LOOKED-AFTER CHILDREN AND EDUCATIONAL TRAJECTORIES

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ABSTRACT

To date, the education of looked-after children has received much coverage within policy, practice and literature. With such focus predominantly on their underachievement, little attention has been afforded to those looked-after children that do achieve academic success. The following study aims to identify the possible educational trajectories of looked-after children, in order to understand why some looked-after children do well at school despite facing similar difficulties to those that do not achieve so well. The thesis demonstrates this using secondary documentation via a secondary analysis approach. The study makes an original contribution to knowledge by combining contemporary policy and legislation with existing theoretical concepts, specifically in relation to resilience. The theoretical ideas emphasised in this study are: (i) connection, (ii) control, (iii) coping. In doing so, the study draws upon a range of disciplinary and substantive perspectives including sociology, criminology, developmental psychology and psychiatry. It concludes with the notion that developing resilience in looked-after children has the potential to help them succeed at school, as well developing a series of wider characteristics and benefits that can be applied outside of an educational setting. This includes having a secure connection to someone, feeling in control of their lives and having the ability to cope with adversity.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original except where indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other education institution in the United Kingdom or overseas. Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University.

Signed …………………………………………………. Date ………………………

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
APPG	All-Party Parliamentary Group
BASW	British Association of Social Workers
CPD	Continued Professional Development
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfE	Department for Education
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DoH	Department of Health
ESB	Emotional, Social and Behavioural
FSM	Free School Meals
HoC	House of Commons
IoE	Institute of Education
NCAS	National Care Advisory Service
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
PEP	Personal Education Programme
RAD	Reactive Attachment Disorder
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SEU	Social Exclusion Unit
VSH	Virtual School Headteacher

DEFINITIONS

Looked-after children	Is the legislative term for all children and young people looked after by a local authority in accordance with the Children Act 1989. A child is looked after by a local authority if: • the child is in care by reason of a ***care order*** • the child is provide with ***accommodation*** for more than 24 hours with the agreement of the parents (unless aged 16 or over) • the child is placed away from home under an ***emergency protection order*** • the child is in ***police protection*** or arrested at the police's request and is accommodated by the local authority Where a child or young person is looked after full time by relatives, they are not regarded as a looked-after child. (DCSF, 2010a)
Care order	A care order is an order made by the court that gives the local authority parental responsibility of the child. A care order is agreed when there is evidence that a child has suffered or is likely to suffer harm from the care they are currently being provided with or the child's behaviour is beyond parental control. The care order continues until there is evidence that circumstances have changed, the child is adopted or the child reaches 18. This is known as the care order being 'discharged'. A care order cannot be made for a young person 17 and over, or 16 in the case of a young person who is married. (Children Act: Section 31 and 33, 1989)

Accommodation	A child is 'looked-after' if provided with accommodation by the local authority. Every local authority is required to provide accommodation for any child (up to the age of 16) within their area who is in need of accommodation. This can be as a result of: • there being no person with legal responsibility of the child (i.e. unaccompanied asylum seeking children) • the child is lost or has been abandoned • the person who has been caring for the child is unable to continue to provide the child with suitable accommodation or care • the child has a person with parental responsibility, but the child's welfare is at risk Any person over the age of 16 but under 21 may be accommodated in a community home which takes young people who have reached 16, if the local authority considers that in doing so would safeguard or promote the young person's welfare. If there is no care order, the person who has parental responsibility for a child will continue to do so and may at any time remove the child from accommodation provided by or on behalf of the local authority. (Children Act: Section 20, 1989)
Emergency protection order	An emergency protection order is a legal order made by the court which has been requested by the local authority. An application is made when there is concern that a child is at risk of significant harm. An emergency protection order authorises the removal of the child to accommodation provided by or on behalf of the applicant (local authority) who has parental responsibility of the child. It can also prevent the removal of a child from any hospital or other place in which he/she was being accommodated by immediately before the order. (Children Act: Section 44, 1989)
Police protection	The police may remove a child to suitable accommodation and keep the child there when there is reason to believe that a child would otherwise be subject to significant harm. The child can be kept under police protection for up to 72 hours. The police do not have parental responsibility of the child but must ensure the safeguarding and welfare of the child whilst under protection. They have a duty to inform the local authority and parents (or those with parental responsibility or who the child was living with immediately before being taken into police protection) of the situation and proceedings. The police also have a duty to inform the child of the why he/she has been taken into police protection and the further steps that may need to be taken. On behalf of the local authority, the police are able to apply for an emergency protection order. (Children Act: Section 46, 1989)

LEAVING CARE

Care leaver	Children can leave care at any time or age if the *care order* or *emergency protection order* is discharged or they no longer require *accommodation* provided by the local authority. The local authority has a duty towards care leavers, who by definition are considered either an *eligible*, *relevant* or *former relevant* child.
Eligible child	A looked-after child aged 16 or 17, who has been looked after for a total of at least 13 weeks which began after he/she reached the age of 14, and ends after the age of 16. (DCSF, 2010a)
Relevant child	A young person aged 16 or 17 who was previously an *eligible child* but is no longer looked after. This also includes those that are in a remand centre, young offender institution or a secure training centre, or any other institution ordered by a court, or in hospital at the time of their 16th birthday. (DCSF, 2010a; DfE, 2010b)
Former relevant child	A young person aged 18 or over who was either an *eligible child* or *relevant child*. The local authority provides support until the age of 21 or 25 if taking a course in education or training. (DCSF, 2010a)
Qualifying child	A young person under 21 (or 24 if in education or training) who was previously looked-after but was no longer looked-after at the age of 16. This also includes young people who are under a special guardianship order which means parental responsibility is with the carer (not the local authority) until they are 18. A qualifying child may still be entitled to advice and assistance. (Children Act: Section 14; 1989; DfE, 2010b)

INTRODUCTION

In western industrialised societies at least, compulsory formal education is a fundamental part of every child's life, a mechanism which is often responsible for determining an individual's future. Whether or not a child achieves a good education can be attributed to a number of reasons, including being in local authority care. For the 67,000 looked-after children in England in 2012, gaining a good education often proves challenging, with only 15% of looked-after children obtaining five A*-C grade GCSE's (including maths and English) compared with 59% of children across the sector (Department for Education (DfE), 2012a). Research in the field has primarily attributed this shortfall to looked-after children experiencing disadvantaged backgrounds before entering care, placement instability whilst in care and insufficient help with education. Significant research over the past two decades, and the introduction of national statistics from 1999, has meant that there is unprecedented awareness of the lower levels of educational attainment of looked-after children (Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) 2009a; DCSF, 2010b; DfE, 2013a; Stein, 2012).

Historically the relationship between UK care leavers and post-compulsory education has also proved problematic. As Stein (2012: 96) notes: "Care leavers are more likely not to be in post-16 education, employment and training than young people in the general population". In 2012, 36% of care leavers aged 19 were not in education, training or employment and only 7% participated in higher education (DfE, 2012b). Despite significant changes in recent years to related legislation and

statutory guidance, practice across the care system does not consistently support high levels of achievement in education for young people in and from care (The Who Cares Trust, 2012). Research at national level into the educational and career progression of those leaving care confirms that the expectations and aspirations surrounding their overall life chances are considerably lower than those of their peers (Leonard, 2011). Disruptions to education, combined with the absence of specialised support, means that this group does not fulfil its potential. As such, care leavers are amongst the most vulnerable individuals within our society (Clay and Dowling, 2004).

Although national government statistics have highlighted the need for research in this area, to date commissioned studies have failed to provide any adequate explanation as to why the number of care leavers progressing to university is so low. What is certain is that, whilst there is a vast literature surrounding the underachievement of looked-after children and care leavers, little attention has been paid to those that do achieve against the odds. Indeed, there is a clear gap in current literature around why some looked-after children do well at school and go on to further or higher education despite facing similar difficulties to those that do not achieve as well. To this end, the aim of the present study is to build upon and extend existing research findings in this area by developing conceptual ideas and exploring theoretical models in order to provide insight into how some looked-after children achieve better outcomes than others. The study specifically focuses on the theoretical concept of resilience and, in particular, how looked-after children adopt and operationalise notions of control, relational connection and coping in order to

negotiate their everyday lives. In so doing, the thesis draws upon a range of disciplinary perspectives from sociology, criminology, developmental psychology and psychiatry. By bringing together academic work from these distinct fields, it aims to offer a coherent analysis of developments in legislation, policy and practice around looked-after children in the post-1989 period.

Structure of thesis

Chapter 1 identifies, explains and critically analyses key policy and legislation documents on looked-after children and their education from 1989 to 2013. Set out in a chronological order, it facilitates understanding of how policy has changed within the time period.

Chapter 2 explores the literature that surrounds looked-after children and their education, focusing on their educational trajectories whilst at school and upon leaving.

The methodology and method employed within this study are addressed within Chapter 3. It focuses on the philosophical stance adopted and the collection of documents via a secondary analysis process. This chapter also includes a reflexive account detailing the researcher's methodological journey.

Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 draw upon sociology, criminology, developmental psychology and psychiatry to emphasise theoretical ideas in relation to the education

trajectories of looked-after children. The main focus is on resilience (Chapter 4) and the components which lie within it, specifically for looked-after children: connection (Chapter 5), control (Chapter 6) and coping (chapter 7).

The concluding chapter, Chapter 8, pulls together the key findings of the preceding analysis, offering a direct response to the three key themes on resilience: connection, control and coping. In closing, the chapter briefly discusses the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 1: GOVERNMENT POLICY AND LEGISLATION (1989 – 2013)

Introduction

In recent years, looked-after children have received substantial attention within government policy and legislation (Hayden, 2007), which has often having been initiated by widely publicised accounts of child abuse (Stephenson, 2007; Shaw and Frost, 2013). Their educational outcomes and achievement have remained a particular focus since the 1990s (Hayden et al., 1999 in Hayden, 2007; Goddard, 2000; Stein, 2012), perhaps due to the fact that annual published statistics still show a significant attainment gap between looked-after children and the rest of the population.

This chapter provides a chronological overview of the way in which government policy and legislation has taken shape in recent years and how initiatives aimed at improving the educational attainment of looked-after children and young people have been implemented. The chapter considers a combination of acts of law, green papers, white papers, bills and other related published policy documents. It begins with the Children Act 1989, since this act was key in reforming policy in regards to children, especially those looked-after. It ends with the most recent policy documentation (in relation to the education of looked-after children) at the time of writing, *Raising the Achievement of Disadvantaged Children 2013*.

The Children Act 1989

The Children Act 1989 altered the law in regard to children. Implemented in 1991, its aim was to ensure the welfare of all children in England and Wales and protect them from harm, allocating duties in this regard to local authorities, courts, parents and other agencies. The Act focuses on the idea that children are best cared for within their own families (Berridge and Brodie, 1998), however it also makes provisions that allow for local authorities to intervene in cases of mistreating a child. Combined with sets of Regulations and Guidance, the Children Act 1989 was significant in establishing the legal framework for the present day care system in England and Wales (Shaw and Frost, 2013). Under section 22 of the Children Act 1989, a key responsibility of local authorities is to safeguard and promote the welfare of the looked-after child (Children Act, 1989). This includes written care plans that set out a child's educational needs and how they are going to be met. Under sections 23 and 24 of the Act, local authorities also have a legal responsibility for 'maintaining' looked-after young people and providing 'financial assistance' (Children Act, 1989). The introduction of this Act highlighted a lack of in-care and after-care services, which saw some local authorities set up educational support teams and leaving care teams in the 1990's (Jackson and Cameron, 2011).

Quality Protects 1998

Following the revelations of widespread abuse in children's homes, the New Labour Government came into power in 1997 with a drive to implement new and stronger duties for looked-after children and care leavers (Stein, 2012). A subsequent critical review on the safeguarding of children living away from home by Utting (1997), was where the term *Quality Protects* was coined (Shaw and Frost, 2013). In response to this review, the '*Quality Protects'* programme was launched in 1998 (implemented in 1999) by the Secretary of State for Health. It was a three year programme designed to transform the management and delivery of children's social services, with local authorities working in partnership with the Department of Health (DoH).

The main element of the programme was to introduce mandatory national objectives for children's services, which set clear outcomes for children that local authorities were expected to achieve (DoH, 1998). Since New Labour also had a wider remit to reduce social exclusion, the first Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) report was published in 1998. It referred to the need to improve the educational achievement of looked-after children and reduce school exclusion (SEU, 1998). As such, one of the *Quality Protects* objectives was Objective 4: "To ensure that children looked after gain maximum life chance benefits from educational opportunities, health care and social care" (DoH, 1998: 14). Other objectives in relation to children in need, together with looked-after children, included: ensuring children were securely attached to their caregiver and are protected from significant harm such as abuse and neglect. For those leaving care, Objective 5, focused on ensuring young people leaving care were not isolated and were able to

participate socially and economically as citizens (DoH, 1998). The performance indicators linked to this objective were to increase the number of looked-after young people in education, training and employment and to reduce the number of young people leaving care when they reach 16 (Stein, 2012). This provides a backdrop for the implementation of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.

Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 was introduced to extend local authority responsibilities towards young people previously looked-after. Under the Act, which came into force in October 2001, local authorities have a duty to assess the needs and provide adequate financial and personal support for young people who were 16 and 17 in care or previously in care, including those in full time education until they are 21 (DCSF, 2009b; DfE, 2013d). Improvements in leaving care services included: a comprehensive needs assessment, a Pathway Plan, a personal advisor and access to education, training or employment (DCSF, 2009b; DfE, 2013d). A Pathway Plan is based on an agreement with the young person, personal advisor and other relevant professionals about the young person's next steps towards independence. It should detail the services needed to support the young person in seven needs areas, including education, training and employment (DCSF, 2009b). The government's aim was that these measures would delay and aid care leavers' transitions from care to adulthood.

In 2002, the *Choice Protects* programme was launched to improve the outcomes of looked-after children and young people through better placement stability, matching and choice (Shaw and Frost, 2013). It has been suggested that this initiative was partly implemented through recognition that an increase in adoption in some local authorities was due to improving standards and choice in foster and residential placements (Thoburn, 2008).

Every Child Matters 2003

The *Every Child Matters* Green Paper emerged from the death of 8 year-old Victoria Climbié (Hayden, 2007), who was murdered by her guardians in 2000. A public enquiry into her death, headed by Lord Lamming, noted the failure of organisations to protect her and gave recommendations on child protection in England. The *Every Child Matters* Green Paper identified four key themes: increasing the focus on supporting parents and carers; early intervention and effective protection; strengthening accountability and the integration of services at all levels; and workforce reform (SEU, 2003). The government's aim was to do more in the way of protection and ensuring that every child reaches their full potential, regardless of circumstances, by giving children support to achieve five outcomes: being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being (DfES, 2003a). The *Every Child Matters* Green Paper came at a time when the New Labour Government were continuing their wider agenda of combating social exclusion. Alongside a focus on education for all children, the New Labour Government prioritised the education of looked-after children. In 2003, the

Social Exclusion Unit published the report *A Better Education for Children in Care,* which identified five key factors as to why looked-after children were significantly underachieving in their education (see chapter 2). It highlighted specific areas of action to improve life chances for children in care, including greater stability of placements and help with school work (DfES, 2004). The release of this green paper combined with the publishing of the government's response to the Laming enquiry, and also saw a major consultation and review of children's services (Stein, 2012). This led to the Children Act 2004.

Children Act 2004

The Children Act 2004 built upon the Children Act 1989 and was the legislative platform to reform children's services to further improve the lives of children, young people and their families, including the protection and safeguarding of children. The Act included establishing a national Children's Commissioner and national Director of Children's Services (Children Act, 2004). The Act also gave a considerable amount of flexibility to local authorities in the way they could implement its provisions (Hayden, 2007). Section 52 of this Act reiterates Section 22 of the Children Act 1989 and places a statutory duty for local authorities to promote the educational achievement of the children they look after (Children Act, 2004; DCSF, 2010a). It requested that Children's Services Departments were to be set up in every local authority to bring care and education under one administrative body (Hart, 2006; Jackson and Cameron, 2011). This multi-agency delivery meant the Children Act 2004 gave the legal underpinning to *Every Child Matters: Change*

for Children 2004, with the intention to achieve the five *Every Child Matters* outcomes (DfES, 2003a, 2004). In addition, the Education Act 2005, meant the admissions system into school also changed to give priority to looked-after children (DCSF, 2010b).

Every Child Matters: Change for Children 2004

Although the Children Act 2004 provided the legislative framework to support the long-term programme of *Every Child Matters*, the *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* Green Paper stated that legislation by itself is not enough and needs to be a part of a wider process if change is to happen (DfES, 2004). The 2004 Green Paper set out a framework for change that is needed to maximise opportunity and minimise risk. It does this by identifying ways in which all services involved in the lives of children and young people could work better together to deal with the consequences of difficulties in children's lives and prevent things from going wrong in the first place (DfES, 2004).

Following the SEU report in 2003 and the Children Act 2004, part of the aim of *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* was to build on the achievements of the Quality Protects programme to improve the life chances of looked-after children (DfES, 2004). A particular focus was on enhancing the number of foster carers, providing stable placements to ensure minimal disruption in children's home and school lives, and introducing a national award scheme to highlight the work of anyone who made a positive impact on a looked-after child's life (DfES, 2004). In

spite of this, it has been noted that policies such as *Every Child Matters* do not challenge the social and economic circumstances of children and families, but rather focuses on individuals overcoming adversity against the odds (Shaw and Frost, 2013).

Care Matters 2006

In 2005 only 11% of children in care achieved 5 good GCSEs (A*-C) compared with 56% of all children (DfES, 2006). These statistics confirmed to the government that looked-after children's life chances had not improved at the same rate as that of all children and it became apparent that children in care remained at greater risk of being "left behind" in terms of their education (DfES, 2006: 3). This led to growing evidence that looked-after children and young people in and leaving care were also susceptible to poor career outcomes (Wade and Dixon, 2006). This stimulated the publishing of New Labour Government's Green Paper *Care Matters: Transforming the Lives of Children and Young People in care* (2006), aimed at improving state care for children and young people. Specific proposals included ensuring the right placement so that children can have a happy, stable home life in order to flourish, with a significant focus on improving their education (DfES, 2006). Educational proposals included the offering of free school transport to allow children to remain at the same school despite any placement changes and piloting the Virtual School Headteacher (VSH) initiative to local authorities (DfES, 2006). The VSH would be specifically responsible for overseeing the education of those children looked-after by the local authority. The paper also stresses the need to ensure children's voices

are heard when important decisions are being made regarding their future and that young people up to the age of 18 were not forced out of care before they are ready (Shaw and Frost, 2013). The subsequent White Paper *Care Matters: Time for Change*, published in 2007, outlined specific proposals that led to the Children and Young Persons Act 2008.

Children and Young Persons Act 2008

The Coalition Government, elected in 2010, implemented the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 in 2011. The educational provisions outlined in the Act placed the designated teacher role on a statutory footing. It also emphasised the need to ensure that placement moves would not disrupt the education of looked-after children. A commitment from the local authority to support care leavers in education or training up until the age of 25 was also put in place. This support package included a personal advisor to give advice and guidance and the offering of practical or financial help. In terms of financial help, the Act required local authorities to provide a bursary to those care leavers wishing to partake in an education or training programme up to the age of 25 (Children and Young Persons Act, 2008).

