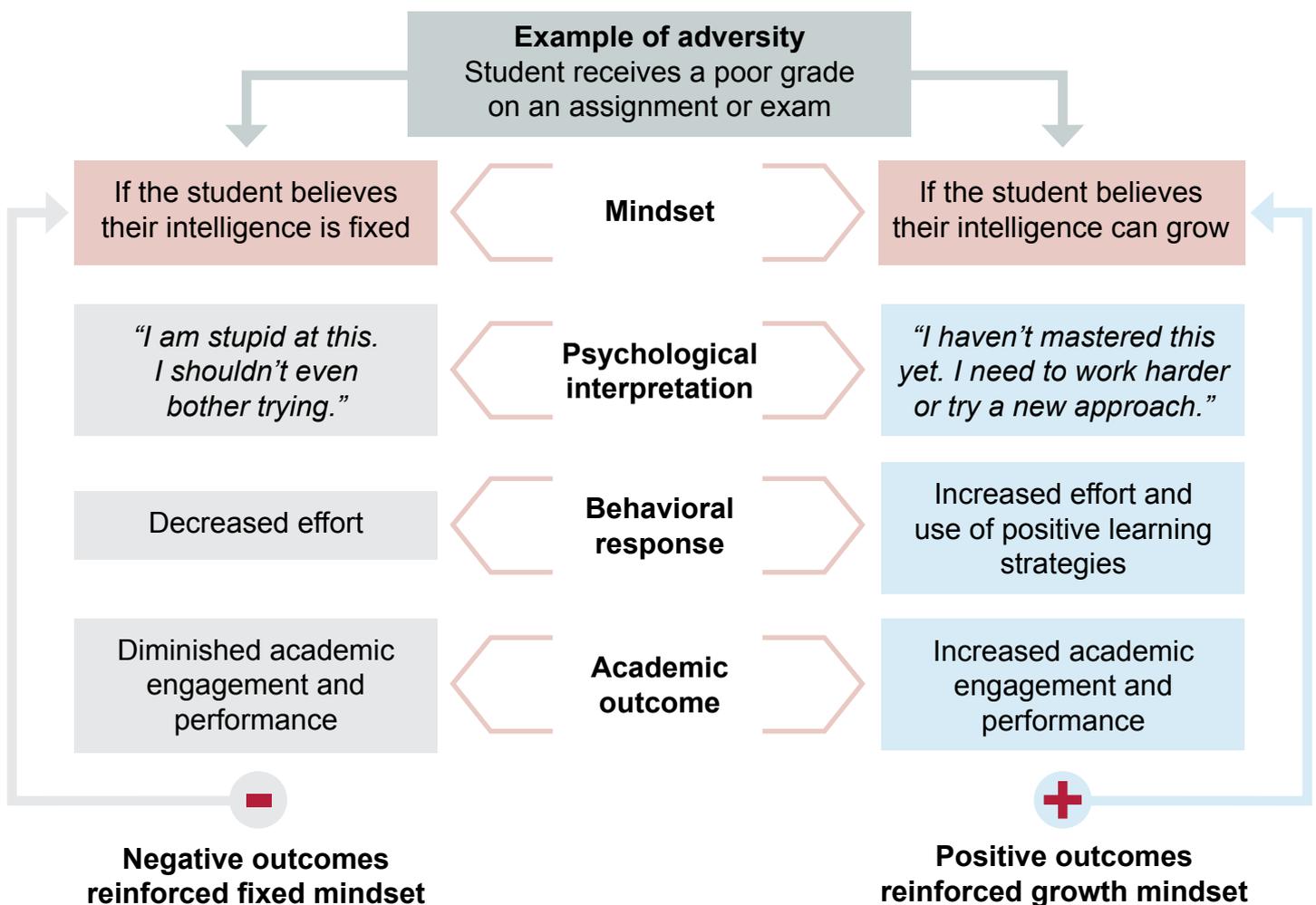
## Resilience areas and strategies

Once you have completed the circle of resilience and identified one or two areas of resilience to focus on, look through the suggested strategies to find some ideas you and the young person might like to try.

# I believe in me

## 1. Developing a growth mindset

The term growth mindset was coined by Carol Dweck. It refers to the belief that intelligence can be developed. Students with a growth mindset understand that they can get smarter through hard work, the use of effective strategies and help from others; contrasting to a 'fixed mindset' the belief that intelligence is a fixed trait that is set in stone at birth.



(Mindset scholar networks, 2019)

For more information watch [Carol Dweck's TED talk](#).

## 2. Positive daily affirmations and positive diary

Self-affirmation theory (Sherman and Cohen, 2006) suggests that positive affirmations can help to alleviate threats to the self and help a person to maintain positive feelings of self-worth.



### Examples of positive affirmations:

- 'I can do this'
- 'Everything I did today leads to a better tomorrow'
- 'I am making progress every day'
- 'I am strong'
- 'I choose what I become'

Positive diaries which focus on simple daily goals can help provide dedicated time for such affirmations.

## 3. Motivational interviewing

Motivational Interviewing (Miller & Rollnick 1991) is an effective technique for young people who may be ambivalent about changing behaviour and may see advantages in maintaining a behaviour which is perceived by others to be problematic.



Motivational interviewing explores behavioural change within a supportive relationship rather than through argument or persuasion.

For more information visit [www.facilitatingchange.org.uk/about-mi/](http://www.facilitatingchange.org.uk/about-mi/)

## 4. Positive role models

The motivational theory of role modelling (Morgenroth, Ryan and Peters, 2015) suggests that positive role models can challenge self-stereotypes and perceived barriers as well as helping the young person through identification and internalisation.

Young people in care could be shown positive media examples and success stories of overcoming hardship, adversity and difficult home lives to achieve great things. These could even be collated into a scrapbook or collage of 'all the things I could be'.

Famous looked after people include Eric Clapton; Steve Jobs; Nicole Richie; Debbie Harry; Eddie Murphy; Cher; John Lennon; Jack Nicholson; Simone Biles - to name a few!

## 5. Peer mentoring

A one-to-one relationship between an experienced student (mentor) and a less experienced student (mentee) in which the mentor voluntarily gives their time to support and encourage the mentee to learn and develop.

Peer mentoring is most effective for those young people with mid-level support needs rather than young people with complex support needs.

A useful information booklet has been produced by Kent Council funded by the Big Lottery Fund and can be found at [http://www.kent.gov.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/74642/peer-mentoring-toolkit.pdf](http://www.kent.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/74642/peer-mentoring-toolkit.pdf)

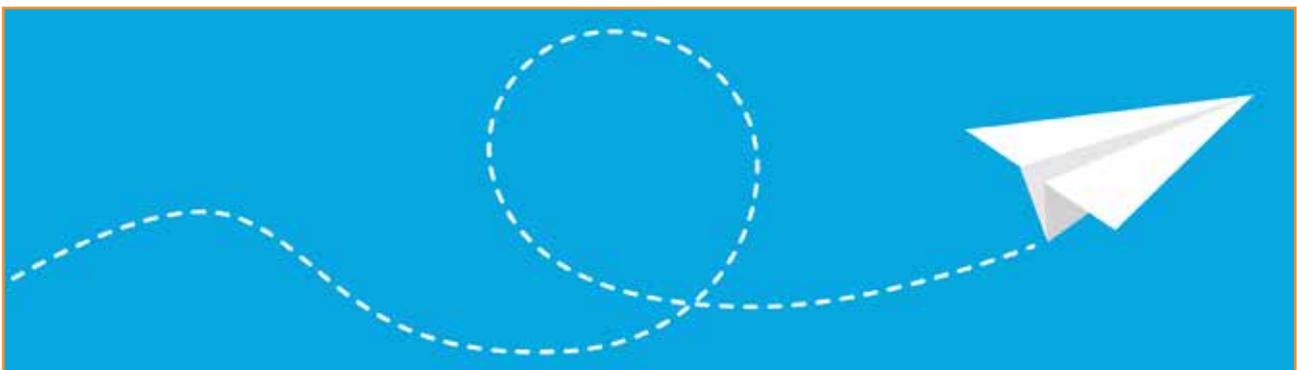
## 6. Acknowledge and support feelings of anxiety

Website such as [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk) have resources for young people on how they can help themselves when living with anxiety.

Adults could spend time with young people exploring this information and considering what might work for them. This could be turned into a personalised resource or 'worry box'.

## 7. Demonstrate small changes and improvements

Mark moments in time; take a 'picture' of where the young person is at now and look back at different intervals. This could be presented in a 'my journey' online album or scrapbook. Try to focus on personal growth rather than making social comparisons.



## 8. Cognitive Behaviour Therapy

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) focuses on the relationship between what we think, how we feel and what we do (Kaplan et al, 1995). There is a strong evidence base for the effectiveness of CBT in challenging negative and unhelpful ways of thinking and resulting in consequent behaviour change.

There are several off the shelf books which offer CBT inspired interventions, including:

- Think Good Feel Good by Paul Stallard
- The Homunculi Approach to social and emotional wellbeing: A flexible CBT programme by Anne Greig and Tommy MacKay
- My Hidden Chimp by Steve Peters (a more simplistic book potentially useful for primary school children)

**Try an app: What's up Mental Health App**



## 9. Mindfulness and yoga

Mindfulness is the ability to pay attention and be present for experiences with open minded curiosity and kindness.

There is an evidence base for mindfulness interventions in school to promote positive psychological wellbeing and mental health and can impact on anxiety, depression and stress.

*'Paws b and .b' are evidence based interventions for young people aged 7-11 and 11-18 respectively.*

See for more details. [mindfulness.school.org.uk](http://mindfulness.school.org.uk) for more details.

Yoga is commonly taught alongside mindfulness and focuses on movements to increase strength and flexibility as well as breathing.

**Try an app: Headspace**

## 10. Build self esteem

Young people with low self-esteem tend to be critical of and see themselves and their life more negatively.

In order to develop self-esteem, it is necessary to challenge the negative beliefs about the self. Ways of doing this include:

- recording negative thoughts and writing down evidence that challenges this
- recognising what you're good at
- building positive relationships with people who are positive and appreciate you

Helping Children to build self-esteem: A photocopiable book - Second Edition by Deborah Plummer suggests that fostering creative use of imagination enables young people to see problems and challenges from different viewpoints. It can help them to find ways forward and make more informed choices in life which leads to control and good self esteem.

**Try an app: Catch It.**

This recommended NHS app teaches young people how to look at problems in a different way; turning negative thoughts into positive ones to improve mental wellbeing.



## 11. Anger management programmes

*'Anger is healthy. Anger is passion, resilience, being alive, engaging...it fuels creativity. It gets things done'* (Luxmoore, 2006). It is 'how' anger is expressed that is important and can be problematic.

Young people who have experienced trauma can be hypersensitive which means that they respond to minor stresses like major emergencies and can be quick to anger ('fight' response).

Helping young people through education is important and 'in-house' anger management programmes can be most effective. Helping Teenagers with Anger and Low Self-Esteem by Hinton House Publishers discusses the features of a good anger management programme.

## 12. Explicitly teach resilience

Resilience Approaches to Supporting Young People's Mental Health: Appraising the Evidence Base for Schools and Communities (2015) is available on the [www.boingboing.org.uk](http://www.boingboing.org.uk) website.

Boingboing outlines and evaluates more than 30 programmes specifically aimed at developing resilience.



## 13. Emotional self-regulation

Supporting young people to develop skills in recognising their emotional state can be helpful. One psychologically informed visual approach to teaching self-regulation and emotional control is the Zones of Regulation. This demonstrates different emotional states as four coloured zones and supports regulation through teaching appropriate strategies to manage feelings.

### What zone am I in?



### Tools to get in the green zone

- Drink water
- Count to 10
- Take deep breaths
- Do wall push-ups
- Use fidgets
- Draw
- Write
- Talk to an adult
- Ask to take a break
- Self talk
- Ask to take a walk
- Volcano breaths
- Listen to music
- Lift something heavy
- Eat a snack

## 14. Emotional wellbeing toolbox

An emotional wellbeing toolbox is developed over the course of a personalised intervention with the young person which explores emotions and identifies different things the young person can do when experiencing big feelings. For example, it might contain prompt cards with suggestions on like 'talk to a friend' or 'think about your special place' or might contain specific calming resources like therapeutic colouring books or play dough to knead. Sometimes these contain affirmative messages taken from people who care about the young person that they can look at when feeling down. It might contain books created over the young person's journey such as life story work or positive diaries.