Following the Act, in 2009, a report *Realising Young Potential: Supporting Care Leavers into Education, Employment and Training* was published encouraging local authority Leaving Care Teams and their partners to further assist young people who have left care to access education, employment and training (DCSF, 2009b). The

report reflected the inclusion of care leavers in the *Socially Excluded Adults Public Service Agreement PSA 16*. Established in 2007, the *Socially Excluded Adults Public Service Agreement PSA 16* saw seven government departments endeavour to improve the life chances of the most vulnerable adults in society, such as the securing of jobs and homes. Care leavers were included since they are considered at a high risk of being socially excluded later in life (DCSF, 2009b). The 2009 report included recommendations and agreed national actions on whether a Buttle UK Quality Mark could be applied to further education; increasing support for local authorities in order to improve education, training and employment outcomes for care leavers; and improving the quality and consistency of education, training and employment actions in Pathway Plans so that they are reviewed regularly, at least until the age 21, or longer if in education, training or employment (DCSF, 2009b). The Buttle UK Quality Mark was developed by Buttle UK, a children's charity specifically for vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people. It was initially awarded to higher education institutions that adopted a statement of commitment to support care leavers (IoE, 2011; Leonard, 2011). It is now also awarded to further education institutions that adopt the same commitment.

Care Planning, Placements and Case Review Regulations 2010

The statutory guidance from *Care Planning, Placements and Case Review Regulations 2010,* implemented in April 2011, set out the functions and responsibilities of local authorities and partner agencies under Part 3 of the Children Act 1989, concerning the provision of local authority support for children

and families. These responsibilities were in relation to care planning, placement and case reviews for looked-after children, in order to safeguard and promote their welfare and enable each looked-after child to achieve his/her full potential in life, as stated in the Section 22 of the Children Act 1989 (DCSF, 2010a). This included promoting their educational achievement regardless of where they live and considering any implications that placement decisions may have on their education and welfare (see DCSF, 2010a; DfE, 2012e). This remit also extended to supporting relevant and former relevant children "to do as well as they possibly can in education" (DCSF, 2010a: 33). If a former looked-after young person expressed a wish to return to education or training some time before they were 25, local authorities were required to assess their needs in order to see if they were entitled to receive support including a personal advisor, a Pathway Plan, specialist assistance and financial help (Baker, 2012). The conditions of this were dependent on how long they were looked-after for and the age at which they left care. Further principles within this statutory framework included being listened to in the development and implementation of their Pathway Plans and that looked-after children were to remain in local authority care until their 18th birthday unless there is a good reason to change their status (DfE, 2012d).

The Importance of Teaching 2010

The Schools White Paper 2010, entitled *The Importance of Teaching*, came as a statement of recognition that compared to international competitors, the UK's overall educational achievement was not improving as quickly. The then Prime Minister, David Cameron, and Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg, explained that this "will define our economic growth and our country's future... the only way we can catch up, and have the world-class schools our children deserve, is by learning the lessons of other countries success" (DfE, 2010a: 3). The White Paper outlined the steps necessary to implement whole-system reform for education in England, focusing on structural change and rigorous attention to standards (DfE, 2010a). It placed responsibility on local authorities to support vulnerable pupils, including looked-after children, those with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and those outside mainstream education. It stated that local authorities were to continue to act as the corporate parent for looked-after children, with a primary role in improving their educational attainment. This included the continuation of looked-after children being given priority in admissions to schools.

A key initiative set out in *The Importance of Teaching* White Paper 2010 was the Coalition Government's priority to address the inequality between rich and poor pupils. This established the 'Pupil Premium', a form of financial assistance designed for disadvantaged pupils (those entitled to Free School Meals (FSM)) to provide additional funding outside of schools budgets, with the primary objective of raising their attainment. The government believed that head teachers and school leaders would be able to decide best how to use the Pupil Premium in order to respond

appropriately to individual circumstances (DfE, 2013f). If used in the right way, the Pupil Premium could provide educational interventions that could raise the educational attainment for those pupils who are at a disadvantage. When the Pupil Premium was introduced to schools in April 2011, it initially included looked-after children who were in care for at least 12 month; more recently it has been extended to include all children who have been in care for at least 6 months (DfE, 2013c). The scheme has also been extended to pupils who have been registered for FSM at any point in the last six years (known as 'Ever 6 FSM') (DfE, 2013f). In the year 2012 to 2013, the government doubled the total funding available for the Pupil Premium to £1.25 billion (£623 per pupil), rising again to £1.875 billion (£900 per pupil) in the year 2013 to 2014 (DfE, 2013f).

Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked-After Children: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities 2010

When the Coalition Government were elected in 2010, not only were they committed to raising the academic achievement of children overall, but they placed a particular emphasis on narrowing the educational attainment gap between children in care and their peers (House of Commons (HoC), 2011). In addition to the releasing of *The Importance of Teaching* White Paper 2010, the Coalition Government published specific guidance on *Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked-After Children*. The DfE (2013a) write that this statutory guidance is for local authorities, Directors of Children's Services, social workers,

Independent Reviewing Officers and officers who are responsible for the education of looked-after children. This guidance directly relates to Section 22 (3A) under the Children Act 1989 and Section 52 under the Children Act 2004, which requires local authorities to promote the educational achievement of the children they look after.

A key part of this guidance was that local authorities had to ensure education remained a priority when care planning, taking into account the implications of school moves at crucial times such as Key Stage 4 when they will be taking their GCSE's (DCSF, 2010b). This was to be done through the use of an up-to-date Personal Education Plan (PEP). If used correctly and efficiently, a PEP is a written document that details the necessary teaching and learning provisions in order to meet the educational needs of the child in care. Since the SEU's report in 2003 implied that insufficient help with education was a reason for looked-after children's underachievement, it seems the PEP was introduced to address this.

The development, implementation and reviewing of a child or young person's PEP is the responsibility of the social worker (or other appropriate professional) and the school's designated teacher. The child or young person will also have a relevant local authority representative specified in the PEP, such as a foster carer. In accordance with the *Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked-After Children: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities 2010*, this representative must attend parents' evenings and other relevant meetings (DCSF, 2010b). Those working with looked-after children were also required to promote positive behaviour and reduce school exclusions in order to maintain the child in school

(DCSF, 2010b). This is something that will be discussed in subsequent chapters. Support for foster carers to help children with their homework and other educational opportunities also formed part of the statutory guidance, and targets one of the factors the SEU holds accountable for the low educational attainment for looked-after children: primary carers not being expected or equipped to provide sufficient support and encouragement for learning and development (SEU, 2003). Furthermore, the guidance states that fostering and children's homes are required to follow (at least) the National Minimum Standards on promoting the educational achievement for looked-after children (DCSF, 2010b). National Minimum Standards are "designed to ensure that care provision is fit for purpose and meets the assessed needs of people using social care services" (DfE, 2013h).

Care leavers also remained a government priority. In 2011, a new 16-19 Bursary scheme began, which entitled looked-after young people and care leavers to a £1,200 bursary if they stayed in full-time education (DfE, 2012d). In 2012 a set of principles and promises developed by care leavers themselves, was set out in the *Charter for Care Leavers*. It was designed to raise expectations, aspiration and understanding of what care leavers need and what the government and local authorities should do to be good Corporate Parents (DfE, 2012c). Whilst the *Charter for Care Leavers* was not to replace laws, the promises made were to help in decision making and the key principles were to remain constant through any changes in Legislation, Regulation and Guidance (DfE, 2012c). Promises included: to listen to, support and to find care leavers a home.

Children and Families Bill 2013

The Children and Families Bill 2013 sought to reform legislation in order to support families and improve services afforded to vulnerable children (DfE, 2013e). Areas specifically relating to looked-after children included changes to adoption and children in care, family justice and children and young people with SEN. For instance, the government wanted to see "more children being adopted by loving families with less delay" (DfE, 2013e: paragraph 2). They also recognised that the educational attainment of looked-after children was not improving at a fast enough rate (DfE, 2013e). By way of targeting this, the Children and Families Bill 2013 required every local authority to have a VSH in charge of the education of looked-after children as if they all attended the same school.

The Children and Families Bill 2013 underpinned the Coalition Government's commitment to ensure that all children and young people can succeed, no matter what their background (DfE, 2013e). This commitment extends New Labour's focus and policy implementation in *Every Child Matters*. However only when this bill is passed will we know if these commitments made by government will be transformed into actions by way of law.

Improving the Adoption System and Services for Looked-After Children 2013

Alongside making changes to reduce the adoption process through the Children and Families Bill 2013, the DfE (2013b) were seen to take strategic action to improve the quality of care and the stability of placements for looked-after children so that all children could succeed in life. In terms of education, Ofsted (2012) emphasised the significant impact that strong VSH leadership can have on the attainment of looked-after children. As a result, following the publication of annual statistics in December 2012 (that indicated looked-after children were still underachieving in their education), the government required that every local authority had a VSH to make sure children in care receive the support they need to succeed at school. As part of this policy the government also pledged to make sure they listened to the views of children in care and make sure they receive better care and protection (DfE, 2013b). Also *Improving the Adoption System and Services for Looked-After Children 2013 policy* pledged to give foster carers the training and support they need and monitor the stability of foster placements by improving the way we collect data from local authorities (DfE, 2013b). For those young people that have left care, this policy document aimed to improve services for children who return home and keep the wellbeing of care leavers in mind (DfE, 2013b).

Raising the Achievement of Disadvantaged Children 2013

In 2013, The DfE expressed concern that "children from disadvantaged backgrounds are far less likely to get good GCSE results" (DfE, 2013c: paragraph 1). Deeming it unacceptable for children's success to be determined by their social circumstances, they intended to raise the levels for achievement for all disadvantaged pupils and to close the gap in achievement between disadvantaged children and their peers. This includes looked-after children. The way they intended to do this was to focus on the use of the Pupil Premium. This included evaluating its findings of improved attainment, ensuring it was used effectively for interventions, and requiring schools to publish details of how they are were using the Pupil Premium and the impact it was having. In addition, Ofsted inspections were required to assess schools on their use of the Pupil Premium and on the performance of their disadvantaged pupils (DfE, 2013c)

For looked-after children, an extension to the current Pupil Premium, the 'Pupil Premium Plus', saw funding to support children in care at school increase by £1,000 per pupil (DfE, 2013g). Children are covered as soon as they enter care (rather than waiting until at least 6 months). From April 2014, it is assumed looked-after children will attract £1,900 additional funding per pupil, more than double the £900 awarded in 2013 to 2014 (DfE, 2013g). Total funding will increase from £40 million in 2013 to 2014 to £100 million in 2014 to 2015 (DfE, 2013g). This funding is to be spent through a collaboration with schools and VSH in order to use it in the best way for each looked-after child.

Summary

This chapter has identified the most prominent government legislation and policy documents surrounding the education of looked-after children, from the 1989 Children Act to the 2013 *Raising the Achievement of Disadvantaged Children*. It has focused on providing the content and context of these documents, as part of an analysis of how looked-after children's education has continued to be a priority for government. This priority has remained despite changes in the government's leadership. What is certain, is that without the implementation of Acts of law, we would not have seen so many policy initiatives published by way of Green Papers and White Papers. *Quality Protects 1998* was the beginning of the current policy focus on outcomes for all children. The Coalition Government have highlighted the vital role of local authorities in assisting with the needs of looked-after children, supporting the role of the designated teacher and VSH, as well as extending the Pupil Premium to the Pupil Premium Plus. However, despite such focus for more than two decades on narrowing the attainment gap between looked-after children and the rest of the population, the most recent government statistics still show looked-after children as significantly underperforming in their education. This raises questions such as, is the government targeting the right areas for looked-after children in terms of their education, and does a different approach need to be adopted? Such statistics have given way to much research and literature in this field, many attempting to understand the reasons *why* looked-after children are underperforming and *what* could be done to change this. It is exploring this that forms our next chapter.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

It has long been established that looked-after children fall within the most disadvantaged groups of people in society, in particular that of disadvantaged children. A key predictor of disadvantage amongst school aged children is those that are entitled to FSM, an indication that their socio-economic status is lower than average. In 2012, 18% of children in England were entitled to this benefit (DfE, 2013i). This includes all looked-after children.

Children from disadvantaged backgrounds are immediately susceptible to poorer life chances, in particular in their educational and life achievements (Stephenson, 2007; Amadeo and Marshall, 2013). Much like health, education is fundamental to our life chances (Shaw and Frost, 2013), with the "foundations of successful careers often laid while young people are at school" (Stein, 2012: 95). The DfE (2010a) noted that young children who are in the bottom 20% of attainment in the Early Years Foundation Stage are six times more likely to be in the bottom 20% at key stage 1 than their peers. The gap between those at either end of the socio-economic status 'scale' continues to widen during childhood (Stephenson, 2007). Those pupils who qualify for FSM are only half as likely to achieve five good GCSEs as their peers. Indeed, in 2011, 35% of pupils entitled to FSM achieved five GCSEs (including English and mathematics at A* to C) compared with 62% of pupils who were not entitled (DfE, 2013c). Failing to achieve qualifications results in a higher

risk of becoming socially excluded and experiencing negative outcomes in later life (Sparkes and Glennerster, 2002; Hobcraft, 2002). For instance, it has been recognised that "more children from some private schools go to Oxbridge than the entire cohort of children on FSM" (DfE, 2010a: 81, original emphasis).

Looked-after children and education

According to Hayden (2007), looked-after children are the most vulnerable children in Britain. Many looked-after children come from poor disadvantaged backgrounds, often receiving poor parenting, maltreatment and family breakdown, contributing to disadvantage further down the line, particularly for education (Stein 2001; Davies and Ward, 2011; Jackson et al., 2011). Certainly, the poor educational attainment of looked-after children has been well documented (Goddard, 2000; SEU, 2003 Stein, 2012). Significant research over the past two decades and the introduction of national statistics from 1999 has raised unprecedented awareness that looked-after children and young people have lower levels of educational attainment than non looked-after children (DCSF, 2009a; DfE, 2013a; Stein, 2012), particularly as they move through secondary education (DCSF, 2009a). As we have seen in the previous chapter, such notions of deficit have received significant attention within government policy, legislation and practice over the years (Hayden, 2007), whereby education has been cited as "a vital component of care planning for looked-after children" (DfE, 2012e: paragraph 1). Yet recent government figures suggest that the educational attainment of looked-after children across England is still low in comparison to those children who grow up

within their birth families (DCSF, 2009a; DfE, 2013a). Table 1 shows the percentage of looked-after children achieving English and Maths GCSE A*-C in comparison to the rest of the population. These statistics are taken from the Government's 2012 Statistical First Release report on the outcomes of children who have been looked-after by local authorities (DfE, 2012b). The report includes an 'impact indicator' to identify the attainment gaps between looked-after children and the rest of the population.

Table 1: Looked-after children and educational attainment

Year	Looked-after children	The rest	Attainment gap (percentage points)
2009/2010	12.7	53.5	40.8
2010/2011	14.1	59.1	45.0
2011/2012	15.5	58.7	43.2

(Adapted from DfE, 2012b)

Although there is evidence of some improvement in the educational attainment of looked-after children's in recent years, the attainment gap between children in care and their peers has, in fact, widened (HoC, 2011). This was due to the rest of the population achieving the equivalent results at a faster rate. The DfE (2013a) explained that narrowing this gap remains a high priority for government; implying that all those involved with looked-after children can do more to support and help

them succeed in education. However it seems important to recognise that there was a change in definition for looked-after children from the statistics published in 2010 and 2011 to those published in 2012. In 2010 and 2011, the statistics included all children who had been looked-after continuously for 6 months. For the year 2012, this changed to those children continuously looked-after for a period of at least 12 months (DfE, 2012b). The DfE (2012b) clarified that the reason for this change was to allow the support (that a looked-after child received from the local authority) to have time to have an impact on educational results. This presents difficulties in comparing the statistics. Stein (2012) argues that these measures of how well the care system is performing are both simplistic and limited, since they do not take into account the poor starting points these young people have upon entry to care. The education, careers, health and well-being of looked-after children and young people is almost solely shaped by what happens to them at home, school and community, often coming from socially deprived backgrounds, having suffered from some form of abuse or neglect (Stein, 2012). Evidence suggests that this may hinder some looked-after children's cognitive and emotional development which in turn has implications on their educational outcomes (Berridge et al., 2008; Jackson et al., 2011; Stein, 2012).

In 2003, at a time when only 1% of care leavers progressed to university (DCSF, 2009b), the then Prime Minister, Tony Blair, commissioned the SEU (2003) to recommend ways of raising the educational attainment of children in care. Their report *A Better Education for Children in Care*, identifies five key factors to why looked-after children were achieving significantly below average: (i) placement

instability, (ii) too much time out of school, (iii) insufficient help with education, (iv) primary carers not being expected or equipped to provide sufficient support and encouragement for learning and development, and (v) many children having unmet, emotional, mental and physical health needs. Alongside the SEU report (2003), there has been other research that has attempted to establish the causes of poor educational attainment amongst looked-after children. Shaw and Frost (2013) conclude that there are three main causes of educational disadvantage for looked-after children: pre-care disadvantage, placement instability and system abuse. System abuse is otherwise referred to as the experiencing of stigma associated with being looked-after, such as being taken out of class to attend a review or having to request permission to stay at a friend's house (Shaw and Frost, 2013). According to Hayden (2007), educational underachievement may be attributed to wider factors comprising of: inadequate corporate parenting, care environment, failure to prioritise education, inappropriate expectations, placement instability, disrupted schooling and pre-care experiences. What these academics present are factors similar to those presented by the SEU, although they establish children's experiences prior to entering care as having an impact on looked-after children's education. Stein (2012: 94) infers that "the reasons for looked-after children and young people's underachievement are multifaceted and require an understanding of their life course". To this end, the aim of the next section is to focus on the possible educational trajectories of looked-after children. Taken from the SEU report (2003) and the academics aforementioned, it comprises of perhaps the most pivotal influencing factors on a looked-after child or young person's educational trajectory; placement stability, time out of/detachment from school and insufficient

help with education. In doing so, the chapter ends by addressing the possible outcomes of such trajectories.

Placement stability

Much research has attempted to establish the causes of poor educational attainment amongst looked-after children, with placement stability receiving significant attention (Skuse et al., 2001; SEU, 2003; Clay and Dowling, 2004; Stein, 2005; Hayden, 2007; Hannon et al., 2010; All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), 2012; Shaw and Frost, 2013). For many looked-after children, school life has been disrupted, making their education a rather challenging process. Often during their time in care, children and young people experience considerable disruption in their lives from placement instability and placement movement (Clay and Dowling, 2004; Stein, 2005). Where this is not the case, the prospects of achieving academic success rise noticeably alongside emotional and financial stability, which are fundamental in creating and sustaining an environment where learning can thrive (APPG, 2012). A study by Atwool (2006) suggested that as the number of care placements increases, so too does the child's vulnerability. This is supported by Daniel (2008) who concluded that the need to have a secure attachment to a specific person is a protective factor that can increase a child or young person's resilience. Changes in a child or young person's placement may consequently have a negative impact on academic achievement since links have been associated between placement stability, placement choice, educational achievement and resilience (Atwool, 2006; Daniel, 2008; Shaw and Frost, 2013). Hannon and

colleagues (2010: 12) add: "a care system that promotes stability, resilience and healthy psychological development for looked-after children, should be based around... stable and high-quality placements that provide good parenting and are responsive to the child's needs, and a supported transition to independent adulthood". Stein (2008) explains that this can be achieved through having a secure attachment by means of a positive, warm relationship, which lessens the chance of a placement breaking down. Having a secure attachment to one or two significant adults (not necessarily parents) facilitates better outcomes later on by promoting resilience for looked-after children (Hayden, 2007; Hannon et al, 2010; Shaw and Frost, 2013). This is best achieved by long-term foster placements or adoption that can offer stability and meet emotional and educational needs (Hayden, 2007; Stein, 2008; Shaw and Frost, 2013). Having the ability to forge relationships with other children and adults can also affect a child at school, in particular improvements in their attendance and attainment (Hayden, 2007). Within the context of resilience, stable placements, attachment and the nature of parenting children receive will be explored in more depth in Chapters 5 and 6.