### Ideas for what might go in a toolbox:



(Student Support Professionals)

## I feel secure

### 15. Theory informed approaches that experience suggests can be effective in supporting young people with emotional needs

- Try to understand what the internal working model of the young person is like (i.e. how what they have experienced has shaped what they think about themselves, other people and the world). Use this to inform your practice. Simply asking them to finish the sentences 'I am...other people are...life is...' can be effective
- Be self-aware of your role in any interaction
- Try not to take anything personally; often what is said is more a reflection of how the young person sees themselves. Try empathising with the negative transference e.g. say 'so you are seeing me as... and that must make you feel...'
- Try not to be impulsive or reactive in response to a provocative behaviour. Think about how to respond first
- Be empathic in your responses
- Be a reliable adult and let the young person know through words and actions that they can lean on you when they need to e.g. scripts such as; 'I am here to keep you safe' or 'I care about you'
- Try to listen openly as young people won't share problems or 'mess ups' with you if they think you will react negatively
- Try to tip the balance scales in favour of praise or affection for every criticism or command

- Check in with the young person throughout the day (before an incident occurs) to let them know that they are being 'kept in mind'
- Spend quality time with the young person and get to know them
- All staff who will come into contact with the young person should be trained in attachment, trauma, internal working models and emotional regulation techniques
- Avoid conflict. Remember that you are modelling behaviour
- Avoid control battles. Offer choices and don't make one of the choices a threat. Choose one or two points to focus on changing and be clear in your mind about your plan so you don't feel drawn into establishing authority
- Encourage young people, rather than pushing them, as this will likely backfire
- Young people may have had relentless shaming without an adult attuning and regulating for them. If you react with anger it can leave the young person feeling anxious or hypervigilant and distressed which 'intensify and trigger outbursts of rage' (Hughes, 2004)
- Remain hopeful; 'tomorrow is another day'. Look at the bad things that have happened and put a positive twist on them. Deliberately adopt a stance that helps make sense of something in a positive way. It offers another view for the young person to make sense of or develop a more adaptive view of their lives. Sometimes it is about managing life rather than changing it
- Use respectful language and use consistently as a team. Do not reinforce negative labels. Reframe and reduce labels e.g. 'have anxiety' rather than 'I am anxious'
- Understand that the young person will have a developmental or emotional age which is much younger than their chronological age and saying things like 'at this age you should know better' is unhelpful

## 16. Key adult

A key adult is someone who serves as an additional attachment figure and who (as described by the young people who participated in the research):

- goes above and beyond for the young person
- who believes in them
- who they can trust, talk to and confide in
- who listens
- who is supportive but with firm, clear boundaries
- who helps them when they need it but doesn't put too much pressure on them
- who helps them feel better and see positives in a situation
- who understands their needs and can develop a young person's ability to emotionally regulate

**The role of the key adult will be to:**

- Attend to the young person
- Contain and emotionally hold the young person
- Keep them in mind
- Give commentaries
- Provide opportunities to safely practice new things

See *'Inside I'm Hurting'* by Louise Bomber for more information.

It will be important to ensure that there are plans in place for when the key adult is sick or unavailable. Be explicit about what is happening. Give the child as much notice as possible and reassure that they will get support.

## 17. PLACE model

**PLACE** (Hughes, 2006) is an approach of four personal qualities which allow adults to support a young person in developing their own self-awareness, emotional intelligence and resilience and is rooted in deep respect for a young person's experience.

**PLACE** stands for Playfulness, Liking, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy

- **Playfulness:** an open atmosphere of lightness and interest when communicating
- **Liking:** showing the young person you like them, keeping connected
- **Acceptance:** actively communicating to the child that you accept them without judgement or evaluation
- **Curiosity:** without judgement, wondering and intending to understand why
- **Empathy:** a sense of compassion for the child and their feelings

## 18. Contain the young person when home life is difficult

When a young person's home life feels upside down is a time when they most need the constancy of school and the people in school that they have formed relationships with. However, it is also the time when they can be at their most challenging and push adults away with their words and actions.

It is imperative that schools commit to containing a young person through these most difficult of times and can as a consequence help to challenge the negative internal working model a young person has, rather than to reinforce this further through isolating consequences such as fixed term and permanent exclusions.

## 19. Support transitions

All young people researched in Barnsley remembered every one of their school transitions, even short-term moves. Those with fewer moves made more positive references to adults in school and school life itself.



Wherever possible, aim to minimise moves and provide greater consistency. A so called 'fresh start' to a young person who has experienced multiple traumas and losses will likely serve simply to reinforce existing feelings of worthlessness, being bad and that people cannot be trusted.

Pay special attention to Year 6 to Year 7 transitions and support this move. Essential to this transition is:

- visits to setting
- child friendly transition information for the interim holidays for example photographs and timetables
- key adult identified with scheduled one-to-one time each week

Consider other transitions including daily movement in school. Mark the end of a school year; give opportunities to say goodbye positively and ways to remember.

For more information on transition planning see [Cornwall's guide to Supporting Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities : Transition Planning Guidance.](#)

## 20. Understand what is meant by separation anxiety

A young person with separation anxiety experiences extreme distress when away from a parent or caregiver usually due to an overwhelming anxiety that something bad might happen whilst they are separated. It can make it very hard for the young person to tolerate periods of separation.

Acknowledge that this might be a contributing factor for a young person struggling to cope with the school day and try to find ways to alleviate this for the young person. One such approach might be to use a transitional object.

A transitional object is something which can be used to remind them that though they are separated from their parent, they can continue to hold them in mind (Winnicott, 1964) and feel their connection with them. Examples include a keyring with photo of parent on; a note in lunch box from a parent or carer; parent perfume on collar; small cuddly toy etc.

## 21. Transition into school

The beginning of the school day is the most significant time of the day for a key adult to be involved. **This involvement will likely include:**

- Meet and greet
- Going through the timetable for the day; drawing attention to any changes and troubleshooting any difficulties
- Supporting any practical problems e.g. incorrect uniform; missing equipment; missed breakfast
- Providing emotional support for learning readiness



## 22. Therapeutic language

**Wondering aloud** is a helpful technique that can be a concrete expression of giving the young person an experience of being 'attended to'. For example:

*'I wonder if you are feeling a bit cross about having to wait your turn as you have gone a bit red in the face' or 'I wonder if you are feeling chuffed with that work as I noticed your eyes sparkle when you got green ticks'.*

The adult makes tentative remarks to put into words how the child might be feeling.

Using **commentaries** is a technique where the adult describes what they can see and what they think out loud. For example:

*'I can see you have lots of energy right now. I think we should take a brain break. Let's go for a short walk so that we can use up some of this energy. Ah that feels good. In a minute we are going to go back to class and we going to be carrying on with the number work we were doing. We're nearly there. Just round this corner. We need to get ready to use our thinking now. I know now that you have had a break you will be much more able to get your thinking back. Ok, we are back in class. Number work. Where did we get up to.'*

From 'Inside I'm Hurting' by Louise Bomber

**Safety Scripts** are key messages that are repeated daily. For example: 'I'm here to keep you safe' or 'You're getting stronger all the time at making the right choices'.

**Emotion Coaching** is a technique that adults can use to help children and young people to understand the different emotions they experience, why they occur and how to handle them (Gottman, 1997).

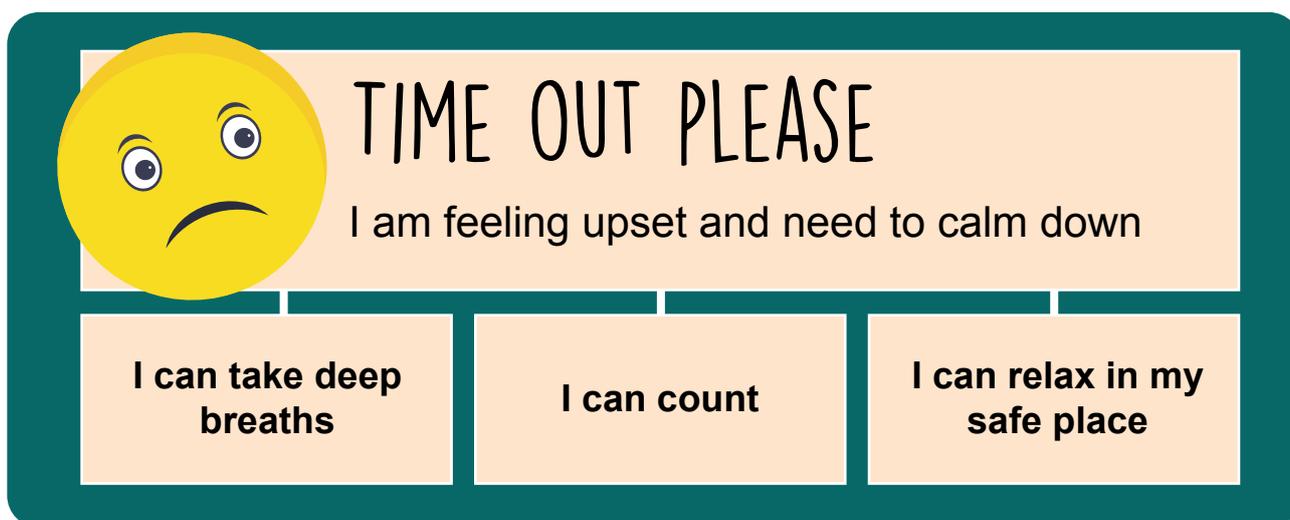
**There are four steps to emotion coaching:**

- (1) Recognise the young person's feelings and empathise
- (2) Validate feelings and label them e.g. 'I wonder if you're feeling a bit angry now because...It's ok to feel that way...'
- (3) Set limits on behaviour e.g. 'there are rules we have to follow'
- (4) Problem solve e.g. 'Maybe next time we could either ... or ... which do you think would work best?'

## 23. Secure base

A consistent physical base needs to be identified such as an inclusion department and make sure that young person knows where they can go to when they need to go somewhere and feel safe.

Consider giving a pass which the young person can use when they are in crisis and need to be able to get there without any verbal demands moving through school.



See <https://www.elsa-support.co.uk> for more information.

## 24. Opportunities to safely practise new things

The adult helps the young person to feel safe enough to practise things for themselves, for example:

- Practising asking for help – let them know that it must be hard to learn something if they cannot ask for help and that you know they probably weren't given that much help in the past
- Practising relaxing
- Practising resolving conflict
- Practising showing affection
- Practising having fun

## 25. Plan for personally and culturally important key dates

Discuss with the young person and plan accordingly for personally important and culturally important key dates throughout the year e.g. anniversary of bereavement or mothers' day.

Occasions which may bring up difficult or powerful feelings include:

- Death or loss
- Christmas
- Sex education
- Autobiographical accounts
- Lessons in science e.g. Genetics

## 26. Whole school approaches

Offering nurture and emotional support for young people is best achieved through a whole school approach where everyone understands and is on board with the ethos. The Thrive Approach works from a whole school level through to personalised plans for individual students using a clear thread.

See <https://www.thriveapproach.com> for more information.

# I enjoy myself

## 27. Pets

A pet is an uncomplicated, straight forward and honest friend. They can keep your secrets, don't tell you off and don't make fun of you!

Consider keeping a school, classroom or inclusion support pet for a young person who might not be able to have a pet at home.



Therapy dogs and horses (Animal Assisted Therapy) are increasingly being used in schools and colleges. Research over the last decade has demonstrated that there are positive benefits for mental health and emotional wellbeing, including for young people with attachment and trauma needs (Nekane Balluerka et al, 2014).

## 28. Walking, movement and fresh air

Do not underestimate the power of the outside. Walking in fresh air can improve mood (because it stimulates serotonin which makes people feel happier and less stressed). It can also provide opportunities to meet friends or make new friends.

Punctuating longer lessons times with opportunities for the young person to get out of their seat and move around will support concentration. Asking the young person to take a message to another part of the school or hand out equipment creates a natural movement break.



## 29. Focus on good times and places

Consider use of a happy box filled with things that smell or feel nice; important items; a cuddly toy; photo albums; letters etc. This box can then be looked at when the young person is feeling down and to help instil hope that the future can be ok.



## 30. Positive school experiences

Much literature on young people in care with low school attendance refers to factors which 'push' young people away from school and factors which 'pull' young people towards the home.



Push factors include exam stress; bullying; difficulties with a teacher. Pull factors include separation anxiety, illness of family members.

By providing positive experiences in school, this may serve to 'pull' the young person into school, away from home.

## 31. Access to a broad and balanced curriculum

Access to a broad and balanced curriculum helps young people to discover their strengths and interests.

Narrowing the curriculum to core subjects can serve to perpetuate a negative academic self-concept if a young person is already struggling in those subject areas.

## 32. Art, drama and music

The arts are very effective at helping young people access their true feelings behind the defence of anger. They can talk about and express emotional hurt indirectly and feel safe.



## 33. Physical activity (sport/exercise)

Physical activity can increase mental alertness, energy and positive mood. It can reduce stress and anxiety, improve quality of life, increase self-esteem and for group activities it can help with the development of friendships.

## 34. Playtime/Leisure

Play and free time helps to improve wellbeing and enriches development in different ways including social; emotional; physical; intellectual and cultural.

Avoid removing playtimes and breaktimes as a consequence for undesirable behaviour.



## 35. Clubs, groups, hobbies and interests and collections

Direct benefits including focus, creative freedom and being able to spend your time doing something that brings you pleasure.

Indirect benefits include community involvement; accomplishing goals; going places and meeting people and feeling a sense of purpose.



## 36. Nature

Interacting with nature can have a positive impact on a young person's mental health and social emotional wellbeing (Tillmann et al, 2018).

Time spent on allotments; farms and eco-schools work can support this.



See <https://www.eco-schools.org.uk> for more information on eco-schools.

## 37. Relaxation

Some young people may need support to find out what they like to do to relax. This might include: going for a walk; gaming; cooking; taking a bath; playing an instrument; watching tv; writing in a diary etc.