Placements can break down for a variety of reasons, with a large proportion failing because of administration errors, not because of bad behaviour, yet this can have a devastating impact on self esteem (APPG, 2012). In the Children's Care Monitor survey 2011, almost a quarter of looked-after children and young people were not given notice of change in their placement until the day of their move and 55% were given notice of a week or less (APPG, 2012). A report by APPG (2012) entitled *Education Matters in Care*, chaired by Edward Timpson MP, stressed that involving

children in the decision making in regards to their placement, is not only important in creating a long-term placement, but also for their academic achievement. Shaw and Frost (2013) explain that placements that are intended to last but eventually break down are mostly seen amongst older children and young people, those that have challenging behaviour and those that do not want to be in care. Challenging behaviour that can cause disruption at home and school can often be due to some form of mental health need which may be labelled as Emotional, Social and Behavioural (ESB) difficulties, Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) or Autism, with a high proportion of looked-after children having SEN (DfE, 2012b). Such emotional and behavioural problems are strongly associated with placement breakdown and so it is crucial to provide adequate support to both looked-after children and their carers (Hannon et al., 2010). Carers' feeling unable to cope combined with the overall pressures of caring can lead to a reduction in carers (Hayden, 2007). Furthermore, given that the breakdown of placements can worsen children and young people's mental health problems and increase the lilkihood of further placements breaking down, Hannon et al. (2010: 14) suggest that "children need to receive high quality emotional and professional support and stable placements from the start of their care journeys to address these problems and build their resilience".

The stability of placements can also be linked to the stability of education and the chance of improved educational outcomes (Skuse et al., 2001; Stein, 2001; APPG, 2012). Clay and Dowling (2004) contend that education is not given sufficient priority when planning for these placements and future options. Changes in a child

or young person's placement can cause discontinuity in education (having to change school), loss of information, decrease in self-esteem and a loss of social networks, all of which can negatively affect their health and reduce their resilience (Shaw and Frost, 2013). Jackson and colleagues (2011) imply that it should be assumed that children in long-term care will remain in placement and education until the age of 18, which should also be evidenced in their Pathway Plans. Indeed, Hannon and et al. (2010) stress that avoiding disruption in education by keeping looked-after children and young people in the same school with the same friends has a strong association with their educational attainment and can promote their resilience. This is because it can act as a source of security and stability, providing opportunities for constructive contact with peers and supportive adults (Gilligan, 1998), as well as facilitating the development of self-esteem and confidence; particularly through non-academic qualifications such as sport or music (Dixon et al., 2004). As noted in Chapter 1, local authorities are required to consider any implications of placement moves in the disruption of education. Jackson and colleagues (2011) argue that more should be done to help and encourage young people to participate in social, leisure and volunteering based activities and projects that are to remain stable despite any placement changes; providing looked-after children and young people with qualifications, experience and income. In turn, having positive school and community experiences can act as a protective factor against risk and help to develop resilience (Daniel, 2008). Ensuring looked-after children and young people are placed in high quality placements will significantly benefit their education and future aspirations to continue to further and higher education, training and employment (Sinclair et al., 2007; Stein, 2009b; DfE, 2012d).

This is particularly the case for those that have a long-term stable placement or whose main placement is with foster carers and placed within their own local authority (SEU, 2003; Stein, 2008; Shaw and Frost, 2013).

Time out of/detachment from school

The process of detachment from a mainstream setting can lead to social exclusion. Therefore for vulnerable young people, becoming detached from education may inhibit them in their adult lives. When referring to detachment from education, we are referring to the inability of the child to cope and remain within mainstream education (Stephenson, 2007); something which indicates a lack of resilience. As a relationship between a young person and a school breaks down, a gradual detachment to schooling can occur. For looked-after young people, school can act as one of the only stable things within their lives and so maintaining it becomes essential. Stephenson (2007) explains that detachment accelerates when young people reach Key Stage 4 of their education. This is an age where entry into the care and criminal justice system is at its highest and these factors alone can lessen attachments to mainstream education (Stephenson, 2007). The process of detachment from schooling manifests itself in a variety of ways: school exclusion (fixed-term or permanent), absenteeism (authorised or unauthorised (truanting) and/or statemented (with SEN) (Stephenson, 2007). Exclusion through behaviour or being statemented as having SEN suggests that the problem is located within the child and therefore the child will be removed. By grouping young people who significantly underachieve or behave disruptively, alongside a range of other

adversities, can be a significant risk factor for adverse outcomes such as social exclusion or not being in education, training or employment (NEET) (Stephenson, 2007). These children often share similar disadvantages of physical and mental health, housing and family stability, all of which are can affect educational attainment (Stephenson, 2007). Serious or persistent offenders, those with ESB difficulties, those permanently excluded, looked-after children and those homeless, have overlapping characteristics that are rooted in poverty and social exclusion (Stephenson, 2007).

Stephenson (2007) notes that looked-after children are widely referred to in the related academic literature as being increasingly at risk of exclusion from school. In 2003, the SEU noted that children in care were ten times more likely to be excluded than other children. That figure is now only four times more likely (APPG, 2012), yet the British Association of Social Workers (BASW in APPG, 2012) still see a disproportionate number of children from a care background being subject to temporary and permanent exclusion. If looked-after children get into trouble in more than one aspect of their lives, they are likely to receive negative criticism which can be the instigator of their behaviour (Hayden, 2007). They are also likely to be known across different agencies such as youth justice, social services and mental health (Hayden, 2007). For example, the extreme breach of authority that leads to school exclusion is often a criminal offence too such as theft, criminal damage or assault (Stephenson, 2007). It is therefore possible to understand the correlation between school exclusion and offending behaviour, especially since problem behaviour in school is one of the associated risk factors for criminal

involvement and poor prospects when older (Hayden, 2007; Farrington and Welsh, 2007; Stephenson, 2007). Pearce and Hillman (1998) argue that once a child has been excluded, their vulnerability increases, particularly from the prospect of placement breakdown. This may have previously created problems that fall between social services and educational departments, however the establishment of the Children Act 2004 saw the care and educational departments join together to form one administrative body (see Chapter 1).

Truanting, on the other hand, involves wilfully missing school without 'parental' consent or knowledge, often displaying traits of anti-social behaviour (Stephenson, 2007). Reid (1999) argues that reducing truancy can help to reduce offending and social exclusion. If looked-after young people enter the custodial system whilst at school, it increases their chances of instability at school, consequently resulting in detachment to mainstream education (Stephenson, 2007). Building on the work of Hibbett et al., Stephenson (2007) argues that children and young people out of education or training for a significant amount of time can result in lower academic achievement. However, the APPG (2012) make reference to Baldwin to suggest that a positive relationship between a looked-after child and their carer is important in helping young people who truant and who are excluded from school in returning to education. Jackson and colleagues (2011) explain that irregular school attendance should be noted as a possible indication that the child could be suffering from serious family problems and information on unexplained absences should be closely linked to safeguarding policies in schools. Similarly in the context of school exclusion, Hayden (2007) writes that behaving in such a way should be seen as a

warning that something is wrong, and therefore particular attention needs to be paid to the possible underlying causes located within the family, school and community; targeting only one area of the young person's life will not be sustainable. The need to have positive experiences within school and the community is necessary if children are to achieve well and cope with life's adversities. This forms part of the resilience theory, with Sinclair (2005) suggesting the need to provide protective factors in order to increase the chance of improved outcomes for those children otherwise at risk of poor ones. Through nurturing resilience, a child or young person's vulnerability and risk of poor prospects can be reduced (Daniel, 2008). It is necessary to foster resilience 'strings', since improvement in one domain has a positive knock-on effect in other domains (Daniel, 2008). This is something which I explore in greater depth in Chapter 4.

Hayden (2007) reminds us that it is important to remember that children are in care because of what their parents have done or been unable to do and not what they have done. We have already seen that the challenging behaviour of looked-after children can be linked to disruption and upset with placement moves. Additional factors include a lack of a consistent social worker and the reasons why they are in care in the first place (Stephenson, 2007; SEU, 2003). A lack of consistent and adequate parenting during the early years and the failing to nurture and provide boundaries (Shaw and Frost, 2013) is something which stems from Bowlby's (1953) theory of attachment. This means looked-after children and young people may experience difficulties controlling their behaviour and understanding the consequences of their actions; something which I rationalise further in Chapter 6.

Given that the behaviour of these children can often be attributed to adverse experiences and not simply the characteristics of the child, Jackson et al. (2011) recommend that local authorities and children's services should keep looked-after young people in mainstream education but with additional support. The APPG (2012) suggest that whilst such a decision remains with the headteacher concerned, the VSH should be included in the decision-making process (APPG, 2012). Nevertheless Stephenson (2007) argues that there are already too many professionals involved in the lives of young people facing multiple challenges.

Insufficient help with education

Schools failing to help those young people in care to reach their full potential may significantly impact the educational attainment of those concerned (Stein, 2012). The APPG (2012) contend this can often be due to schools having low aspirations for the educational attainment of looked-after children. Since many looked-after children have a history of disadvantage prior to entering care, planned and well organised multi-professional work is necessary to address these disadvantages and ensure educational disadvantages do not accumulate once they are in care (Shaw and Frost, 2013).

It is important to recognise that some children can achieve higher in their education by being in care (Wade et al., 2011). Evidence shows that VSH, PEPs and designated teachers have had a positive effect on the educational experience of looked-after children, especially since some saw their entry to care as beneficial to their

education (Brodie et al., 2011). Despite the VSH post becoming statutory in all local authorities (DfE, 2013a), there is evidence to suggest that young people are often not aware of their PEPs, let alone involved in their implementation and progress (APPG, 2012). This is supported by Brodie and colleagues (2011) who concluded that there is no clear evidence between recent initiatives and improved educational outcomes, suggesting a need for better understanding of young people's experience at school and as learners, alongside recognition of other emotional and care needs. They explain that improving educational attainment for looked-after children and young people will be reflected by improvements in the quality of care that they are receiving, in particular to emotional health and well being; emphasising that this support should be afforded to looked-after children of all ages from early years through to higher education. Jackson et al. (2011) point out that as looked-after children play a part in the care system as well as the education system, it should be vital for teachers to understand the care system and social workers the educational curriculum.

Mental health problems are known to disproportionately affect groups of children who are already disadvantaged (Hayden, 2007), with children in care being four times more likely to have a mental health disorder (Barnardo's, 2013). Government statistics also show that in 2012, almost three-quarters (71.5%) of children who had been looked-after continuously for 12 months or more have some form of SEN, the majority being ESB difficulties (DfE, 2012b). These can inhibit social development, education, peer group relationships and cause distress to other children (Hayden, 2007). Stein (2012: 87) explains that the complexity of these needs are often

formed "within children's earlier damaging intra-family relations and the failure of the care system to compensate young people". Early problems in childhood cause greater need for concern since it is more likely that it will affect them longer term, than those who display such problems in adolescence (Rutter et al, 1998). Having SEN or other needs that have not been met is just one of the issues associated with disaffection related behaviour at school (Hayden, 2007). Other issues include child abuse/poor parenting, disrupted or stressful living conditions, disruptions associated with being in care and relative poverty, all of which are common for looked-after children (Hayden, 2007). Jackson et al. (2011) recommend that when a child becomes looked-after, at the earliest opportunity they need to have a detailed educational assessment and intensive help given to catch up.

According to the Scottish Office Education Department, it has been noted that parental attitudes to school or their levels of education can effect children's attendance and efforts at school (Stephenson, 2007). In their report entitled *Barnardo's calls for Government not to abandon children looked after by the state,* Barnardo's (2013) explain that parents and carers of children not in the care system have much higher aspirations that their child will achieve at school, giving them the support and encouragement needed. Carers who come from a solid educational background themselves and who recognise why they must make the educational progress of children in their care a real priority, can play a central role in raising both the educational aspirations and achievements of looked-after children (APPG, 2012). Foster carers and residential support workers should understand that promoting educational achievement is a key part of their role - if they are not able

to provide educational support due to their own low level of education then they should receive additional help and guidance from teachers (Jackson et al., 2011). Indeed, according to APPG (2012) schools that work closely with foster carers and involve them in all aspects of school life are far more likely to see a continuance of progress outside of the classroom.

Outcomes

As we have established care leavers are one of the most vulnerable groups in society, at risk of experiencing poorer outcomes than other young people of a similar age. This can include homelessness, NEET, substance use and criminal behaviour (Stein, 2006, 2008, 2012; Barnardo's, 2013). Combined with a lack of emotional and material support and dependence on benefits (Stein, 2006), means care leavers are over-represented in the homeless, prison, mental health and learning disabled population (DCSF, 2009b). Blome (1997) suggests this is because some young people leaving care do not receive the support that a 'good parent' would be expected to provide, with Aldgate (1994) similarly implying that the continued availability of most family homes as a 'safety net' to which young people can return is not available for many care leavers. According to the Fostering Network, the UK's leading charity for foster care, the average age at which most young people leave home in the UK is 24 (The Observer, 2013). An unpublished survey conducted on behalf of Barnardo's found that only 5% of UK parents expected their children to leave home by 18, with 64% expecting them to be at least 22 and 27% expecting them to be at least 26 before they left home

(Barnardo's, 2013). For looked-after children, local authority care usually ends on their 18th birthday. Some local authorities do offer funding so that they can stay with foster carers, other looked-after young people rely on their foster carer giving them a home for free, but most are expected to move out to live on their own (The Observer, 2013). In an article published in The Observer (2013), entitled, *Teenagers at risk after having to leave foster care too soon*, MP Paul Goggins tabled an amendment to the Children and Families Bill that would require local authority care to be funded by central government (directed through local authorities) until the age of 21. However it is argued that unless Goggins' amendment is accepted, a good proportion of the 6,000 young people who leave care annually will never enjoy that sense of a longer-term secure base as they face the challenges of early adulthood. Instead they will have to cope with the anxiety, uncertainty and disruption of being forced out of the place they have come to call home (The Observer, 2013). The UK's largest children's charity, Barnardo's (2013) argue that care leavers need support for even longer, suggesting that the cut off age for support needs to be raised from 21 to 25. Certain literature surrounding this area has attempted to understand why this supported is essential. Stein (2006, 2009a, 2012) explains that as a group, young people leaving care may have a more problematic journey to adulthood as it occurs at a much earlier stage than it does for their peers. Whilst recent policy developments have aimed to help the journey from care to adulthood, care leavers are still experiencing compressed and accelerated transitions (Ward, 2008; Stein, 2012). This can mean care leavers become more susceptible to social exclusion later in life (Wade and Munro, 2008; DCSF, 2009b). In particular care leavers may face difficulties and changes to

personal, social, financial, domestic and educational circumstances (Montgomery et al., 2006; Leonard, 2011). How well they are able to cope with this transition to adulthood can be largely influenced by what happens to young people in their families, schools and communities before and during their time in care (Stein, 2012).

Improving outcomes for care leavers has remained a prominent government priority since it has been suggested that being in care can transform their lives and provide them with good life chance opportunities (DfE, 2012d). In their research entitled *Predicting after-care outcomes: the importance of 'felt' security*, Cashmore and Paxman (2006) point out that a combination of stable relationships, jobs and social networks are key to ensuring a successful transition. One of the key indicators of future economic well-being is the level of education and training that a person achieves (DfE, 2012d). Yet it has been argued that looked-after children and those leaving care still find themselves at a significant disadvantage in comparison to other children with regards to their educational attainment and progression (Comerford Boyes, 2012). This would suggest, as established in the previous sections of this chapter, that those young people leaving care with lower academic achievement may have experienced difficulties in placement stability, time out of school or insufficient help with their education. Indeed, Jackson and Martin (1998) recognised this to a similar extent, implying that looked-after children and young people can be high achievers if they receive encouragement, attachment and stability from their carer's. A subsequent study of theirs sought the opinions of care leavers themselves to identify what was needed to improve outcomes for care

leavers. These further findings consisted of supportive carers, stability at home and school, opportunities and facilities to engage interest (i.e. desk and books at home) (Martin and Jackson, 2002).

According to Leonard (2011) discontinuities in the educational history of care leavers can cause underdevelopment of skills and a lack of confidence, self-esteem, aspiration and expectation, which has a profound effect on their future. Achieving lower level qualifications during school can also result in accelerated transitions to independence, attributed by higher levels of unemployment, low income and early parenthood (Stephenson, 2007; Wade and Munro, 2008). The DfE (2012d) made the suggestion that financial support and policies should encourage young people to remain engaged in education, take up training opportunities and undertake activities aimed at improving employability (DfE, 2012d). One way in which this has been implemented is the use of Pathway Plans that are used to help young people's transition from care to the next stage of their lives, including education. However it is contended that many care leavers often feel these are written to meet the local authority's system and are not always completed efficiently (Clay and Dowling, 2004; DfE, 2012d). The DfE (2012d) emphasise that ensuring it is written in a way that suits the young person and includes their aspirations, is necessary if they are to be considered a useful resource. The Care Leavers' Foundation (2012) support this, proposing that local authorities should not make decisions based on past failures and need to understand all the reasons why some care leavers do not do things at the same time as other young people the same age and require support to catch up emotionally and academically. This next section of the chapter seeks to identify

possible future outcomes for care leavers, based upon the varying educational factors conveyed previously in this chapter.

Offending

Becoming detached from society presents problems, and for children, becoming detached from education and not participating in post-16 education can result in a greater chance of delinquency (Stephenson, 2007). Much research has demonstrated strong associations between offending and unemployment (Rutter et al., 1998; Farrington and Welsh, 2007; Stephenson, 2007) as well as offending and educational attendance and achievements (Stephenson, 2007; Amadeo and Marshall, 2013). According to Parliament Justice Committee (2012), 23% of the adult prison population has previously been in care, even though looked-after children and care leavers account for less than 1% of the total population. Of the young people in the youth justice system, more than 40% have been in local authority care at some point (Barnado's, 2013). Pinkerton (2006) implies that young people that have few expectations for the future may regard themselves as having little chance in mainstream society, and by way of an alternative, turn to risk-taking behaviours instead. Those at risk of participating in criminal activities, due to facing multiple adversities, are less likely to have accumulated the necessary skills at school or through family to steer them away from negative pressures, such as effective decision making and planning skills (Stephenson, 2007). Being able to

make effective decisions is something that will be explored in Chapter 6 in relation to 'control'.

Unemployment

Evidence of poor educational attainment amongst many looked-after children is apparent in the high rates of unemployment among care leavers (Dixon and Stein, 2005; DfE, 2012d). Statistics published in 2012 show that 36% of care leavers aged 19 were not in education, employment or training, compared with 20% of all 19 year olds (DfE, 2012b). Wade and Munro (2008) argue, having fewer qualifications means care leavers are vulnerable not only to unemployment but homelessness, mental health problems and early parenthood. Simon and Owen (2006) point out that they are also more likely to obtain low paid semi-skilled or unskilled jobs than their peers.