## 38. Laughter

Laughter releases endorphins, the body's feel good chemicals that increase our sense of wellbeing. It decreases the stress hormones and reduces negative emotions. It can help people see the funny side of a situation.

Help young people laugh; joke of the week for assemblies; weekly caption competitions; joke-a-thon competitions; comic productions; open mic; lunchtime comedy clubs; comedy film club.



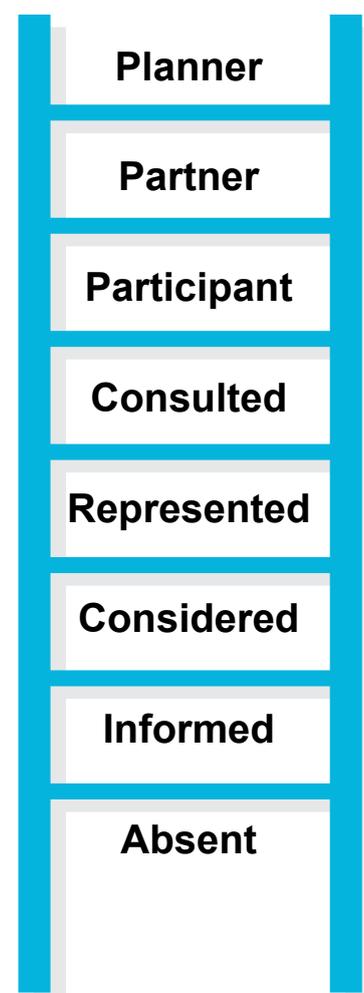
# I can communicate

## 39. Participation

Participation is about people sharing ideas, thinking for themselves, expressing their views effectively, planning, prioritising and being involved in the decision-making process to create change.

The ladder below outlines the different levels of participation:

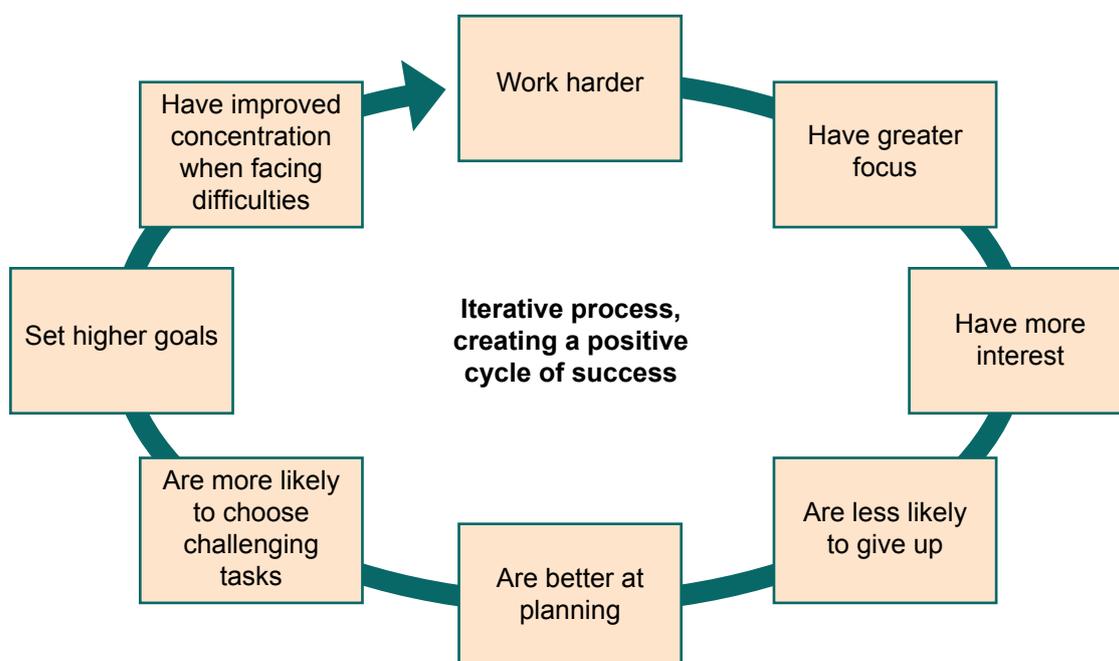
- **Absent** – young people are being thought of as a case or series of problems
- **Informed** – young people know that adults are meeting and are told about decisions that have been made
- **Considered** – adults use their judgement to say what they believe the young person's views might be when the child is unwilling or unable to speak for themselves
- **Represented** - the views of the young person are shared through quotes or choices and they are either present or not
- **Consulted** – young people answer direct questions at a meeting and can respond to decisions made about them
- **Participant** – young people are active in the meeting and ask their own questions. They contribute to decision making and influence planned outcomes
- **Partner** – young people are involved in deciding what will be discussed. They might be able to lead a section or suggest relevant targets and actions for themselves or others
- **Planner** – young people can give adults useful feedback about what works and what doesn't work for them; they might help adults evaluate practice or influence the service provided later to others.



Find out more at [Person centred planning for children and young people.](#)

## 40. Empowerment and agency

Developing a strong sense of agency for young people is important. Johnston (2004) demonstrates the process of supporting the agency of young people:



Find out more at [education.vic.gov.uk](http://education.vic.gov.uk)

## 41. Person-centred meetings

A person-centred review puts the young person at the centre and aims to have information available to all and enable everyone to contribute on an equal footing.

The young person should be included and invite key people that they would like to be there.

Find out more at [Person centred planning with children and young people: The Tower Hamlets Model.](#)

## 42. Person-centred language

When speaking with young people, language should be clear and jargon free, using everyday words. Conversations should be honest and realistic. Be careful of using extreme words and avoid absolute statements. Use a matter of fact tone.

## 43. Keeping the young person central

Find ways to keep the young person central to meetings and discussions.

Challenge negative discourse. Present an alternative discourse along with a photo of the young person at any meetings the young person is not present for.

## 44. Ensure meetings are accessible

**Techniques to ensure meetings are accessible include:**

- Providing differentiated resources within the meeting
- Use of appropriate language, which takes into consideration the age and stage of development of the child or young person
- Use of visual supports or graphic facilitation

Find more information on graphic facilitation at  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S5DJC6LaOCI>.

## 45. Information sharing

Discuss with the young person who they feel would benefit from having some information about their early experiences and what they would like them to know. Consider creating an information sharing contract with the young person which outlines who will know what.

## I learn and achieve

### 46. Create a supportive learning environment

**Find out what conditions are best for the young person:**

- levels of noise
- seating arrangements
- environment e.g. lighting, air flow or displays

The research with young people in care in Barnsley indicated that they generally liked quiet, calm learning environments.

Find out more at [www.aettraininghubs.org.uk](http://www.aettraininghubs.org.uk). This site also has a useful sensory audit that could be completed with the young person.

### 47. Quality first teaching and differentiation

- Give enough time to complete work set
- Break tasks down into small chunks of learning and present using 'First, next, then, last' type visual approaches
- Check understanding by asking the young person to explain (just to you) what they are required to do
- Differentiate by the amount you expect the young person to complete

- Set homework by time you would like them to spend working rather than what you want them to produce
- Give direct, specific feedback and support the young person to make the changes required
- Teach to the interests of the young person and use these to motivate and hook in the young person
- Provide lots of opportunities for over-learning and consolidation of facts
- Consider creating a small group to access pre-teaching so that they can access the whole class teaching input at more of a level playing field
- Do not pressure the young person, be supportive and sit alongside them
- Provide opportunities for small group learning. Young people in care can find it hard to constantly access whole class learning approaches and benefit from more personalised approaches in smaller groups
- Give the big picture at the start and make sure that the young person understands why they are learning what they are learning; place the learning in a context

## 48. Personalised approaches

**ICT** can be a great support for young people. Consider providing the young person with a personal tablet and identify appropriate apps such as those that support with dyslexia which can be found at [www.callscotland.org.uk/downloads/posters-and-leaflets/ipad-apps-for-learners-with-dyslexia/](http://www.callscotland.org.uk/downloads/posters-and-leaflets/ipad-apps-for-learners-with-dyslexia/).



A tablet could also be used for developing independence, for example: use QR codes to link to a visual clip of you giving the instructions for the learning activity so that the young person can listen to the instructions as many times as they need to.

### Learning styles

Does the young person learn best by being active (making and doing); listening; seeing images or using touch? Young people in care may well 'tune out' voices when they have lived in chaotic households and would benefit from multi-sensory teaching and learning practices.



The young men who participated in the research generally expressed an interest in being physically active. They enjoyed being able to study vocational courses at college.

### Intelligences

Building on the pioneering theory of Howard Gardner (1983), Pallett et al (2010) suggested that people have multiple intelligences which are different but equal in status. Encourage young people to explore how they are clever.

- Body smart: good motor coordination as used in sport and dance
- Word smart: using language to express oneself or to learn new languages
- Music smart: skills in performance, composition and appreciation of music
- Art smart: appreciation of art and skill with colours, patterns and shapes
- Think smart: problem solving ability
- Number smart: mathematical and logical ability
- Eye smart: building, designing, using maps and solving visual puzzles
- Feelings smart: understanding your own needs and feelings
- People smart: understanding and getting on well with others
- Nature smart: good at observing and understanding nature

### Developmental age

Remember that chronological age and developmental age are different and you should teach to the developmental age of the young person. Saying 'at your age you should know how to...' is unhelpful.

## 49. Emotional and sensory support

**Be flexible** in your approach; accept that if the young person is dysregulated then they will not be able to engage their learning brain; give the young person a repetitive job to do to help calm before focussing them on task.

**Calm box** is a personalised box full of cards with short multi-sensory activities on them which last a few minutes. This allows the young person to practice calming and self-regulation.

**Movement breaks may benefit** young people to regulate their emotions and meet sensory needs to move or be active throughout the school day. Sensory tools can help support young people in care to settle and learn:

**Tangles and figits:** are good for fiddling with. It can be hard for a young person in care who has high stress levels to stay still.

**Chewies and chewlry:** chewing can be an effective way to calm and self sooth.

**Wobble seat/beanie chair/gym ball seat:** allow movement, provide additional sensory input and help the young person to sit up and be more physically alert.

**Thinking doodles:** allow the young person to draw/ scribble/ graffiti whilst listening. This can help focus and concentration.

**Weighted blankets** provide sensory feedback helping young people feel safe, relaxed and calm when they need calming and comforting.

**Aroma cushions** are long bags filled with wheat that are scented and can be heated. They can be draped over shoulders helping to create a feeling of being grounded or calm.



## 50. Study skills/organisation

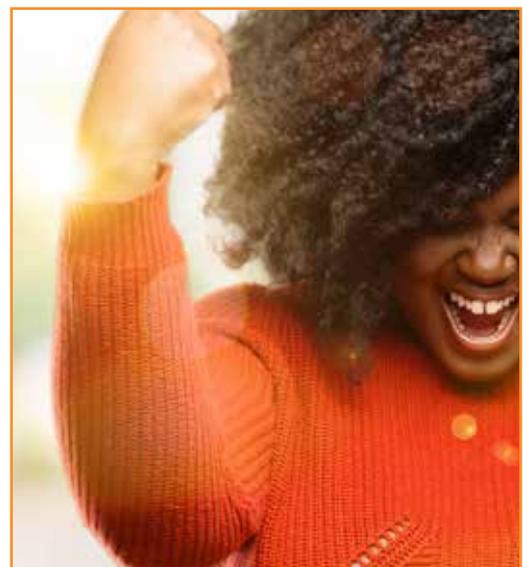
Explicitly teach the young person how to be organised and prepare for examinations through effective study skills, such as:

- motivation and goal setting
- where, when and how much study to do
- working to your learning style and strengths
- time management
- organisation
- taking notes
- reading skills e.g. skimming and scanning
- how to remember and memorise new learning
- working to different test types

Visual supports such as checklists; numbered instructions; flow charts; colour coding; writing frames; “clozed” response questions; sequencing activities etc. are useful tools.

## 51. Celebrate successes

Monitoring progress against outcomes and/or interventions help a young person remain engaged. Agree with the young person how small steps and achieving end goals will be celebrated. Use an approach which encourages the young person to look at how far they have come rather than compare themselves with others. This can be supported through the use of books or folders of successes that can be drawn on when a young person has experienced a set back.



## 52. Choices

Choices can help young people settle in school. Don't give too many choices as this can be overwhelming; just two or three.

Being flexible about how we want something to be achieved by offering positive choices will support the young person's need to be in control whilst enabling the adult/teacher to retain control and ensure task completion.

## 53. Attendance and not missing lessons

Develop inclusive school attendance policies avoid external exclusions, do not use cumulative exclusions and ensure exclusions are only used as a last resort in line with statutory guidance.

Partial timetables should only be used in exceptional circumstances and as part of a longer term reintegration plan. Reintegration plans should be tight and build to full attendance as soon as possible.

Don't let attendance slide, ensure close monitoring of attendance. Look for patterns that may identify underlying issues or triggers. Keep links with home strong and communicate the importance of regular school attendance.

Consider implementing an attendance improvement plan with the young person and their carers.

## 54. Plug gaps through targeted intervention (which has an evidence base)

Baseline assess the current knowledge and skills of the young person, ideally using an assessment which allows for small, incremental steps of progress to be measured.

Plug any gaps in learning to date through targeted intervention. Research evidence suggests that distributed practice (little and often) is best. This means that 10 minutes three times a week is better than 30 minutes once a week.