The likelihood of a young person being in work, education or training at 17 is decreased by exclusion and truanting since this prevents qualifications being achieved (DfES, 2003b). Hayden (2007) argues that young people who entered care due to socially unacceptable behaviour are the most likely to be NEET at age 19. For those looked-after young people who may be at risk of becoming involved in delinquent behaviour, employment can provide protective effects from involvement in offending (Farrington and Welsh, 2007; Stephenson, 2007). By way of targeting unemployment, the DfE (2012d) has been funding the FromCare2Work

programme run by National Care Advisory Service (NCAS) which provides care leavers with employment opportunities (DfE, 2012d).

Further Education

Further education is an important step for young people who wish to reengage with their education since missing out on school (Stein, 2012). It provides an opportunity to catch up, make new friends and can be a route to higher education. Becoming detached from compulsory schooling can result in varied or no participation in post-16 education (Stephenson, 2007). For looked-after young people this can result in early transitions to independent living (Stephenson, 2007).

A large proportion of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, including care leavers, are under-represented in further education (Leonard, 2011). Statistics suggest the older young people leave care the more likely they are to remain in education. In 2012, 40% of the young people who remained in care until they were 18 and over continued in education, compared to 26% of those who left care aged 16 (DfE, 2012d). In 2011, research carried out in the west of England into the education of care leavers, highlighted that groups of disadvantaged learners, such as care leavers, were not always identified in further education colleges as requiring special support (Leonard, 2011). Leonard (2011) drew the conclusion that further education colleges tend to rely on universal provision to meet the needs of all learners. Efforts have since been made to address such issues with colleges developing policies for care leavers and Continuous Professional Development

(CPD) (Leonard, 2011). However NCAS (2011) point out that unlike higher education, there is insufficient funding in the way of loans and grants for further education, which make it difficult for care leavers who struggle financially to stay in education or re-access it. Since the strategic responsibility for further education rests within local authorities, national and local government policies ought to include support for care leavers accessing further education and not just university (Leonard, 2011; NCAS, 2011). This has since been put in place with the 16-19 Bursary that entitles looked-after children and care leavers to a £1,200 if they stay in full-time education (DfE, 2012d).

Higher Education

Care leavers are one of the most under-represented and disadvantaged groups within higher education across the UK (Leonard, 2011; Comerford Boyes, 2012). In 2012, only 7% of care leavers aged 19 participated in higher education, compared to 40% of those aged 19 in the general population (DfE, 2012b). Leonard (2011) implies that care leavers who suffer disruptions in their previous education may be unable to demonstrate their potential for higher education or lack the necessary skills to consider it as a possible life-course pathway.

Between 2000 and 2005 (a time when the educational needs of care leavers was under review as a result of the Children Leaving Care Act 2000), a five year action research study was commissioned by the Frank Buttle Trust (now Buttle UK) entitled *Going to University from Care* (see Jackson et al., 2005). The findings of this

research, which included 129 care leavers currently enrolled on university courses, suggest that young people from care who succeeded in higher education, did so against all the odds (Buttle UK, 2011). The report found that foster placements generally offered a much better educational environment than residential care, especially if the foster family had a strong commitment to education (Jackson et al., 2005). This was later recognised by the DfE (2012d) who noted that young people who are in foster placements immediately before leaving care are the most likely to be in higher education aged 19. In addition, the care leavers interviewed in *Going to University from Care* indicated a lack of support from their educational institutions, who had not been made aware of care leavers as a group with particular needs (Institute of Education (IoE), 2011). This barrier has also been supported by Taylor (2006), whose study recommended that both practical and emotional support are necessary for those in care and after they have left. The *Going to University from Care* report concluded that the educational ability and potential of looked-after young people is being systematically undermined, being deprived of similar educational opportunities to those growing up within their birth families (Jackson et al., 2005; Jackson and Simon, 2006). There is a view among university administrators and admissions tutors that young people in care are not capable of reaching a sufficient standard to benefit from university (Jackson et al., 2005). This was evidenced by the 95% of universities in the UK (at the time) not offering any special pastoral support to students known to have been in care. As evidenced in Chapter 1, this has since been addressed by Buttle UK and their Quality Mark for further and higher education institutions. In the *Care Leavers in England Data Pack* published by the DfE (2012d), it requires local authorities to make care leavers

aware of which institutions have reached the Quality Mark standard. Furthermore, in accordance with the Children and Young Persons Act 2008, local authorities are required to pay a one off £2000 higher education bursary to care leavers aged 18-24 who start a course of higher education (DfE, 2012d)

Research findings from the *YiPPEE* (Young People from a Public Care Background Pathways to Education in Europe) project in 2011, found most of the 25 young people interviewed in England were living independently in social housing, often in deprived or isolated areas, suffering from severe financial difficulties (Jackson et, al., 2011). The project recognised that some young people still received emotional and practical support from previous carers, although there was a general view that there was much less support available since leaving compulsory schooling, especially in further and higher education institutions (Jackson et al., 2011). Findings also consisted of the views of Leaving Care Managers on 'facilitating factors' that helped young people succeed in education and the 'obstacles' they faced (Jackson et al., 2011). Many of the barriers mirror the findings already identified in this chapter. Despite significant improvements in legislation and statutory guidance, practice across the care system does not consistently support high levels of achievement in education for young people in and from care (The Who Cares Trust, 2012). Stein (2008, 2012) argues that care leavers who go on to higher education are more likely to have had stable care experiences, continuity in their schooling (which may compensate for any placement movement) and have been encouraged with their education by their birth parents with assistance from their foster carers. Improving outcomes for young people leaving care is not just

about improving the practice of one team, but ensuring a collaborative and well structured approach across all services (Clay and Dowling, 2004). Clay and Dowling (2004) argue that there needs to be an increase in the levels of awareness and support for children leaving care in continuing into further education and training. This in part, has been achieved by the Buttle UK Quality Mark and the government's most recent commitments to care leavers, as outlined in Chapter 1.

Summary

This chapter has consisted of a synthesis of literature around the educational trajectories of looked-after children and young people. In doing so it addressed the factors that may be influential on a looked-after child or young person's educational journey and thus their educational attainment. This included: (i) placement stability, (ii) detachment/time out of school and (iii) insufficient help with education. This provided a context in which to understand the possible outcomes care leavers may experience upon leaving care, such as unemployment, offending or progressing to further and higher education. We have established that ensuring looked-after children receive a high quality education is the foundation for improving their lives (DfE, 2013). However, throughout the chapter it has been argued that if children are to develop important character traits and skills they need to succeed in life, the focus needs to be on the overall development of the child (Hannon et al., 2010). For children, in particular those looked-after, this includes experiencing a secure attachment, stability, empathy, and authoritative parenting that provides warmth alongside consistent boundaries (Hannon et al., 2010;

Ginsburg, 2011). These are all factors associated with resilience, a theoretical

concept that is addressed in more depth in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

As we have seen, the overall aim of this research was to investigate the educational trajectories and outcomes of looked-after children. This necessitated a qualitative approach. Clough and Nutbrown (2002) explain that as researchers we adopt research approaches which are specifically relevant to the work which we intend to pursue and the research questions that we intend to address. To this end, the present study adopts a constructivist ontology and interpretive epistemological approach. This chapter identifies the reason for the chosen perspective, methodology and method used. It explains the advantages and limitations of such method, and also provides a reflective overview of the research process and the difficulties arising therein.

Ontology and Epistemology

Within academia there are radically different assumptions as to what there is which exists to be investigated (Gomm, 2008), driven by two main questions: what's out there to know? (ontology) and what and how can we know about it? (epistemology) (Geco and Sosa, 1999; Grix, 2004; Maxwell, 2005). Crotty (1998) and Gomm (2008) argue that 'ontology' refers to the study of being and what we may know; whilst 'epistemology' refers to the study of how we acquire knowledge and what it means to know. Together, these two elements form the foundations of social research

(Grix, 2004). Clough and Nutbrown (2002) infer that we adopt these philosophical research stances or perspectives depending on their relevance to our own work. A study which aims to analyse social perceptions should adopt a research approach based upon a constructivist ontological ideology (Rodwell, 1998). Constructivist approaches to research consider social phenomena and meaning to be socially constructed (Robson, 2002), whereby knowledge is based on social interaction, social experience, human perception and social conventions and therefore is in a constant state of revision by social actors (Bryman, 2012). As the overall aim of this research is to understand the educational trajectories of looked-after children, a constructivist ontology and interpretive epistemology was adopted.

Our choice of epistemological perspective determines the way in which we construct our research (methodology) (Grix, 2004). Crotty (1998) explains that methodology is the strategy or plan of action that shapes the choice and use of certain methods to achieve desired outcomes. Methodological frameworks allow us to think through and operationalise how we can go about acquiring knowledge (Grix, 2004). Hence, the research question (or problem) will always drive the methods we use and subsequently the methodology we employ. To this end, the present study adopts a qualitative methodological approach in order to gain a detailed overview of the kinds of characteristics, qualities, evidence, views and opinions which exist (amongst secondary sources) around the subject of looked-after children's educational trajectories.

Data Collection

Bryman (2012) explains that a common rationale for doing social research, that is research relating to social scientific fields such as sociology, human geography and politics (Williams 2003), is because researchers may notice a gap or unresolved issues in current literature which acts as a platform for new research. It is concerned with the collection of data in order to enhance knowledge about particular social phenomena, whereby efficient data collection is key to successful research (Pole and Lampard, 2002). The identification of a gap in current literature around the education of looked-after children is what informed the decision to use documentation analysis in order to enhance knowledge within this field.

Documentation analysis is an alternative way to collect data that uses existing information for analysis, commonly referred to as 'secondary analysis' (Flick, 2011). Mayan (2009) implies that gathering documents is one of the most common forms of data collection, yet one which is least well understood. It differs from questionnaires, interviews and observations in that it is indirect as opposed to direct observation (Robson, 2002). It has been produced for an alternative reason (other than for the researcher's own purposes) and so is referred to as secondary data (Flick, 2011; Bryman, 2012). In most instances, secondary data is collected using a hard copy or electronic document (May, 2001). This includes books, newspapers, reports or magazines, yet also includes documents such as films, television programmes or photographs for example (Robson, 2002) – generally anything that the researcher is interested in (Mayan, 2009). For the purposes of this study, the use of statutory legislation, legal commentary, policy documentation, academic and practitioner-based books, reports, and newspaper articles were used

since these constituted the relevant literature which related to the specific aims of the research. All of the documents used were public and openly-published (as opposed to private, closed or restricted) and were selected on the basis of their specific relevance to the research questions under consideration (May, 2001). In the main it was the content of these documents that was being analysed, a process formally known as content analysis; a critical interrogation of what was in the stated documentation (Robson, 2002). Bryman (2012) explains this is probably the most prevalent approach to qualitative analysis of documents and involves searching for underlying themes of interest in the materials being analysed. This is the method that was adopted for this study.

Advantages and Limitations of Chosen Data Collection

The content analysis of secondary sources is regarded by social scientists as an 'unobtrusive measure', i.e., the document itself is not affected by the fact that it is being used for such a purpose (Robson, 2002). This can be seen as advantageous especially when researching vulnerable or marginalise groups because pursuing primary data collection in such circumstances may present both ethical and practical problems. An overarching problem with content analysis is that the material being analysed has not been structured with the observer in mind, but rather as a document produced with a certain purpose (May, 2001; Robson, 2002). Atkinson and Coffey (2011) argue that documents have a distinctive ontological status and form a separate reality, as opposed to an underlying social or organisational reality. Knowing who has produced the document, why they have

produced it and for whom it has been produced for, all collate together to inform meaning and therefore should be critically considered as part of the analytical process in order to analyse them in the context in which they were written (May, 2001; Grix, 2010; Flick, 2011). In this study, every effort was made to ensure that this was taken into consideration by constructing separate chapters for the policy documents and the academic literature (where possible). May (2001) explains that researchers are subject to issues associated with time and money. Documents are generally an easily accessible way of collecting data and can be inexpensive and (as we have seen) unobtrusive, however analysing them can be very costly and time consuming (Mayan, 2009; Flick, 2011). They are rarely a sole form of data collection, often forming part of a broader research design with other methods (May, 2001; Pole and Lampard, 2002). Flick (2011) suggests that secondary data should only be used if the research question gives good reason to do this. As noted below, the reason for secondary data analysis in the present study was because of a lack of respondent engagement. However Mayan (2009) argues that documents can be used as a single data collection source for many qualitative studies that seek to discover perspectives of a particular phenomenon, which is essentially the aim of this study.

Methodological Reflexivity

As is commonly the case amidst methodological discussion, it is pertinent to provide a reflexive account of the decision-making processes which took place around the completion of the present study, since social research can be influenced by a variety of factors (Bryman, 2012). This understanding gives recognition to the implications and significance of the researcher's choices within the research process and the consequences in relation to data collection, analysis and dissemination (Bryman, 2012).

The choice to undertake a purely desk-based study using documentation (content) analysis was not the initial methodology intended for this study. As May (2001: 185) notes: "The methods used depend not only upon the researcher's perspective, but also on the time and resources available, the aims of the research and the problems encountered in the collection of data". The intended study was located within the same epistemology and ontological paradigm and qualitative methodological approach. The key difference was that the initial aim was to accurately discern looked-after children's educational trajectories through generating empirical data. Originally data collection was to be carried out in line with a specifically designed educational intervention/initiative based at University of Gloucestershire which aimed to assist a small cohort (n=6-12) of post-16, looked-after young people in their decision-making processes with regard to university entrance. The initiative was intended to run over a six-week period in the Spring of 2013 and was to comprise of one, two-hour session per week when young people would come into the University to work with the researcher. Each session was to include materials

derived from the main themes highlighted by Jackson et al. (2005) i.e. how to make choices about universities and university courses, how to manage finance, and accommodation issues. In addition to this, the young people were to be assigned a student mentor (a group of 6-12 carefully selected students from the University) who were to provide support and guidance and facilitate further discussion on the issues which were to be presented in each session. The looked-after children cohort was to comprise of young people aged 16-19 who were currently in Years 12, 13 or 14 at a school or further education college in Gloucestershire. Due to the limited number of looked-after young people in the county in further education, the exact composition of the cohort was entirely subject to the willingness of individuals to take part. Participant selection was negotiated with looked-after children staff from Gloucester County Council, Social Services and the county's Virtual School.

Given the nature of the intervention and the kinds of research questions in play, semi-structured interviews were to be the primary source of data collection (Bryman, 2012; Robson, 2002). These were to take place both during and at the end of the intervention, once a rapport had been created between participants and the researcher. Depending on the willingness of the participants, interviews would have been approximately 30 minutes in length. In order to supplement interview data, participants were to be asked to complete personal diaries/journals relating to their experiences of compulsory education to date and of the intervention itself (Burgess,1990; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Data would have been analysed using content analysis through a thematic approach in order to deepen the researcher's understanding of individual issues (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

All ethical considerations and approval had been put in place and potential respondents were contacted by letter and e-mail via the county's Virtual School. However, despite repeated attempts to contact the identified cohort, only a very small number responded and this meant that an alternative data collection strategy and overall approach had to be adopted in relation to the research questions at hand. An alternative option was to interview care leavers that already attended the University, in hope that securing access would be far less problematic, especially given that they were over 18 years old and that consent issues would be relatively straightforward. However due to the University's confidentiality policy, contacting care leavers directly was deemed inappropriate. Access via the University's main (care leaver) gatekeeper was the final option. The gatekeeper expressed general difficulties in seeking contact with these young people due to various and on-going disruptions in their lives. Despite contacting them on the researcher's behalf, no replies were received. Having experienced these setbacks with regard to respondent access (and given the likelihood of finding an alternative, local cohort was slim) the decision was taken to adopt a heuristic strategy via a desk-based study that did not rely on sources that were out of the researcher's control. Hence, the research was re-designed around the investigation of the previously formulated research questions, via an interrogation of the secondary source legal, policy and academic/practitioner materials in the area.

Summary

This chapter, split into three sections, has identified the reasoning behind the choice of epistemological perspective, methodological approach and methods used. Section one focused on understanding epistemology and methodology, and where it lies within this study. Section two contextualised the choice of method (documentation analysis) within the field of study and section three sought to give a reflexive account of the heuristic decision to undertake a desk-based study outlining the original research design, the preferred methods of data collection and the limitations that followed. Such limitations meant that a re-designing of the project had to take place. The use of secondary data collection meant that there would be no need to rely upon primary sources to provide data, therefore the decision to use documentary analysis was taken. The aim was to interrogate related secondary source materials in order to identify underlying themes and explore theoretical concepts that would enable the extension of existing research in this area. This meant adopting an interpretive epistemological approach by means of a qualitative methodology. The following chapters set out to disseminate the results of this analysis via the appropriation of the four main themes which have been identified in the related literature. These comprise - and can be broadly summarised under - the headings: (i) resilience, (ii) connection, (iii) control, and (iv) coping, each of which we address in turn.

CHAPTER 4: RESILIENCE

Children who successfully achieve adaptation despite being exposed to challenging or threatening circumstances are referred to as 'resilient' (Masten et al., 1990; Lambert, 2001; Davies, 2011; Goldstein and Brooks, 2013). Research dating back to the 1960s noted that some children showed no signs of weakness when faced with stresses and difficulties in their lives (Rutter, 1985; Davies, 2011). Lambert (2001) explains that to some, this was seen as being 'invulnerable'. However, these children were still vulnerable to specific risk factors, only they were able to cope with and control their situations better in order to positively affect their outcomes. Those that have such capability, are known to be resilient. This chapter seeks to explore this theoretical concept and how it can contribute to positive outcomes. In doing so, it contextualises resilience by indentifying related literature surrounding risk and protective factors. The latter part of the chapter outlines varying components which are suggested to promote resilience.

Attempting to define resilience proves difficult since it is not a straightforward concept (Lambert, 2001; Daniel and Wassell, 2002a), but rather an outcome phenomenon (Goldstein and Brooks, 2013). People may be highly resilient in one aspect of their lives but require much more support in another (Brom et al., 2009; Ginsburg, 2011). The ability to rise above difficulties faced, shares common ground amongst literature (Masten et al., 1990; Gilligan, 1997; Masten, 2007; Ginsburg, 2011; Davies 2011). Ginsburg (2011) explains that resilience allows us to live in a

world where adversities exist but we can still move forward with hope and confidence, whilst Masten (2007) adds that it is achieving good developmental outcomes despite exposure to high-risk situations. If looked-after children are to do this, then they too must foster resilience. It might seem from these explanations that resilience is about being independent and being able to cope with adversities on one's own. Whilst those children with high levels of resilience are able to cope well and are often more independent, it is important to note that the healthiest of adults still depend on other people (Ginsburg, 2011).

The concept of resilience in relation to disadvantaged children was pioneered by Rutter (1985), and is used to highlight how some young people can succeed in areas such as education despite being initially faced with disadvantage. Daniel (2008) emphasises that a good education and experiences in school, combined with support for friendships and development of skills and interests is one of the requirements necessary for resilience. Resilience should be viewed as a normative, standardised process that everyone should adopt, rather than a special characteristic that helps those who are at-risk (Davies, 2011). Baldwin and colleagues (1993) imply that resilience is a central component of a child's development that every child must achieve. Whilst it is well documented that children are born with a natural resilience, all may become more resilient if this characteristic is nurtured and opportunities are provided that require resilience (Bell 2001; Ginsburg, 2011). In this respect, protective parenting takes the lead, as "children who are resilient tend to have experienced consistent, responsive

parenting" (Davies, 2011: 61). As we know from Chapter 2, this is unlikely to be the case for those children who have entered in care.

Looked-after children may face particularly difficult circumstances affecting various aspects of their lives. Daniel and Wassell (2002c: 93) note that "what distinguishes resilient young people is their knowledge that they can make choices that counteract the adversity they have suffered". Children who lack resilience, usually blame someone or something else for adversity (Ginsburg, 2011). They see themselves as victims and are reluctant when facing difficulty to think that their actions will not make a difference. Therefore in order for looked-after children to lead fulfilling and successful lives, being resilient plays an important part, since it determines why some achieve different successes and happiness to others including that of education. Davies (2011) explains that growing up in challenging environments (such as local authority care) makes it harder to become resilient; therefore continuous support is vital. However, a study by McMurray et al. (2008) concluded that professionals, namely social workers, displayed a lack of understanding of the concept of resilience and relied upon their own understanding of it. This meant there was an over emphasis on optimistic factors which saw a contradiction to children's actual behaviour and educational progress. Kendrick (2008) stresses the importance of informal support, which can often be overshadowed within formal delivery. Goldstein and Brooks (2013) reinforce this point suggesting that the child, immediate family and extended community can interact to offset the risks associated with adversity. This can be done in two ways,

protection against the risks or enhancing the development of the child (Goldstein and Brooks, 2013). Both have the aim of improving the child's future outcomes.

Risk and protective factors

There is much discussion surrounding children being at risk and that certain processes can serve to protect them against such risk. These are identified within related literature as risk and protective factors. They are explained as affecting the process and outcomes of a child's development, in particular their long-term social and emotional well-being (Daniel and Wassell, 2002; Davies, 2011). This means risk and protective factors have long been established as factors affecting resilience, occurring along a continuum in which they constantly interact (Davies, 2011). Risk factors are referred to as influences that increase the probability of an adverse condition worsening or the maintaining of an already adverse condition (Davies, 2011). For example Goldstein and Brooks (2013) have drawn upon the work of Garbarino to highlight how poverty is associated with numerous risks factors and stressors that can damage a child's development. Something which closely relates to the Pupil Premium (FSM) as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. Other risk factors known to make children vulnerable are social exclusion or marginalisation, failure/rejection at school, being 'looked-after' and criminal involvement (Hayden, 2007).

Stressors are sources of stress that increase risk for a wide range of detrimental outcomes (Goldstein and Brooks, 2013). For children this can lead to long term implications in adulthood, having negatively affected their educational and health development when they were younger (Shore 1997). These results can occur regardless of what age the child may be, but the younger the child, the greater the risk and subsequent level of vulnerability. All of which equates to less resilience (Shore 1997; Fantuzzo et al., 2003).

The difficulties that some children face can be determined by the child themselves, family, community or broader environment (Goldstein and Brooks, 2013). For looked-after children and young people, it is usually family factors that mean they become looked-after by the local authority. In terms of the broader environment, society places increasing pressure on young people and so it is impossible to over-prepare them when it comes to being resilient (Ginsburg, 2011). Goldstein and Brooks (2013) suggest that increased risks and vulnerabilities such as delinquency, mental health and academic difficulty could be attributed to the complexity of society, so this adds to the difficulty in parents and significant others preparing children with the necessary qualities to be resilient and lead a successful life.

Recent research recognises the ongoing association between child development and protective factors (Davies, 2011), with these often being used as a way of measuring resilience (Conrad and Hammen, 1993). Whilst they cannot be accountable for entirely eliminating risk factors, protective factors within the community, family or child have the potential to reduce the likelihood of the

negative outcomes associated with risk factors, by offsetting the risk (Faser et al., 1999; Davies; 2011). Reducing risks provides direct intervention to the affected child (Goldstein and Brooks, 2013). They reduce a child's stress and provide opportunities for them to strengthen their coping capability and is why research on resilience has increasingly looked to protective factors as a support mechanism (Davies, 2011). It has been suggested by Atwool (2006) that young people can be protected by factors that promote success. Children that are at risk of reduced life chances (such as looked-after children) but are subject to protective factors over time, are more likely to develop resilient traits and adaptive coping mechanisms (Davies, 2011). This would suggest that protective factors can help with resilience, but that they are not solely able to make a child resilient. Farrington and Welsh (2007) suggest that a resilient temperament and a warm affectionate relationship with parents are key protective factors, the latter not always possible for looked-after children. For this reason then, it is important to focus on what is possible and that is developing a resilient temperament and a warm affectionate relationship with alternative caregivers. Daniel (2008) implies that having a secure base, access to wider support and positive school and community experiences are also protective factors that help with resilience, stating that improvements in one domain can have a positive knock-on effect in the others. As such, there is preference to refer to these as processes rather than factors since to be truly effective in promoting resilience, they must be present across many years of the child's development (Luthar et al., 2000). Whilst these processes can steer children away from negative outcomes, Lambert (2001) writes that they are only effective when experiencing a combination of risk factors. These factors can be within the

child, parent or community/environment and can interrelate with each other to affect the development of the child (Davies, 2011). The existence or non-existence of risk and protective factors serves to explain why some children are able to achieve normal development under difficult conditions (Fonagy et al., 1994).

In order to decipher resilience by increasing protective factors, researchers have attempted to define components for building resilience. Gilligan (1997) suggests a secure base, self-esteem and self-efficacy, whilst Rutter (1985, 1999) distinguishes four protective mechanisms that include: reduction of the risk impact, reduction of the negative chain reactions, promotion of self-esteem and self-efficacy, and the opening of opportunities. Others identify a secure base, education, friendships, talent and interests, positive values and social competencies as resilience 'strings' (Daniel and Wassell (2002a, 2002b). Atwool (2006) has narrowed it down to individual characteristics, family support and a supportive person or agency outside of the family. Similarly, a whole-child perspective has been proposed by Goldstein and Brooks (2013) that focuses upon competence, context and contributors to children's physical and mental health. They argue that a model for resilience should focus on a child's competence rather than deficiencies, the interaction of the child and environment (which forms the context), and those adults in a child's life that are capable of contributing to their resilience. It becomes evident then, that a combination of structure and agency components are necessary for building resilience. In a broader sense, Ginsburg (2011) identifies '7 crucial Cs' of resilience: competence, confidence, connection, character, contribution, coping and control. These were based upon the 4 Cs required for positive youth development

(competence, confidence, connection and character) as defined by the founding president of the International Youth Foundation, Rick Little. Ginsburg (2011) explains, contribution was added because children who possessed the original 4 Cs were found to contribute to society, and coping and control meant the model both prevented risk and encouraged a healthy child development. A basic definition of each of the 7 Cs is identified below:

Confidence: Young people need confidence to be able to navigate the world, think outside the box, and recover from challenges.

Competence: When we notice what young people are doing right and give them opportunities to develop important skills, they feel competent. We undermine competence when we don't allow young people to recover themselves after a fall.

Connection: Connections with other people, schools, and communities offer young people the security that allows them to stand on their own and develop creative solutions.

Character: Young people need a clear sense of right and wrong and a commitment to integrity.

Contribution: Young people who contribute to the well-being of others will receive gratitude rather than condemnation. They will learn that contributing feels good, and may therefore more easily turn to others, and do so without shame.

Coping: Young people who possess a variety of healthy coping strategies will be less likely to turn to dangerous quick-fixes when stressed.

Control: Young people who understand privileges and respect are earned through demonstrated responsibility will learn to make wise choices and feel a sense of control.

(Ginsburg, 2011)

Summary

This chapter, split into two main sections, has addressed the concept of resilience. The first section has identified the need for children, in particular looked-after children, to have resilience in order to overcome challenges in their lives. The second section has made reference to risk and protective factors in affecting the trajectories of vulnerable children. It has sought to explain how protective factors can offset risk, which developing resilience may have the potential to do. It identifies key components associated with building resilience and concludes with reference to Ginsburg's (2011) '7 Crucial Cs of resilience'. The subsequent chapters attempt to understand these integral, interrelated components of resilience for looked-after children and young people, in terms of benefits to their development and how this can contribute to their educational attainment. This should help us to understand how and why some looked-after children and young people are able to succeed against the odds. For those that have been less fortunate, it may prove beneficial in appreciating what could have been done differently in their lives in

order that their educational trajectory was successful. It is hoped that together this will inform us how to better prepare those currently and yet to be, in the care system. Ginsburg (2011) outlines that all of the 7 Cs need to be addressed in order for children to successfully build resilience. The aim of the next three chapters is to focus on the Cs that appear to be most important for looked-after children, and considers whether or not targeting them might facilitate a series of wider characteristics and benefits. We thus turn our specific attentions to issues surrounding connection, control and coping, beginning with the former.

CHAPTER 5: CONNECTION

When referring to connection we are essentially referring to relationships; that is, close ties to family, friends, school and community. Through these ties children feel a sense of security and reassurance, which is essential for developing resilience. As children, this security allows us to take chances in order to reach our full potential knowing that we have a secure base to return to (Daniel and Wassell, 2002a, 2002b; Ginsburg, 2011). It also impacts upon developmental outcomes during childhood, adolescence and adulthood and is evidenced by a number of studies in the quality of parent-child and peer relationships (Sroufe et al., 2005; Grossman et al., 2005; Sroufe, 2005). This chapter considers the role of 'connection' in promoting resilience in children and young people, with an additional focus on those in local authority care. In doing so, the latter half of the chapter provides further contextualisation through the theoretical concept of attachment theory.

Parents that forge a secure connection with their children, and as such are providing a secure base at home, provide a foundation from which their children are able to connect with others more comfortably. Studies have shown that there is an association between high levels of resilience in young people and parents that demonstrate high levels of affection and low levels of maternal psychological control; that is behaviours that infringe of a child's own thoughts and feeling (Belsky, 2001; Brennan et al., 2003; DePanfilis, 2006). Nonetheless connection is not just something that occurs during childhood, it is a process that can occur at any

point during our life time, with romantic partners for example (Bowlby, 1956). Forging connections to people provides us with reassurance and support during difficult times and circumstances. People who experience a tragic event, recover best when they hold deep connections to other people (Ginsburg, 2011). Most people will have someone they can turn to in times of crisis, this is likely to be, but not restricted to, our parents; a connection that would have been formed in our very early years of existence. Having these connections allows us to be weak at times, since we know there will also be times when the role is reversed and we must provide that support and reassurance.

Connection and Looked-after Children

Children in trouble can be at least partly connected to problematic relationships (Hayden, 2007). Looked-after children have often had much disruption to their home lives and once in care, have little or no contact with their birth families. Any previous connection may diminish once entering care, meaning that they do not have their parents to turn to in times of crisis which most of us take for granted. The time spent with their birth families prior to entering care usually consists of some form of abuse (physical, sexual or emotional) and/or neglect (physical or emotional) (Dozier and Rutter, 2008). Hayden (2007) draws upon Rickford to highlight that if a primary carer is depressed, disengaged, irritable or impatient with their baby, part of their baby's brain will show little activity. Without a sense of belonging, which is formed through strong connections, children will become isolated and disconnected (Ginsburg, 2011). They will start to become reluctant to

test themselves and take risks, consequently hindering their development of competence and confidence, thus affecting their education. Daniel and Wassell (2002c) point out that if they are isolated and socially inept by the time they reach adolescence, they are increasingly likely to be ignored or excluded, resulting in further withdrawal from activities and their peers. This is where attachment theory can play a pivotal part in understanding the importance of parents bonding with their child. As such it is explored in greater depth within the next section.

Aside from the bonding between parents and their children, Ginsburg (2011) highlights the importance of children making new bonds to other people throughout their childhood and adolescence to develop trust. This is a much easier task for children who already have a secure base in their home environment, having established trust in someone other than themselves. For looked-after children and young people who may not have had strong family ties, learning to make that connection (and to trust people) becomes a challenging process. As children begin to be looked-after by the local authority, they will have many adults (other than their parents) pass in and out of their lives, such as social workers, foster carers and health practitioners. Trying to form connections with these adults will be severely compromised and likely to be weak or limited (Ginsburg, 2011), especially if they have never had a secure attachment to a protective figure before. For those that have, securing a new attachment also proves difficult, as Bowlby (1956: 58) explains: "to complain because a child does not welcome being comforted by a kind but strange woman is as foolish as to complain that a young man deeply in love is not enthusiastic about some other good-looking girl". He is implying that it would

be rather naive to think that the formation of attachments is a straightforward process; it is not something that can be destroyed and then easily replaced. This may be the cause of many placement breakdowns that becomes a focus later on in this chapter.

Ginsburg (2011) writes that children's connections to others can be weak or limited if families move frequently and the children have to leave friends behind. If looked-after children undergo frequent placement moves they will continuously have to make new friends and therefore new connections. It is not difficult to see that the more movement that occurs, the more chance there is of connections weakening or diminishing completely and reservations developing around making new ones. Daniel and Wassell (2002a) add that being able to successfully interact with other children is fundamental in establishing friendships, however for those that have had past difficulties in connecting with parents or significant others, this might be a stressful task that initiates anxiety and affects their learning. Those children that do manage to overcome difficult situations have likely been able to gain a close tie to someone who has provided them with stability in their lives. Ginsburg (2011) explains that it need be only one adult in a child's life that can make this difference, establishing a healthy development for the child and fostering resilience. However in order to feel secure and protected in all aspects of their lives such as home, school and community, children require multiple circles of connection. As we have established, for looked-after children this can prove extremely difficult if they have not formed connections before or still have limited connections to their birth family. This therefore needs to be done with caution, in order that they do not lose

trust in all the people that come into their lives, particularly those that are there to help such as a designated teacher at school.

One of the important features for making and securing a connection is through being empathetic (Ginsburg, 2011). For looked-after children this becomes particularly important, since they have experienced a range of adversities that some of us will never experience or understand. Although according to Ginsburg (2011) empathy is not about understanding, it is simply trying to imagine what a situation feels like from another person's perspective. If those involved in the lives of looked-after children and young people are able to be empathetic, it can provide an emotional safety net whereby those children feel secure in going to them with problems, knowing they will do their best to resolve them. This can alleviate the pressure children may feel to do everything single handily, and steer them aware from negative behaviours or outcomes. If they also teach children this trait of empathy, children will have a much better chance in forging positive relationships when they are older, since understanding emotions is essential in forming connections with people and overcoming adversity in life (Ginsburg, 2011). By not empathising and/or discouraging children from showing emotion, they will become disconnected from their emotions and therefore have difficulties connecting with others.

Attachment theory

In order to understand why children may find the attachment process difficult, it is necessary to understand the theory of attachment and the important effects attachment has on the development of the child, since long term resilience is associated with children that are securely attached to at least one person (Fonagy et al., 1994; Daniel and Wassell, 2002a). Attachment theory essentially forms the mechanism behind connection and helps us to understand how we connect with others and how such connections can lead to adaptive or maladaptive outcomes (Lambert, 2001). When faced with adversity, Daniel and Wassell (2002a) refer to a study by Werner to note that there is a clear correlation between having a secure attachment relationship and resilience.

Attachment theory looks at the psychosocial development of a child's relationship with significant others, in particular the main caregiver, and in most cases the birth parents (Lambert, 2001). Research into attachment initially came from John Bowlby, with later refinement from Mary Ainsworth. Findings published by Robertson and Bowlby (1952) found that a child's relationship with their mother was important for functioning later in life; and that when separated from her the child may experience extreme distress, even when cared for by others. This was thought to be as a result of the mother's connection through feeding and providing safety for her child. A subsequent study by Ainsworth (1967) discovered that babies and young children could become attached to people who did not feed them, meaning that attachment theory was not solely based on feeding motives or genetics. Instead it is based on social relationships formulated by a strong

emotional tie that a child has to a specific person/s that gives that child a sense of security (Davies, 2011). Whilst Davies (2011) implies that it is a central concept in understanding child development, this assertion has been criticised by Rutter (1981) for underestimating the scope in which developmental and behavioural problems can be reversed.

Lambert (2001) explains that there are two types of attachments: secure and insecure. Those children that are securely attached have a view of themselves as 'loved and loveable' having experienced mutually responsive and emotionally available relationships. Holding such a view of self and of others can increase self-esteem and self-efficacy (Cicchetti and Rogosch, 1997), which we have already established promotes resilience. Daniel and Wassell (2002a) add that a secure attachment is associated with parents adopting an authoritative, warm, sensitive parenting style, appropriately responding to a child's needs and character. The impact of different parenting styles is something that will be addressed in more detail in Chapter 6. Insecure attachments are based upon having an inadequate or unstable caregiving environment, that leads to negative feelings of self, lowered self-esteem and being less inclined to seek help due to a perceived view of others as being less dependable (Lambert, 2001). However there are two types of insecure attachment that lead to these outcomes, the first is anxious attachment. This is usually the case for children who have not received available and responsive care and therefore think they need to be demanding to receive it and have their needs met (Lambert 2001). Avoidant attachment on the other hand, is where children have learnt from previous attachments that achieving closeness to a rejecting

caregiver is best done by avoiding them, that way they protect themselves by not getting close to avoid being rejected (Lambert, 2001).

The basis of attachment is formulated during the early years of childhood (Daniel and Wassell, 2002a). The parent-child attachment serves as a protective factor for young children and becomes evident in the first six months of a child's life, however it is an on-going process that we do not simply outgrow (Bowlby, 1951). Attachment is not something that is prevalent only in childhood, but rather it "represents a psychological need that persists throughout the whole of life" and maintaining these continues to be the set goal of the attachment process (Rutter, 2008: 959). Attachment serves as an irreplaceable context for emotional development, emotional support and protection against stress (Bowlby, 1951). These early attachments to parents in our childhood "are a powerful predictor of adult functioning, accounting for nearly half of total variance" (Rutter, 2006 in Rutter, 2008: 966). They are viewed as especially important in helping to form meaningful relationships later in life, including those necessary for parenting (Rutter, 2008). Kobak and Madsen (2008) draw upon work by Adam and Chase-Lansade and Kobak et al., to explain that a reduction in an adult's confidence and ability to cope with challenges outside the family often stems from relationship difficulties with their parents and partners. They lose confidence in the availability (physical access, responsiveness, open lines of communication) of the attachment figure, which then reduces feelings of security that would otherwise be present (Bowlby, 1973; Kobak and Madsen, 2008). Fear, anger or sadness can accompany

this perceived lack of availability which can deteriorate into clinical conditions of depression, anxiety and aggression.

The emphasis placed on the parent-child bond to the development of the child is because of the importance it has in shaping their confidence and feelings of security (Kobak and Madsen, 2008). In order for this to happen, babies or young children require a consistent relationship with a particular person in order to thrive and develop (Kobak and Madsen, 2008). Histories of secure attachment predict adaptive functioning in later childhood, with most resilient children having received adequate parental support throughout their development (Sroufe et al., 2005). Disruption to such relationships can cause emotional damage to the child and alternative care provided by child care professionals cannot substitute the attachment bond a child has with parents (Bowlby, 1951). An insecure attachment to a caregiver, whether that is birth parents or a foster carer for example, can result in poor peer relations, anger and poor behavioural self-control for the child (see chapter 6) (Sroufe at al., 2005).

The primary goal of attachment behaviour is to feel safe and secure and is met by keeping close to a preferred person. This can be seen through attachment seeking behaviour where infants wake up from a nap and cry for their parents or carer. Signalling distress such as crying then activates the mother's or primary caregiver's attachment system, and both infant and parent take actions to restore the sense of security (Bowlby, 1969). Infants soon start to learn the qualities of their primary caregiver and differentiate them from others who may comfort them, such as voice,

touch and smell (Davies, 2011). It is common for infant's attachments to have an order of preference, usually the mother, then father and then siblings. Infants who are in care full-time with a single caregiver often develop an attachment, but it is usually second after their mothers.