Where possible, try to make sure that any 'off the shelf' intervention package has an evidence base before purchasing. The Education Endowment Foundation is a useful website which gives summaries of many interventions as well as consideration of the evidence for their effectiveness.

## 55. Staff understanding

Make sure that all staff know how to support the young person and are in communication with each other.

Round robins to explore what works and what is not working can be a quick way of getting some useful information.

Circle of adult approaches are also useful. Staff members can sit around the table and explore strengths and difficulties of the young person and problem solve together.

Where possible, give time for staff in school to get to know the young person more, on a personal level so that they can build a positive relationship. This is really important for young people who find relationships difficult. Young people need to feel safe and secure through relationships of trust before they can access learning.

## 56. Uniform

Be as flexible as possible with uniform; try to support and help ensure that uniform is not a barrier to the young person being in school and being able to access an education.

One young person researched described getting two buses and walking some distance to get to school, only to be sent home for incorrect uniform. The young person described how this made him feel as though it wasn't worth bothering anymore.

## 57. Transport

Make considered and informed decisions when planning transitions to different schools or when welcoming young people in care into your setting.

One young person researched described how she has anxiety but was moved to another school where she was required to get two buses, the first of which would take her in to town. The anxiety about getting on public transport led to a sudden decline in her attendance at school.

Explore all options regarding transport to minimise the impact it can have on a young person accessing education.

## 58. Exam support

Exam times can be stressful for any young person, not just young people in care. It can be a difficult time for young people in care and there may be more instances of the young person becoming dysregulated. Support during exam times by teaching about self-care.

The young minds website has some useful information.

<https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/exam-self-care/>

Make sure that the young person has appropriate access arrangements in place.

There is useful advice at <https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration>.

## 59. Support literacy at home and school

Being able to read is fundamental for being able to thrive in adolescence and adulthood.

Parents or carers at home and school will need to provide intensive support to make sure the young person at a minimum reaches a functional level of literacy by the time they leave secondary school.



It will be important for home and school to work together using a consistent approach, focusing on the same outcomes.

Some young people in care may also present with specific literacy difficulties, in addition to possible gaps in their learning or lack of early literacy opportunities.

The best outcomes for students with literacy learning difficulties are achieved when young people in care are provided with high-quality, evidence-based instruction and intervention. Young people with literacy difficulties will not 'catch-up' without additional support.

This would likely involve:

- quality first teaching at whole class level
- differentiation to ensure curriculum access
- intensive individualised instruction

Regardless of age or year, young people with literacy difficulties will usually benefit from a phonic based programme.

## 60. Support transition to adulthood

Preparing for adulthood means preparing for:

- higher education and/or employment
- independent living
- participation in society

In order to do this effectively it will be important to be person-centred in your approach; listening to the voice of the young person and those important to them; and working with other agencies; assessing needs and joint planning.

The resource below draws on research across 16 countries and provides information on how to support resilience and improve outcomes for care leavers.

See [www.amazon.co.uk/Young-Peoples-Transitions-Care-Adulthood/dp/1843106108](https://www.amazon.co.uk/Young-Peoples-Transitions-Care-Adulthood/dp/1843106108) for more information.

# I have people I care about and who care about me

## 61. Help make friends and mix

The young person in care may benefit from adult facilitated opportunities to interact with other positive peers on an enjoyable activity.

Other young people in care may require explicit instruction to develop social communication and interaction skills.



Lego based therapy offers a structured approach in a fun setting. It uses children's love of playing with Lego to help them relax and develop communication and social skills.

## 62. Teach the young person to see things from another person's perspective

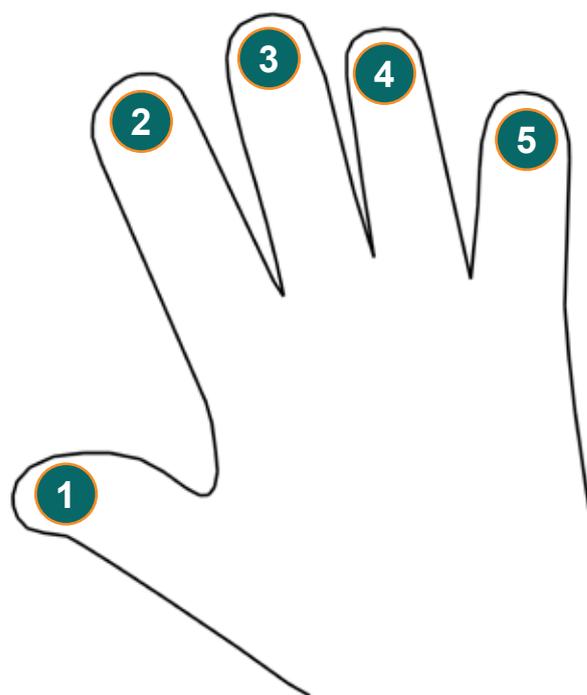
Young people in care may struggle to see things from another person's perspective, also known as mindreading.

Tools such as the hand of options in the Louise Bomber book 'What About Me?' can support with this. Young people and a supportive adult can talk through five possible motives and intentions that might have been behind whatever caused the young person stress.

**A girl bumps into you.**

**Five possible reasons for this are:**

- 1 Someone else pushed the girl who knocked into me
- 2 The girl didn't realise she had come into my personal space
- 3 The girl was busy talking and didn't look where she was going
- 4 She was trying to hurt me
- 5 It was an accident



## 63. Kindness days and random acts of kindness

Make kindness the norm. Acts of kindness can help young people connect with other people as well as to feel good about themselves, increase their sense of wellbeing, belonging and making a positive contribution.

Find out more at [www.randomactsofkindness.org/about-us](http://www.randomactsofkindness.org/about-us).

## 64. Opportunities for reparation

Demonstrate to young people in care that there are more healthy ways of relating with people.

**Focus on repairing incidents:**

- Be explicit about what has happened. Describe it neutrally and empathically

- Let them know that you understand they are probably feeling shaken up
- Be clear that something needs to happen to repair the situation and give them an idea of how to do it
- Let them know that you will support them in developing their skills in coping with such situations
- Supervise the reparation
- Let them know that the relationship is still intact

Find out more at [www.transformingconflict.org/](http://www.transformingconflict.org/).

## 65. Keep existing relationships going

Find ways to enable the young person to safely keep relationships going that are positive even if there are reasons why they won't be in contact as much anymore.

This might include:

- Written communication
- Safe supervised social media
- Check-ins with previous teachers
- Recall and memory activities to enable the young person to continue to talk about people who were special to them
- Social activities

## 66. Make sure that the young person is not isolated

Young people in care can find unstructured time difficult. Provide a space for the young person to go during times such as break and dinner until they feel comfortable enough to choose not to access it.