In his work on child development, Davies (2011) describes three other functions of attachment, based upon the previous work of Bowlby and Ainsworth. The first is the ability to regulate affect and arousal. This essentially refers to the controlling of an infant's emotional/affective state. If arousal (feelings of being 'on alert' witnessed through physiological reactions such as an increase in breathing and heart rate) intensifies without relief, infants become distressed, send out stress signals and move towards the caregiver. Children who are securely attached are able to go to their caregiver for help in controlling the distress. Through successful shared regulation, children learn to regulate their own arousal, helping them "to feel competent in controlling distress and negative emotions" (Davies, 2011: 9). Those children that have not been helped in such a way within their attachment relationships, are likely to have more behavioural problems because they have not developed efficient ways of controlling their reaction to stressful situations (Solomon et al., in Davies, 2011) (see Chapter 6). If parents respond negatively to the distress, as is often the case in an insecure attachment, the child then learns that in order to continue the attachment, they must refrain from having strong and negative feelings. Over time this causes the child or adult to avoid emotion by showing minimal expression (Magai, 1999). As previously noted, this hinders the development of forging attachment relationships later on.

Promoting the expression of feelings and communication is the second function of attachment. As an attachment relationship develops, the infant begins to share positive feelings and learns to communicate the need to be fed or to be played with for example. These are known as transactions which require parents to respond accordingly. They are important qualities of attachment requiring both the infant and the caregiver to work together, paying attention to each other's feelings, with the caregiver also showing empathy (Stern, 1985). Davies (2011) emphasises that even in the most secure attachments there will be times when the involvement and responsiveness of both mother and infant will be mismatched, temporarily affecting the infant's ability to regulate their emotions. For example if a child cries for their mother but the mother is on the telephone and is unable to respond immediately, a temporary mismatch occurs whereby the child feels out of touch with the mother. A secure attachment can be seen if both the mother and infant repair the mismatch using interactive coping skills, restoring the sense of security for the child (Davies, 2011) (see Chapter 7). Repairing is seen to be important in the context of attachment in order to teach the child that misunderstanding and missed connections are common, and that connections can be restored (Davies, 2001 in Davies, 2011).

Lastly, attachment serves as a base of exploration, essential for children to become competent and confident. The motivation to explore and learn about the world is as intrinsic in infants as is attachment motivation (Davies, 2011). Particularly after the age of one, the attachment relationship becomes the secure base for exploration,

where both behavioural systems work in conjunction with each other (Bowlby, 1988). For young children, exploring environments in a playful way sets the foundations for cognitive development and successful learning, therefore is likely to build later resilience (Daniel and Wassell, 2002b). Having a secure base is implicit in secure attachments and directly affects the amount of confidence a child has in exploring and taking risks (Cassidy, 2008). Those that are highly confident understand that their caregivers are available if needed (Grossman et al., 2008). By having this sense of security allows children to focus on developmental tasks and to feel competent in what they do (Cassidy, 2008). Building on the work of Lieberman, Davies (2011) argues that children that have an insecure attachment are likely to be anxious about the availability of their caregiver and may not possess the confidence to be able to explore, instead choosing to concentrate on ensuring their attachment figure/s are available. This is the same for children who have experienced abuse or neglect. Becoming reluctant to explore and never being given the opportunity to play with others, means these children may require considerable encouragement and support than might be expected at their age (Daniel and Wassell, 2002b).

Attachment theory and looked-after children

Parents are just as much biologically prepared to care for their children as children are to develop attachment relationships to their parents or guardians (Dozier and Rutter, 2008). Being raised continuously by birth parents represents the natural position that most children find themselves in. Being in local authority care strays far from this. Hannon and colleagues (2010) infer that attachment and placement

stability are strongly linked. Towards the end of the twentieth century, Daniel and Wassell (2002a) noted that child care practice and planning recognised the importance of attachment, however Rutter (2008) highlights that there has been a weakening in the connection between child care policies and attachment theory over recent years. Although no specific reference to attachment, Chapter 1 featured a continuing emphasis on the importance of providing looked-after children with a secure base or stable placement, whether that is in foster care or residential care. Chapter 2 also emphasised this suggesting that instability can have detrimental effects on a child's development, particularly on their educational achievement.

Breakdown in placements, (which causes children to subsequently move to a new placement), may be due to the struggle in making a secure attachment with new primary carers. The initial attachment a child has with a parent, whether it is secure or insecure, can cognitively affect subsequent attachments. It has been recognised that most disruptions in a child's life (at the point when they enter the care system) occur at an age when forming and maintaining attachments is key to their development and would have already been formed with a caregiver (usually from the ages of 1 to 5) (Dozier and Rutter, 2008). It is therefore understood that any new experiences children receive upon entering care will be compared against what they already know and the formation of a new attachment is likely to take a different form. Bowlby (1973, 1980) refers to this as an 'internal working model', and Howe et al. (1999) a 'mental representation'. These authors explain that children analyse their social relationships that they have formed, in terms of the

availability, care and support offered by the other person. The child then forms views about themselves and others based upon what they have interpreted. These views, stemming from very early attachments, consist of the likely behaviour of themselves and others in later relationships (Lambert, 2001; Daniel and Wassell, 2002a). This helps to explain why some looked-after children have reservations about forming new attachments. If previous relationships have been unsupportive, it can help to explain the trust issues that many of them have. However it is important to note that insecure internal working models can change through establishing more secure relationships, with some creating a stable base (Feeney and Noller, 1996). A study by Stovall and Dozier (2000) suggested that children entering care after the age of one, experience difficulty in trusting a new caregiver and behave in ways to seek nurturing behaviour. In particular, if a child is in residential care where there are a number of children living together, this may mean that the child misses the opportunity to develop selective attachment relationships due to a lack of personalised care from care providers (Dozier and Rutter, 2008; Rutter, 2008). This is supported by Hannon et al. (2010: 14) who note: "if residential care is to promote resilience and stability for children, it must promote opportunities for children to develop secure attachments. Influential research suggests that high ratios of staff to children and high turnovers of staff and young people are counterproductive".

Evidence suggests that for children who are to be looked-after long-term, adoption provides them with the best opportunities to develop attachment. However, adoption is only suitable for a small proportion of looked-after children and most

are placed with foster carers (Hannon et al., 2010). The increasing popularity of foster care, in connection with attachment theory, is to provide personalised care in a family setting, offering an opportunity for stable on-going relationships (Rutter, 2008). Within the UK policy context, the Children Schools and Families Select Committee proffer that: "for most young people in care, their most important relationship on a day-to-day basis is with their foster family" (APPG, 2012: 36). However whilst this presents an ideal scenario for children to develop attachments, Rutter (2008) explains foster care features high rates of breakdown ,not necessarily around attachment issues, but rather the practical difficulties associated with the establishment of foster care itself. Dozier and Rutter (2008: 713) add that it is possible that looked-after children will form new attachments to a caregiver if a previous one has been disrupted or after experiencing harsh conditions, by organising "their attachment behaviour in relation to the new caregivers availability". However, as the attachment works both ways, if a carer is not highly committed, the placement is likely to breakdown (Dozier and Lindhiem, 2006). Factors that contribute to children developing secure attachments with their carers and feeling stable and secure in their placements include sensitive parenting and a combination of warmth and consistent boundaries being set (Hannon et al., 2010); of which is a topic of focus in Chapter 6.

Whilst much focus has been on the importance of attachment in the early years of a child's life, Daniel and Wassell (2002a, 2002c) make us aware that whilst they may not show obvious signs, school-aged children and adolescent's need for a secure base, and thus a secure attachment, is just as great as that of a young child's.

During a child's school years, school provides the opportunity to boost resilience, as it can act as a complementary secure base, providing opportunities for developing self-esteem and efficacy as well as opportunities for constructive contact with peers and supportive adults (Daniel and Wassell, 2002a). Children will come across a range adults and children whilst at school and so being able to develop social relationships remains key if they are to be successful in their education. Davies (2011) argues that teachers can help children move toward adaptive social relationships by making strong efforts to establish an attachment with the child. During adolescence having a secure base is fundamental to act as a stepping stone to the wider world so that they can develop their own network of attachments, particularly friendships and intimate relationships (Daniel and Wassell, 2002c; Rutter, 2008). If young people are securely attached then they are more likely to make a successful transition to mature independence (Daniel and Wassell, 2002c). As noted in Chapter 2, this is particularly important for looked-after young people since they are far more likely to undergo an accelerated transition to adulthood than their peers.

Regardless of what age children or young people enter care, the nature of conditions prior to and post entering care (alongside the child or young person's strengths and vulnerabilities), can have an effect on their behaviour and their ability to control that behaviour (see Chapter 6) (Dozier and Rutter, 2008). A study by Ainsworth and colleagues' into children from severely adverse backgrounds, discovered that the children displayed unusual patterns of behaviour, possibly attributed to an attachment disorder (Rutter, 2008). Rutter (2008) explains that

there are two different types of reactive attachment disorder (RAD): the emotionally withdrawn/inhibited type, and the indiscriminately social/disinhibited type. Those children suffering from the former show little emotion, a lack of comfort seeking when distressed and a failure to respond when comforted. Signs of disinhibited RAD include not understanding boundaries and not differentiating behaviours between caregivers and strangers for example. It is suggested that this type of attachment disorder is not representative of an insecure attachment but rather a failure to develop an attachment in the first place (Rutter, 2008). A study of children with this type of disorder found that a high proportion had mental health needs, particularly SEN (Rutter et al., 2007 in Rutter, 2008). Both types of disorder have been found to have a strong correlation with maltreated children (Rutter, 2008) and, as we established in Chapter 2 is often the case for looked-after children. Poor early experiences can also affect brain development and this makes children vulnerable to experiencing disorder later on (Dozier and Rutter, 2008). For example, early neglect or difficulties in connecting with parents or significant others puts children at risk of a range of difficult outcomes, including behavioural issues at school and difficulties connecting with peers and maintaining friendships, consequently affecting their learning (Egeland et al., 1983; Daniel and Wassell, 2002a). Daniel and Wassell (2002a) draw upon authors Crouch and Milner to suggest that difficulties interacting with other children and adults can also indicate a lack of social competence, confidence and self-efficacy which is common for neglected children where they have lacked social simulation.

According to Dozier and Rutter (2008), children that may have experienced parental neglect or abuse prior to entering care still form selective attachments with their parents or other care givers in the home. Although this is likely to be an insecure attachment, it suggests that "the attachment system is adaptable to a range of caregiving experiences" (Dozier and Rutter, 2008: 701), thus offering potential for subsequent attachments to be made. Nonetheless Lambert (2001) points out that a child with an insecure attachment that faces the same difficulties as a child with a secure attachment will struggle far more to cope (see Chapter 7). They are less likely to be able to correct themselves, meaning they are also likely to be less resilient. When repeatedly exposed to frightening situations, as is the case for abused children, they may begin to show extreme behavioural or psychological reactions, such as freezing, crying or moving away when seeing their primary caregiver (Dozier and Rutter, 2008; Lyons-Ruth and Jacobvitz, 2008). This is known as a disorganised attachment. Whilst disorganised attachment is not a disorder, studies have shown it to be a predictor of mental health problems (Rutter, 2008). Such disorganised attachments are common amongst high-risk families and children that have been maltreated (Rutter, 2008), and mean children have difficulties in developing a trusting relationship with a caregiver (Milan and Pinderhughes, 2000). For looked-after children this may impact on the stability of their placement. Daniel and Wassell (2002c: 29) add that: "the aim in practice is to ensure children are provided with a secure base, either by improving the relationship with the parent/s or, if necessary, by finding an alternative attachment figure". Rutter (2008) explains that where attachment therapies are used, attachment disorders are not always the problem, but rather behavioural problems

can interfere with a carers attempt to form a connection with their child. This is often initiated from a child's lack of trust in the caregiver's availability. If this is addressed, it serves to help attachments by children showing secure behaviours, which for looked-after children and young people, can mean they remain in their placement longer (Dozier and Rutter, 2008). This notion that behaviour can adversely affect a child's development, consequently affecting their education, is explored in greater depth in chapter 6.

Summary

In summary, this chapter has addressed a key building block for resilience, connection. In so doing, it has identified what connection is in terms of resilience and why it is crucial for children and young people to be resilient, particularly looked-after children. Since a continuing concept throughout this study is that of attachment and a secure base, the latter section of the chapter has focused on the attachment theory. Here I have discussed the basis of attachment theory focusing on attachment relationships for children and why they are considered important for resilience. I have also discussed attachment theory in relation to looked-after children. By identifying the elements of attachment theory within the context of connection and education, I have attempted to provide a more in-depth analysis as to why looked-after children in particular are thought to be less resilient than their non-looked-after peers and how this has implications for their education. The knowledge provided by such theory, may also help to underpin and inform other aspects of resilience, including those addressed in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 6: CONTROL

We have already established that children with a stronger sense of attachment to other people are more likely to demonstrate resilience (Rutter et al., 1998). However this is also the case for those that have a more positive outlook on life, more plans for the future and more control over their lives (Rutter et al., 1998). 'Control' forms one of the '7 crucial Cs' as recognised by Ginsburg (2011). It "is the core of resilience – when faced with adversity, failure or stress, kids who have a true centre of control will be able to bounce back... ultimately they will be happier, more optimistic, and better equipped to face the next challenge" (Ginsburg, 2011: 306). Whilst control is rather a broad term, in relation to the building of resilience we are referring to a child's ability to be able to control their lives; that is the decisions they make that interpret their actions and outcomes (Ginsburg, 2011). Daniel and Wassell (2002c) add that combined with a capability for problem-solving and a sense of purpose and future, are all factors that aid resilience. This chapter illustrates the cause and effect 'control' can have upon a child's life. It seeks to explain why control is considered an important element in the resilience building process for children, with a later focus specifically on looked-after children.

Resilient children have internal control over the decisions that they make which is a powerful tool for resilience (Ginsburg, 2011). They tend to have better problem-solving skills and a sense of self-efficacy (Rutter, 1985). This self-efficacy is fundamental to academic achievement (Daniel and Wassell, 2020a), providing

children and young people with an ability to plan ahead, foresee consequences and find positive solutions to problems (Bandura, 1995). They are aware that these choices have a direct effect on outcomes in their lives and therefore that they themselves have the ability to make a difference (Bandura, 1995). Children and young people learn that making mistakes is a natural and inevitable part of life and that the lessons learned from such processes can be put to good use in terms of preparation for future life events.

Being able to have control over our lives is not something that is innate; we are not born with this ability. Ginsburg (2011) writes that we are taught how to take control of our lives and our environment. For example when a baby cries and their mother appears as a response to the crying, they are starting to learn to control the environment around them. As they get older, their ability in controlling their parents attention improves (Ginsburg, 2011). This forms part of attachment theory whereby comfort and reassurance-seeking behaviour such as this are known as 'attachment behaviours' (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1969, 1982). Ginsburg (2011) suggests that parents play an important role when it comes to helping us develop control. Self-control usually stems from a young age when our parents teach us that sometimes we have to be patient and wait, put in effort or may never get what we want (Ginsburg, 2011). However whilst this can be a challenging process to teach children, these smaller delays in gratification are necessary if children are to be resilient and cope with more serious issues later in life. An important aspect of parenting is that it teaches children from a young age that misbehaving can lead to undesirable consequences. Daniel and Wassell (2002a)

explain that teaching control through the use of consequences should help children refrain from unacceptable behaviour. Nevertheless the consequences that parents give are not always beneficial in helping children learn right from wrong. Ginsburg (2011) proposes that the consequence should be appropriate to the offence so that the child can see the direct relevance and proportionality of the consequence. Using extreme or random punishments does not help to eliminate that behaviour or offense from happening again, because there is no coherent connection between the two and so the focus shifts to the punishment itself. This gives a message to the child that they are not in control of their circumstances or life events and that adults control what they can and cannot do (Ginsburg, 2011). Sending out this type of messages or mixed signals does not help the child to develop a sense of control and therefore militates against the development of resilience.

Building on the work of Winnicott, Davies (2011) implies that parents need not be perfect, but 'good enough' to carry out the normal functions of parenthood. The commitment of parents in teaching control to their children can be down to the nature and quality of parenting, something which has often been the focus for psychologists and can play a fundamental part in influencing children's behaviour (Hayden, 2007). Ginsburg (2011) notes that many parents either adopt the same style of parenting that they received from their parents, or adopt a completely opposite approach. The latter is usually the case for those who received a cold and controlled 'authoritarian' approach (Farrington and Welsh, 2007) and they vow to be less strict with a more 'laid back' approach to raising their own children. Alongside an authoritarian approach, Farrington and Welsh (2007) draw upon work

by Baumrind, to insinuate that there are two other general styles to parenting: permissive and authoritative. More recently a 'disengaged' approach has also been distinguished (Ginsburg, 2011). The permissive style of parenting offers much love and support but does not necessarily set boundaries. In this instance parents simply hope that their child will do the right thing not to disappoint them (Ginsburg, 2011). Disengaged parenting on the other hand, is an approach that ignores the child and their behaviour. These parents believe that setting limits will not have much influence, but when major problems occur they use harsh discipline, consequently giving the child mixed messages (Ginsburg, 2011). Farrington and Welsh (2007) infer that having harsh, erratic, rejecting or inconsistent parenting is a risk factor of anti-social behaviour that can lead to anything from school exclusion to a custodial sentence. As we previously established in Chapter 2, looked-after children may be particularly at risk of such consequences.

Ginsburg (2011: 279) argues that there is much evidence to suggest that "children raised with authoritative parents are less likely to engage in worrisome behaviours and are more likely to be resilient". This is supported by Davies (2011) who adds that children who are resilient tend to have had consistent, responsive parenting. During a child's early years, parents or the primary caregivers are responsible for setting boundaries, acting as their 'external conscience', providing explanations as they intervene (Daniel and Wassell, 2002b). In turn, as children get older, this approach is balanced by setting firm boundaries and rules but allowing children the opportunity to make choices for themselves (Farrington and Welsh, 2007). This allows for children to develop independence, yet parents are still able provide love

and support (with control) where necessary (Ginsburg, 2011). This is essential if children are to gain a sense of control since being self-disciplined and self-responsible are important requirements of resilience (Ginsburg, 2011). If we have someone else making decisions on our behalf then we are denied the opportunities to learn control; when we are older we will never be able to handle challenging situations on our own. Therefore children learn control by being given opportunities that require them to make decisions and face the consequences of those decisions – good or bad. In order to do this, it is necessary for parents to occasionally let their children experience some "emotional bruises", but of course still protecting them from the more severe "hurts" (Ginsburg, 2011: 301). Once children understand that their decisions have an effect on outcomes, they also understand that they can then have control over their lives. By being able to make informed decisions they begin to learn to trust their own ability to control their lives (Ginsburg, 2011). Of course even in adulthood we are not in complete control over our lives. But most of us when faced with a decision think about the possible outcomes before making that decision. By being able to do this we learn that most success will result from us delaying immediate gratification. Davies (2011) points out that a study by Harter concluded that children were increasingly able to delay gratification in the hope it would lead to a better reward. Children who are able to delay gratification become less impulsive, more thoughtful and think about the outcomes of their decision making (Davies, 2011). Maintaining self-control means children and young people are more likely to overcome adversities. For looked-after children this is crucial, especially during adolescence when they may be preparing to leave care. If they are able to eliminate any obstacles that they face, albeit a

potentially slow process, they begin to build a solid base in preparation for a successful future (Ginsburg, 2011).

The consequences and boundaries that parents put in place for their child are fundamental to the child's development of control. Not only do children gain control (through decision-making), but consequences and boundaries also help them to realise that sometimes in life, they will have no control or choice over matters (Ginsburg, 2011). However, Ginsburg (2011) points out that children still need to feel secure in telling their parents when they are in trouble or have done something wrong. This links back to the notions of attachment theory whereby security is the key theme. If children are not secure in their relationship with their parents or caregiver then they will find it difficult to ask for help when needed. Those who are not emotionally attached will tend to become delinquent due to having low self-control (Farrington and Welsh, 2007).

The ability to empathise is something which has previously been referred to in Chapter 5 in association with connection, and again the ability to be empathetic and listen to children also comes in useful for promoting their self-control. Daniel and Wassell (2002a) and Hayden (2007) suggest that a warm and secure relationship to a caregiver provides the foundations for the development of empathy and the understanding that others have feelings that can be influenced. If the primary attachment figure demonstrates kind and empathic behaviour towards the child and others, this will be highly effective in the child adopting the same characteristics since children mimic the behaviour of those they closely associate

with (Daniel and Wassell, 2002a). This will also mean children will not be afraid of seeking help from their attachment figure/s when they need it (Ginsburg, 2011). Being given the opportunity to make decisions for themselves requires children to think rationally, take possible consequences into consideration and the effect these might have on themselves and others; thus teaching them the importance of empathy also. Whilst the natural reaction of a parent is to want to solve their child's problem, it remains important that instead they help guide the child to come to their own solutions (Ginsburg, 2011). This allows the child to feel that they have managed to solve the problem themselves and therefore have remained in control. In doing so, children who can empathise are less likely to display aggressive behaviour towards others (Hayden, 2007).

Control and Looked-after Children

We have come to understand that the development of looked-after children (including education) can be largely influenced by their level of resilience. It would therefore seem that the educational underachievement of many looked-after children may be due to them having little resilience. This we have established, is partly made up of control. The previous section portrays an idyllic environment in which children might develop control within their birth families. This is not often the case for looked-after children, proving ever more difficult if they have had multiple placement moves (home and school) and/or no secure attachment relationship to a specific person.

A child's ability to regulate and control their emotions and explore the world (both of which are important for social and personality development and psychopathology) can be impacted by the type of attachment they have with a primary caregiver (Weinfield et al., 2008). Marvin and Britner (2008: 271) observe that "the interaction between a child and their attachment figure(s) compensate and compliment the child's lack of motor, communication and social skills so the child is always protected whilst being given the independence in which to learn those skills". It is during a child's early years when they begin to master self-control, learning from their attachment figure's boundaries and expectations (Daniel and Wassell, 2002a). These years are vital for cognitive development and control must always be a priority (Daniel and Wassell, 2002a). During this time children become better at focusing their attention on tasks (Masten et al., 1990), which will prepare them well for school. This would be the ideal scenario for a child that has a warm, loving and secure attachment figure. If looked-after children and young people have not been given reasonable and consistent boundaries prior to entering care, or if they have had multiple placement moves that have had the same inconsistent effect, then acquiring self-control can be inhibited. This can also be the case if looked-after children have previously struggled to make a secure attachment to their parents, or felt they had a secure attachment and consequently struggle to make a new one with a primary caregiver. For children that are neglected or abused, as is often the case for looked-after children, they receive negative attention from their caregivers. If children do not receive the attention they crave, they often find means of getting it through ways that cannot be ignored. This is often through behaviours such as screaming. The attention that is given in response

to these behaviours is often negative and, as previously noted, can negatively affect a child's ability to form new attachments. Behaving in such a way that elicits negative attention reiterates the internal working model that we discussed in Chapter 5 as part of attachment theory. Children who experience this type of negative attention will develop an internal working model that expects to receive and need such attention from other primary caregivers, such as foster carers, and thus will manipulate their behaviour in order to get it. As noted in Chapter 5, displaying such behaviours can lead to placement breakdown and disruption in education. Farrington and Welsh (2007: 65) also note that "child abuse may lead to impulsive or dissociative copying styles that, in turn, lead to poor problem-solving skills or poor school performance". This may help to explain why many looked-after children have complex mental health needs that can hinder them at school (Barnardo's, 2013), with many statemented as having SEN (DfE, 2012b).

Displaying types of behaviour that causes a negative reaction can make children feel inadequate and incompetent, due to their lack of understanding into the reasons why they should not have done something (Ginsburg, 2011). A child may have been able to control their environment when with their birth family, but struggle when placed in an alternative setting or with 'strangers' as they may see them. This is the same for parenting style. Even if their birth parents, foster parents or residential workers have consistency within their own parenting style, if it differs from what the child is used to, then this can further complicate a child's ability to learn to control their lives. This further highlights the issues of stability discussed in Chapters 2 and 5. Placement stability is essential in order for the child to progress

successfully at the same rate as his/her peers; moving from placement to placement thus receiving different styles of parenting will adversely affect the child. It would be easy to suggest that foster carers (as part of their role), should be required and given guidance to adopt an authoritative approach to parenting. In this regard, if a child was to move placement they would be provided with some consistency in their relational environments; although this presents difficulties in a number of ways. The first is that if foster carers have children of their own and their parenting style differs from the authoritative approach, then this can cause further complications for all children in the household as well as the foster carers themselves. Especially since disorganised family structure or a chaotic household can be associated with increased problem behaviour in children (Coldwell et al, 2006). Secondly, if foster carers feel they are being judged on how well they can provide a certain type of parenting, it may cause a shortfall in the number of foster carers. This may prove detrimental since Chapter 2 established that, exclusive of adoption, foster care is the best form of local authority care for looked-after children to thrive. Furthermore for some children who come in and out of care, the parenting received within their birth families may well differ from their time in care, confusing the child considerably.

A lack of control may see children display aggressive tendencies, causing them to fall out with friends and get into trouble at school, consequently interfering with the learning process (Daniel and Wassell, 2002c). Hayden (2007) explains that temperament can affect positive or negative outcomes, with aggressive temperament being a risk factor of adverse outcomes (Farrington and Welsh,

2007). If such aggression in childhood is not addressed, then it is likely it will persist and lead to criminal activities, violence and anti-social behaviour in adolescence and adulthood (Daniel and Wassell, 2002a, 2002c; Farrington and Welsh, 2007). Those that have been taught control should understand that they cannot always get what they want and the learning of empathy should help them understand the reason behind parents or teachers decisions. If they learn this, then the aggression, particularly instrumental aggression (aimed at getting what you want) should diminish (Daniel and Wassell, 2002c). However, the nature of parenting again affects this development. For example, a warm and caring nature with clear boundaries and expectations of behaviour develop valuable social skills that can be transferred to adulthood (Daniel and Wassell, 2002a).

Rutter and colleagues (1998) emphasise that a range of life events and other circumstances can play a part in helping anti-social behaviour continue or cease. For example good experiences within the educational system with opportunities for achievement can be an important protective factor against adverse outcomes (Hayden, 2007). For looked-after children, it can also mean that their home placement is less likely to breakdown due to improved behaviour. Since pro-social behaviour boosts resilience, it is necessary for foster parents, teachers and other professionals to adopt the view that everyone has the potential to behave prosocially and regardless of difficulties faced, all young people can learn to control anti-social or unkind behaviour towards others (Daniel and Wassell, 2002a). This pro-social behaviour helps children to foster empathy and inhibit aggressive impulses (Davies, 2011). This is particularly needed since it has been found that

there is continuity between how kind a child is to how kind they are when they become an adult (Daniel and Wassell, 2002b). Ginsburg (2011) explains that there are certain disciplinary strategies that can help children; either by highlighting and encouraging positive behaviours or diverting from negative ones. The most important aspect of discipline is to pay frequent positive attention to the child, since it is this that children crave (Ginsburg, 2011). Nevertheless, when a child displays more undesirable than positive behaviours, it can be easy for parents and teachers to slip back into a routine of focusing on the undesirable behaviours. For looked-after children, many of whom come from disadvantaged and disconnected backgrounds, may display behaviours that are deemed unacceptable. Therefore for foster carers and residential support workers, giving children positive attention becomes crucial for the development of the child and the development of the attachment between both individuals. All these factors can strengthen a child's resilience, and have a positive impact on their education.

It has been suggested that low attainment and lack of achievement could cause frustration amongst children and be the instigator for disruptive and anti-social behaviour (Daniel and Wassell, 2002a). Conversely, it could be the aggressive behaviour that interrupts with children's ability to learn and it is this that causes underachievement (Daniel and Wassell, 2002a). Either way there is a strong correlation between successful academic attainment and controlled behaviour (Daniel and Wassell, 2002a). Young people that have few, if any, expectations for the future may see themselves as having little investment in mainstream society and therefore turn to risk-taking behaviours instead (Pinkerton, 2006). Daniel and

Wassell (2002c) highlight the importance of adolescents having a sense of purpose and future, in understanding that they have the ability to control and shape their lives. For looked-after young people, this may prove particularly difficult, especially since decisions on what peer group to mix, whether to have children or whether to continue in education for example, are highly influenced by previous experience that can affect their long-term outcomes (Daniel and Wassell, 2002c). Looked-after children and young people who believe that they cannot determine their future or reach a certain goal feel powerlessness, and therefore require help in establishing an "inner sense of control" (Ginsburg, 2011: 306). Ginsburg (2011) recommends that this should be built up using a 'one step at a time' approach, breaking down overwhelming challenges into smaller, manageable steps – a coping plan as such. If children can experience success one step at a time, they will begin to gain confidence in realising that they have the power to control what happens to them. This confidence should aid them in reaching the overall task, filling them with competence in being able to control other issues or goals in the same way; something that can be transferred and applied to their education. Although as formerly mentioned, it is not possible to control every aspect of our lives, and looked-after children especially need to understand this to be able to overcome adversity (Ginsburg, 2011). Otherwise they will waste time and effort in trying to control something that is out of their hands, rather than focusing on what they can change.

For looked-after children taking positive steps to reach a goal may seem so difficult to them that they feel they are incapable of reaching it and as such do not try (Daniel and Wassell, 2002a; Davies, 2011). This highlights a lack of 'competence'; another of Ginsburg's (2011) 7 Cs. Those who have been victims of abuse or severe loss, which can often be the case for looked-after children, develop internal attributions that are self-blaming and find it difficult to look to the future (Daniel and Wassell, 2002a; Davies, 2011). They become overwhelmed with feelings of hopelessness that lead to them thinking they have no control over their lives (Daniel and Wassell, 2002a). Again, it is pertinent here to make reference to attachment theory. If looked-after children or young people have been denied the opportunity to gain confidence and competence through a secure attachment, then they become at risk of disengagement with their learning and leaving school early (Midgley, 2002). Having a secure attachment gives children the confidence to successfully make decisions on their own, knowing that their secure attachment figure will support them if they get into harm. Not only will this confidence help to give them more control over their lives, but help them to gain competence in what they do, including education. This competence facilitates sensible decision-making and the ability to control instant impulses and consider the different outcomes in social situations (Daniel and Wassell, 2002a, 2002c). This is when children begin to learn what is socially acceptable behaviour and what is not, building their 'character' (Masten et al., 1990). They will find it easier to make friends and respect teachers' expectations which are there to help them succeed in their education (Daniel and Wassell, 2002a). If looked-after children know they are in control of their environment, then they will become more likely to use healthy coping

strategies because the need to escape from reality will be lessened and their ability to recover from adversity heightened (Ginsburg, 2011). This forms the focus for Chapter 7.

Summary

This chapter has explored the concept of control within the context of resilience. In doing so, I discussed effective decision-making, repercussions of actions and consequences, and the ability to control behaviour. Empathy was also identified as contributing to a child's learning and understanding of control. The chapter then sought to understand the need for looked-after children and young people to establish control within their lives, and the implications this may have on their education and future. It described why some of looked-after children and young people may display a lack of control, how this may hinder their education and how this can be addressed. I also discussed the importance of an attachment figure facilitating such development, including parenting style.

CHAPTER 7: COPING

In terms of building resilience, 'coping' is the ability to withstand stressors and stressful situations; something which is necessary in order to survive in a society that places increasing pressures on young and old alike. The need to prepare children to cope with stress is emphasised by Ginsburg (2011) who states: "no matter how competent and confident children are, no matter how secure their connections, how sterling their characters, or how generously they contribute to the world, resilience requires a wide repertoire of skills to cope with stress and challenge". Resilient children possess the ability to deal with problems competently in addition to managing the physical and emotional discomfort that such problems might create. This chapter seeks to explore how 'coping', as a component of resilience, is developed, nurtured and maintained with childhood and adolescence. The latter part of this chapter provides context on how this might affect the development of looked-after children and young people, potentially impacting upon their education.

Coping mechanisms are something that we unconsciously develop in our early years, although if not effectively developed, can hinder our ability to cope with life's challenges (Ginsburg, 2011). During a child's early years their cognitive domain is limited and immature mechanisms for coping with stress leave them vulnerable to stressful situations. This means they draw upon a range of internal coping strategies, such as mutual regulation (Davies, 2011). Mutual regulation relies on the

availability of the attachment figure to offer comfort and remain as a secure base for the child. The child needs this security and availability to feel comfortable in seeking help and support from them when needed. Again this refers back to the attachment theory that has had much influence when discussing resilience. When a child's age increases, so does the range of stressors and strategies for coping with stress and self-regulation. Before children begin school they are still largely reliant on attachment figures when under stress, particularly when internal coping mechanisms fail (Davies, 2011). By this time however, they are beginning to move toward a sense of autonomy which allows self-reliance and self-worth to develop, which is supported by positive working models of attachment derived from an internalised secure base (Davies, 2011).

Often children do not realise that underlying stress affects their moods or irritability, therefore Ginsburg (2011) explains that parents need to consider whether temper tantrums, mood swings or isolation may be signs of stress or depression. When school-aged children are "faced with external or internal stressors, they are likely to take an active coping stance, drawing on their own self-regulatory strategies or seeking help from others" (Davies, 2011: 360). Davies (2011) points out that self-regulation (that is the regulating of arousal and behaviour), is a primary task for children, and is influenced by parental support. An important part of self-regulation is "effortful control" which involves having the ability to stay focussed on a goal when faced with stress or adversity (Davies, 2011: 361), something which is needed to succeed in education. Being able to display such behaviour is based upon the child's own belief that he/she can take action to

change the events rather than leaving it to chance, which links back to the previous chapter on control (Wigfield et al, 2006). Indeed it is becoming apparent that coping and control are two closely associated components of resilience, where the development of one will impact and assist the development of the other.

When faced with emotional or physical discomfort, we all find ways to cope in order to make ourselves feel comfortable, whether it is using a positive or negative coping strategy (Ginsburg, 2011). Negative strategies are usually those that feel good and offer immediate relief, but in the long term do little to help the stress and can even intensify it. Positive coping strategies can enhance well-being and have the potential to offer at least partial relief (Ginsburg, 2011). A child or adult's ability to opt for positive coping strategies rather than those that offer immediate relief, is much like the ability to delay gratification that was mentioned in the previous chapter. If children can learn these skills from a young age, they will be far better equipped to cope with stress when they are adults.

Children that do not receive responsive and supportive parenting to develop additional coping mechanisms, are at risk of being unable to cope with stress and to regulate their emotions which can, in turn, have a damaging impact on all aspects of their lives. For children and young people in particular, it can affect their education. Davies (2011) explains that the ability to develop coping strategies could be hindered due to a child being unable to utilise coping strategies that are well established and sufficient to deal with the stress. The younger a child's age, the less coping strategies he/she will have developed and therefore they are more

vulnerable to stressors. This is why attachment forms such an important part in promoting resilience within children. Throughout childhood a child's cognitive functioning is still developing; as such they are at risk of stressors having not yet learned to deal with them independently (Davies, 2011). For this reason, parents are expected to act as an external conscience for the child whilst they are developing their own coping mechanisms. A child that has experienced an insecure attachment, maltreatment or trauma during their first few years of life may be pushed towards a maladaptive pathway, particularly if there are no protective factors present (Davies, 2011). In addition, the development of coping strategies may be hindered if a child is exposed to continuous multiple risk factors that may cause their resilience to diminish. Young children in particular, (in times of stress) require external protective factors that come from family support (Davies, 2011). Indeed, children of all ages employ the coping strategy of reassurance that their parents will become available if they are not currently present (Ginsburg, 2011). If parents or caregivers are not there to buffer the child when they are faced with stressors (Rutter, 1985), children are left to cope with them on their own which might impact their ability to cope when they are older. This helps to explain why perhaps some children and young people display difficult behaviour in response to what they deem to be stressful situations. If they have never had someone to help them cope, they may display a reaction similar to the ones they displayed when they were much younger. For those children that struggle to cope with stress, Ginsburg (2011) has developed a 10-point stress reduction plan, based upon research with children and families and scientific literature on effective coping. Each of the points include a variety of activities and actions to handle stress,

although Ginsburg (2011) importantly points out that it is not a 10-step plan, nor is it expected that people use all coping techniques suggested, but rather a trial and error process with a few at a time. The 10 parts are as follows:

1. Identify and then address the problem

2. Avoid stress when possible

3. Let some things go

4. Contribute to the world

5. The power of exercise

6. Active relaxation

7. Eat well

8. Sleep well

9. Take instant vacations

10. Release emotional tension

Having a stress-reduction plan has to be specific to a child's needs, development and circumstances, since what works for one child may not work for another (Ginsburg, 2011). Ginsburg (2011) emphasises that his plan is not directed at childhood and works just as effectively for adults. Being a role model is possibly the most effective way of teaching children to manage stress, especially when adults talk aloud to explain what they are doing (Ginsburg, 2011). If we do not want adolescents to use negative strategies such as smoking, drinking alcohol or violence as a means of coping, then it is important that they learn healthy coping strategies from their parents; parents cannot model problem-solving if they choose to take a nap each time they feel stressed (Ginsburg, 2011).

Coping and Looked-after Children

It is suggested that those children equipped to deal with stress are less likely to experience it (Ginsburg, 2011). This is why coping becomes so important for looked-after children. We already know that looked-after children are more vulnerable to specific risk factors and stressors than children who are not looked-after. The notion that exposure to risk and stressors reduces resilience has been recognised by Davies (2011) as hindering a child's ability to cope, and has been a central focus throughout the present study. Reducing risk factors can increase a child's ability to cope with adverse situations which can improve overall resilience, and thus academic achievement. Preparing children to cope with life's stressors may reduce the overall stresses they face and may mean that they are better equipped to deal with (and overcome) stress effectively.

In the preceding section it was discussed how during the formative years the most important development takes place for learning coping mechanisms. That is not to say that older children and adolescents cannot learn to cope with stress, but the early developmental stage is a necessary focus for assessment for vulnerable children to establish successful strategies (Daniel and Wassell, 2002b). For example, most children in their early years use self-stimulation, such as sucking their thumb, as a form of coping to internal and external stress (Davies, 2011). Whilst self-stimulation is a normal response, it has been noted that caregivers should observe the child's life for sources of stress if it occurs constantly (Brazelton, 1992). Davies (2011) notes that often young children use play caretaking scenes with themselves

in adult roles as a means of coping with the stress of separation from their parents. Whilst this is a normative process for all children, for looked-after children this may be a primary coping device they draw upon if placed in local authority care at an early age. Reassurance of their parent's availability is not something that looked-after children and young people can rely on as a coping strategy, since contact with birth parents is not always readily available. If, however, they have a long-term, stable foster placement and have established a secure attachment with foster parents, then it is possible that this reassurance can be sought from them.