Consider putting on structured activities until the young person can cope with less structure. This might involve board games; gardening; painting; a project; football etc. Activities that place a low verbal demand on the young person may be helpful initially.

## 67. Tackle bullying and difficult peer relationships

Children in care are much more likely to be bullied. Preventing and tackling bullying and cyberbullying is a whole school issue and all staff should be clear on the school policy.

When staff are alerted to a possible issue it is important to listen to the young person and accept their perspective of their experience. The young person will need to feel as though they have been listened to and that action has been taken. In addition to remedial action, the young person may also need some specific support in developing their own skills, such as:

- how to consider the perspectives of other people
- how to manage tricky social situations

Find out more at [www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying).

## 68. Circle of friends

This intervention involves identifying supportive, sensible peers who can support vulnerable young people by meeting regularly and problem solving difficulties that the young person may be experiencing in school.

This is facilitated by an adult.

Find out more at [www.inclusive-solutions.com/circles/circle-of-friends/](http://www.inclusive-solutions.com/circles/circle-of-friends/)

## 69. Close home school links

Daily ways of communicating positively with parents and carers include phone calls; texts; emails; postcards; stickers; notes in planners and communication books.

Epstein (2018) found that features of a positive home school relationship include; family confidence in teachers, feeling welcome in school and reciprocity in communications.

**Epstein's model for parental involvement outlines six areas:**

- **Parenting:** assist families with parenting skills; understanding child development and ensuring home conditions support learning
- **Communicating:** Communicate with families about school and progress, and create two-way communication channels
- **Volunteering:** improve opportunities for parents to volunteer and be involved in school
- **Learning at home:** involve families with their children in academic learning at home including homework; goal setting and other activities
- **Decision making:** include families as participants in school decisions
- **Collaborating with community:** coordinate resources and services for families, students and school with community groups

## 70. Social scripts and social stories

**Social scripts:** a social script is a narrative of what to say or do in a social situation and is usually written in collaboration with the young person.

**Common areas for social scripts include:**

- compromising and negotiating
- responding to criticism
- settling conflicts

These can be practised with an adult in a safe space before being used with other young people.

**Social stories:** were created by Carol Gray (1991) and are a short description of a particular situation, event or activity which include specific information about what to expect in that situation and why.

**Common uses for social stories include:**

- understanding the perspective of another person
- helping to cope with changes to routine
- developing social skills

## Application and conclusion

It is hoped that these strategies will help you to plan support for a young person in care, using a process of assess-plan-do-review. Consider using the template below to support you with this:

Action plan					
What area of resilience have we agreed is most in need of support	What strategies do we think might be helpful?	How might this be written as a SMART outcome?	How will we measure progress or see whether the strategy has helped?	When will we review progress?	What do we need to do first (the next 48 hours) to get started?
<p><b>Example</b></p> <p>I have people I care about and who care about me</p> <p>Marley has been eating her dinner in the school toilets</p>	<p>61. Help make friends and mix</p> <p>66. Ensure not isolated</p>	<p>By next term, Marley will feel confident to eat her dinner and chat with adults in Inclusion Support</p>	<p>1. Dinner eaten consistently in Inclusion Support</p> <p>2. Marley initiates conversation or reciprocates conversation (<i>more than four exchanges</i>) with adults in Inclusion Support</p>	<p>February half term (one full term)</p>	<p>Visit Inclusion Support with Mrs Cornwall and chat about how dinner time might 'look' in Inclusion Support</p>

## Strategy checklist

- | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No. | What we could try  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1              | Developing a growth mindset  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2              | Positive daily affirmations and positive diary   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3              | Motivational interviewing  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4              | Positive role models   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5              | Peer mentoring   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6              | Acknowledge and support feelings of anxiety  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 7              | Demonstrate small changes and improvements   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 8              | Cognitive Behaviour Therapy  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9              | Mindfulness and yoga   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10             | Build self esteem  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 11             | Anger management programmes  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 12             | Explicitly teach resilience  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 13             | Emotional self-regulation  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 14             | Emotional wellbeing toolbox  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15             | Theory informed approaches that experience suggests can be effective in supporting young people with emotional needs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 16             | Key adult  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 17             | PLACE model  |

- 18 Contain the young person when home life is bad
- 19 Support transitions
- 20 Understand what is meant by separation anxiety
- 21 Transition into school
- 22 Therapeutic language
- 23 Secure base
- 24 Opportunities to safely practice new things
- 25 Plan for personally and culturally important key dates
- 26 Whole school approaches
- 27 Pets
- 28 Walking, movement and fresh air
- 29 Focus on good times and places
- 30 Positive school experiences
- 31 Access to a broad and balanced curriculum
- 32 Art/drama/music
- 33 Physical activity (sport/exercise)
- 34 Playtime/Leisure
- 35 Clubs/groups/hobbies/interests and collections
- 36 Nature
- 37 Relaxation
- 38 Laughter
- 39 Participation
- 40 Empowerment and agency
- 41 Person centred meetings

- 42 Person centred language
- 43 Keeping the young person central
- 44 Make sure meetings are accessible
- 45 Information sharing
- 46 Create a supportive learning environment
- 47 Quality first teaching and differentiation
- 48 Personalised approaches
- 49 Emotional and sensory support
- 50 Study skills/organisation
- 51 Celebrate successes
- 52 Choices
- 53 Attendance and not missing lessons
- 54 Plug gaps through targeted intervention (which has an evidence base)
- 55 Staff understanding
- 56 Uniform
- 57 Transport
- 58 Exam support
- 59 Support literacy at home and school
- 60 Support transition to adulthood
- 61 Help make friends and mix
- 62 Teach the young person to see things from another person's perspective
- 63 Kindness days and random acts of kindness

- 64 Opportunities for reparation
- 65 Keep existing relationships going
- 66 Make sure that the young person is not isolated
- 67 Tackle bullying and difficult peer relationships
- 68 Circle of friends
- 69 Close home school links
- 70 Social scripts and social stories

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# Acknowledgements

We have really enjoyed working on this project and bringing together all the strategies that make a real difference to looked after children and young people and previously looked after children and young people in schools and educational settings.

A special thank you to the young people who took part in the initial research and shared their experiences so openly with us.

Thank you too, to the designated teachers, social workers and foster carers that took part in our conference to explore the findings of our research and whose ideas and contributions on that day led to the development of this toolkit.

If you would like to know more about how to develop and implement any of the ideas listed you are welcome to contact the Barnsley Council Virtual School.

[VirtualSchool@Barnsley.gov.uk](mailto:VirtualSchool@Barnsley.gov.uk)

Liz Gibson

Francine Wint

Virtual school Head

Educational Psychologist