Those children that enjoy secure early attachments to a caregiver, live in safe environments and have not experienced trauma are more likely to be better equipped to handle anxiety when they are older. Lambert (2001) explains that the coping mechanisms children learn from acquiring a secure attachment include the ability to seek help when needed, and a belief in their own self-worth and self-determination. Being given the opportunity by their attachment figure to explore and experience the world, means that they are also better placed to understand situations and the intention and emotions of others (Saarni, 1999). Being able to assess situations becomes particularly important when children reach school age, as they will have to rely on their own self-management of emotions and coping devices as opposed to an adult's.

An important method that facilitates children to cope with stressful or anxious situations is familiarity. Becoming familiar with situations is based on memory development, and allows the child to predict what is likely to happen. This

generalises what can be expected in response to situations that have similar elements to those experienced before (Davies, 2011). This can decrease stress as children are able to respond more naturally in these situations. This is similar to the attachment relationships discussed in Chapter 5, whereby children develop internal working models of previous attachments and the base their subsequent attachments on this. Familiarity may be a mechanism utilised by looked-after children where they have had distressing events in their lives, such as multiple placement moves. However, those looked-after children who have been victims of abuse or neglect may not have had the necessary support in developing the coping mechanisms discussed above. Davies (2011) draws upon work by Gunnar and Thomas, and Guskin, to suggest that children who have been exposed to harsh discipline, maltreatment or parental fighting show more difficulties with self-regulation and aggression. This can also be seen in those children who experience an avoidant attachment since they are less inclined to ask adults for help and inevitably struggle to manage their impulses (Sroufe et al., 2005). In contrast, children at pre-school age who have had a secure attachment are less likely to be aggressive because they have turned to adults when distressed and developed the skills to manage their impulses (Sroufe et al., 2005). A lack of help to self-regulate arousal during a child's early years, may cause some children to become highly aggressive and display 'tantrumming' behaviour because they feel helpless in response to stressors (Davies, 2011). They also become more vulnerable to frustration and hyperarousal, witnessed in conditions such as ADHD. This may help to explain the high proportion of looked-after children and young people suffering with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Not only can this sort of behaviour

cause placement breakdown, but it can also go on to effect the educational trajectories of looked-after children and young people, in relation to school exclusions and detachment from school (as evidenced in Chapter 2).

According to Ginsburg (2011: 215) "virtually all the behaviours we fear in children and teenagers are misguided attempts to diminish their stress". Examples include: procrastination, laziness, boredom, bullying, smoking, drugs, sex, eating disorders; all of which are negative coping strategies. These can be evidenced in the majority of children, not just looked-after children, who lack resilience. Farrington and Welsh (2007) point out that if unacceptable behaviour is not addressed in childhood, it is highly likely that it will continue into adolescence and adulthood – with inevitably impacting upon academic achievement. The challenge then, is to raise children with a variety of positive, alternative and safe coping strategies, to help them avoid negative and dangerous behaviours (Ginsburg, 2011). Ginsburg (2011) recognises that everyone has a different way of coping and writes how experts have identified key differences in coping styles. He explains that whilst some people cope by tackling a problem head-on and try to fix it in the best way possible (problem-focused), others focus on the emotions that arise from the problems and do alternative things that make them feel better (emotion- focused). Both are active attempts to engage the problem. Alternatively, other people choose to avoid the problem altogether, withdrawing from the problem, acting in denial or playing down its significance (Ginsburg, 2011). This can lead to isolation or depression. Indicators of poor coping in adolescence and adults include: a lack of educational qualifications, low income, unemployment, homelessness, broken relationships,

single and/or premature parenthood (Stephenson, 2007; Ward, 2008). These characteristics are suggestive of social exclusion which many care leavers find themselves vulnerable to (Ward, 2008).

Whilst there has been an emphasis on the importance of coping with life's stresses and strains, it is not to say that we should rise to and confront every challenge. Although the continuous denial of a problem will never solve it, in the case of over-whelming problems it can be wise to not let it bother us (Ginsburg, 2011). Ginsburg (2011) suggests that parents should not force children to face every single dilemma, because as we know from the previous chapter, we are unable to control everything that happens to us. This is the same for coping. Children need to feel comfortable withdrawing from or avoiding problems in order to save their energy to address the problems they are prepared to change or solve. With young children, Ginsburg (2011) implies it is best to simply model positive coping strategies for them to learn how other people deal with problems. Davies (2011) adds that the attachment figure serves as an important role model as children imitate and internalise their parent's ways of regulating anxiety, therefore by modelling adaptive coping can improve children's coping abilities and stress resistance. Older children need reassurance that their worries are linked to a problem and things can be done to address that problem (Davies, 2011). Often it can be beneficial to expose children to the kinds of coping strategies that they can then later draw upon when they need to, such as exercise or reading (Ginsburg, 2011). Without directly telling them that these are the things they should be resorting to, it is hoped that their own natural resilience will draw them to these positive coping strategies.

These coping mechanisms are just as important, if not more important for looked-after children and young people since they are likely to face more stressors in their life than their peers. In this respect it is important that they are recognised by foster parents, residential support staff and anyone else involved in the lives of these children in order to facilitate the development of resilience.

Summary

In this chapter I have considered the implications of coping within a child's ability to be resilient. I established that during a child's early years, their mechanisms of coping with stress is largely based on the attachment relationship and as they get older, begin to develop their own internal strategies for coping. The chapter recognises that without this, a child's development and ability to cope can be severely hindered. In the latter part, the focus was on looked-after children and young people's ability to cope with stress and adversity, and how this may be affected. It was indicated that attachment for children and young people is crucial in helping them cope with life's pressures. Through the teaching and modelling of positive and effective coping strategies, it was proposed that looked-after children and young people may be better prepared to cope with adversity that can have a damaging effect on their education.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore and analyse the educational trajectories of looked-after children. It brought together a coherent analysis of developments in legislation, policy and practice around looked-after children in the post-1989 period, with a review of extant literature that contextualised the subject. It became evident that within policy, practice and literature, little attention has been afforded to those looked-after children that do succeed in education. This thesis specifically focused on the theoretical notion of resilience to determine how this is possible despite facing similar difficulties to those looked-after children that do not achieve as well. Whilst resilience is comprised of many components, the study focused on those that appear to be most important for looked-after children; connection, control and coping. This allowed for a more in-depth discussion that emphasised how theoretical concepts from fifty years ago, such as attachment theory, are still relevant today. In doing so, these chapters gave an insight into how facilitating certain components of resilience can develop a series of wider characteristics and benefits that can be applied outside of an educational setting. This thesis demonstrates an original contribution to knowledge in this area by connecting a range of disciplinary fields including sociology, criminology, developmental psychology and psychiatry, to existing theoretical ideas and contemporary policy and practice in relation to looked-after children. The theoretical ideas emphasised in this study are the components of resilience: connection, control and coping. This concluding chapter proceeds to summarise the key themes identified within the

study and where necessary, illustrates possible examples of how they might be embedded within future policy and practice.

Looked-after children require a secure connection

This thesis recognises that children need to feel secure and protected in order to develop resilience, which can be achieved through multiple circles of connection with family, friends, school and community (Ginsburg, 2011). The attachment theory provided us with the understanding that having a secure base is implicit in secure attachments. Securing an attachment to someone provides an irreplaceable context for emotional development, emotional support and protection against stress (Bowlby, 1951). It also becomes the secure base for exploration which sets the foundations for cognitive development and successful learning (Daniel and Wassell, 2002b). Whether or not looked-after children have this secure base, directly affects the amount of confidence they have in exploring and taking risks. This is something which is needed in order to develop confidence and competence, particularly within an educational setting (Cassidy, 2008). For looked-after children who may not have a stable home life, school can act as a complementary secure base, providing opportunities for developing self-esteem, self-efficacy and the opportunity to connect with other adults and children which can impact on their level of achievement (Daniel and Wassell, 2002a, 2002b). For adolescence, having a secure base is fundamental to make the transition to the wider world.

This recognition that looked-after children and young people require stability in their lives has not gone unrecognised, featuring in policy and practice since 1998, against a backdrop of academics who have written on the subject (Skuse et al., 2001; SEU, 2003; Clay and Dowling; 2004; Stein, 2005; Hayden, 2007; Jackson et al., 2007; Hannon et al., 2010; APPG, 2012; Shaw and Frost, 2013). The 1998 *Quality Protects* programme, implemented in 1999, consisted of ensuring children were securely attached to their caregiver. When the programme came to an end in 2004, the publishing of *Every Child Matters* focused on improving the educational and life chances of looked-after children through providing stable placements. This was also evident in *Care Matters* in 2006, which had an additional aim of offering free school transport to allow children to remain at the same school despite any placement changes.

The designated teacher role that become statutory in schools following the *Children and Young Person's Act 2008* meant looked-after children have a specific person they can seek help from and who will provide them with the support they need. In addition, new provisions were put in place to ensure placement moves would not disrupt the education of those children. This was also included as part of the statutory guidance from *Care Planning, Placements and Case Review Regulations 2010* and *Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked-after Children 2010*. In 2013, the DfE published *Improving the Adoption System and Services for Looked-After Children,* which had an aim to improve the quality of care and the stability of placements for looked-after children, by monitoring the stability of foster placements and improving the way they collected data from local authorities. For

children's residential homes, the aim was to make sure looked-after children receive better care and protection. To further reiterate the importance of growing up within a secure family environment, the Coalition Government expressed the need to see more children being adopted by loving families with less delay. This is set out in the *Children and Families Bill 2013* which is currently undergoing the necessary parliamentary stages, before it receives royal assent and is made into an Act of Parliament. Given the literature synthesised in this study, policy and practice has acknowledged research in the area, by recognising the key theme that *Looked-after children require a secure connection*; evidenced within their focus on ensuring placement stability for all looked-after children.

Looked-after children should feel in control

It is apparent that some looked-after children may become detached from school and are more likely to be excluded, fundamentally affecting their education (SEU, 2003; Stephenson, 2007, APPG, 2012). This suggests that some looked-after children have difficulties controlling their behaviour. In this thesis we established that the learning of control forms part of the process in building resilience. Looked-after children were understood as needing to take control of their lives in terms of the decisions they make that interpret their actions and outcomes. In this respect, listening to the views of children in care is important. Within an educational context, this was partly implemented through the *Care Planning, Placements and Case Review Regulations 2010*, which referred to looked-after young people and care leavers being listened to in the development and implementation of their

Pathway Plans (DfE, 2012d). However it should perhaps be considered that looked-after children are to have more involvement in their PEP, giving them a sense of control over their lives that they may not feel they have. Much like attachment relationships, learning control is something that children develop during their early years with their primary attachment figure. Therefore, a child or young person who possesses low-self control can be because they do not have an emotional attachment to a specific person/s (Farrington and Welsh, 2007). This correlates directly to the previous theme outlined above, that placed emphasis on the importance of security within a looked-after child or young person's home life. This suggests that by facilitating a looked-after child or young person's ability to make a connection (attachment) through the providing of a stable base, may also help them develop and feel in control of their lives. Indeed it would seem, in an ideal scenario, a looked-after child requires a secure connection before being able to develop control.

Where the providing of a secure base may not be possible, it remains important to ensure that looked-after children and young people are able to learn control through alternative measures. The introduction of the Pupil Premium in the *Importance of Teaching White Paper 2010* has meant additional funding has been allocated for looked-after children purely for educational purposes. Whilst there is no statutory guidance on how this is spent, schools have a duty to justify the expenditure, with the DfE (2013c) indicating that they must ensure that the Pupil Premium is used effectively, as written in *Raising the Achievement of Disadvantaged Children 2013.* From the material presented in this study, the Pupil

Premium may benefit looked-after children if, in part, it is used for activities that require effective decision making and those they feel competent and confident in. By building competence and confidence, can give looked-after children the feeling of being in control over their lives and see them adopt a positive view of themselves and their future (Ginsburg, 2011). This can steer them away from negative behaviours that can impact upon achievement in the classroom, and even lead to anti-social behaviour (Daniel and Wassell, 2002a, 2002c; Farrington and Welsh, 2007). This view is supported by APPG (2012: 38) who recommend that looked-after children and young people "should be given the opportunity to experience learning and other life skills outside of the classroom to help increase their educational attainment and self resilience".

It has been established that having little self-control can result in displaying unacceptable behaviour that can affect a child's placement and educational trajectory (Daniel and Wassell, 2002a). This is possibly attributed to receiving unreasonable and/or inconsistent boundaries, something which may have started prior to coming into care and continued through multiple placement moves. Since it has been recognised that parent's have a significant role when it comes to helping children to develop control (Farrington and Welsh, 2007; Davies, 2011; Ginsburg, 2011), this same role should be assumed by foster carers and residential workers also. Paying positive attention and focusing on encouraging positive behaviours in order to divert from negative ones is considered important, given that there is a strong correlation between successful academic attainment and controlled behaviour (Daniel and Wassell, 2002a). The DCSF (2010c) have suggested that those

working with looked-after children should promote positive behaviour and reduce school exclusions in order to maintain the child in school. This forms part of the statutory guidance for local authorities on *Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked-After Children* 2010. It reiterates previous guidance published in 2008 by the DCSF, titled *Improving Behaviour and Attendance: Guidance on exclusion from schools and Pupil Referral Units*, which highlighted that exclusion of looked-after children should be an absolute last resort. This may be beneficial to a looked-after child and young person who expresses difficulties in controlling behaviour, since literature implies that using extreme punishments does not help to eliminate the behaviour from happening again; with no coherent connection to the two, the shift focuses away from the offense to the punishment itself (Ginsburg, 2011).

The ability of children and young people to control their behaviour is often reflected through the events that have happened in their lives, such as growing up in local authority care. For looked-after children and young people, a lack of control may not always be through fault of their own, but due to never having been taught it. That is not to say that unacceptable behaviour should be tolerated, but for looked-after children it should be viewed as part of their wider social background (Hayden, 2007). For this to happen, perhaps all staff in schools should be made aware of those children and young people who are currently or previously had a background in care (in accordance with school's confidentiality policies). Furthermore, additional training ought to be given to all those working within a school, as part of schools commitment to CPD. From the coherent analysis in this study, a focus upon how being in care can positively or negatively impact on all

aspects of a child's life, including their education, alongside how they can provide support and promote their resilience is crucial. This may facilitate empathy, which we have recognised can also help to promote resilience. In the 2013 policy document, *Improving the Adoption System and Services for Looked-After Children,* it requires every council to have a VSH in charge of getting children in care the support they need to succeed at school, this training could perhaps form part of their role.

Looked-after children need to be competent at coping

It has become evident that looked-after children and young people can face more difficulties than their peers. Insufficient help to cope with adversity, including a lack of specialised support from school and home, was understood as a possible reason for looked-after children and young people's educational underachievement (Hayden, 2007; Jackson et al., 2011; APPG, 2012; Stein, 2012). In order to overcome this adversity, the theoretical concept of resilience, specifically coping, suggests that children (and adults) need to become competent at coping with stress and stressful situations. Those children that are resilient deal with problems competently in addition to managing the physical and emotional discomfort that the problems might create (Ginsburg, 2011). They further have the ability to stay focussed on a goal in the face of stress or adversity, something necessary in order to succeed in education. However, Davies (2011) pointed out that resilience (and therefore coping) diminishes in children who are vulnerable to multiple risk factors. This includes looked-after children.

Initial coping mechanisms are learnt through having a secure attachment relationship (Davies, 2011). Those children and young people that have this type of attachment will feel more comfortable in seeking help from other adults when distressed and are less likely to be aggressive because they have been taught how to manage their impulses (Sroufe et al., 2005). As such they will be better at handling anxiety when they are older. Once again it is pertinent to make reference to our initial theme *Looked-after children require a secure connection*. Establishing a secure attachment to a caregiver, may provide a necessary foundation for looked-after children and young people to base positive coping strategies. Modelling positive coping strategies has been considered one of the most effective ways of teaching children to manage stress (Ginsburg, 2011). The attachment figure serves as an important role model, as children imitate and internalise their parents ways of regulating anxiety, therefore can improve children's coping abilities and stress resistance (Davies, 2011; Ginsburg, 2011). In this respect, more training ought to be considered for foster parents and residential support staff in teaching children and young people effective coping strategies. Particularly as the government has pledged (in *Improving the Adoption System and Services for Looked-After Children 2013)* to give foster carers the training and support they need. Not only will this benefit them in times of stress, but they are then able to model this approach for the children and young people they look after. A similar view is also shared and has been implemented by The Fostering Network (2013). *Head, Heart, Hands* is a four year programme that is being run across six pilot areas in England and Scotland that works with foster carers "to help fostered children build positive relationships that leads to stability, better outcomes and long-term well-being" (The Fostering

Network, 2013: paragraph 3). They intend to do through the use of academic knowledge, an understanding of emotions and a combined hands-on practical approach. Additional help within an educational setting can be observed through the statutory role of the designated teacher, as outlined in the *Children and Young Person's Act 2008*. Nonetheless it seems important that all teachers and staff within a school are made aware of why looked-after children and young people may not have developed the necessary coping mechanisms to deal with stress effectively, including signs that they are not coping and may be suffering from stress or depression. Such information ought to be relayed to the designated teacher who is responsible for addressing this issue. Again such training could form part of their CPD.

Whilst it is important to have someone to turn to in times of distress, some looked-after children and young people may not have formed a secure connection, and alternatively do not wish to discuss their difficulties with an 'authoritative' figure, such as a teacher. Perhaps a useful way (to help children and young people cope with and overcome stress) would be for a mentoring scheme in schools for looked-after children and young people; possibly forming part of the additional expenditure allocated for the Pupil Premium Plus. If local authorities were to employ recent care leavers to undertake this role, then not only would it assist care leavers with employment, but provides an opportunity for looked-after children to feel connected to someone. A care leaver undertaking this role may also be able to demonstrate the empathy needed in helping to build resilience. This has also been recognised by The Care Leavers Association in a report entitled *Education Matters*

in Care, which acknowledges the value of learning mentors, particularly care leavers, in helping and advising looked-after children and young people (APPG, 2012). For example in Lancashire, the work of three learning mentors "was directly responsible for saving 12 children from fixed-term exclusions and played a key role in pushing educational progress alongside providing tailored pastoral support" (APPG, 2012: 30). Whilst such scheme could have the potential of instilling control and coping strategies back in their lives, it has been argued "schools cannot alone improve educational outcomes for looked after children (Ofsted submission)" (APPG, 2012: 36). Giving foster parents the training and support they need, is one of the actions set out in *Improving the Adoption System and Services for Looked-After Children 2013.* Foster parents are already required to attend parent's evenings and other relevant meetings as stated in *Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked-After Children: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities 2010,* yet these types of meetings are not always regular. It would appear useful then, if part of the Pupil Premium was used for designated teachers and/or mentors to have regular meetings with foster parents, in order to discuss how well a child is coping at home and school, and recommend effective ways of dealing with stress. Since we have established that stability at home is closely linked to stability at school, this would see continuity across a looked-after child or young person's life, receiving the same targeted support both at home and school.

Limitations and recommendations

Initially this thesis began as an empirical study that sought to accurately discern looked-after children's educational trajectories through generating empirical data. Through experiencing setbacks, aforementioned in this study, the decision was taken to adopt a heuristic strategy via a desk-based study. The secondary analysis of legal, policy and academic/practitioner materials presented in this thesis paves way for more empirical work in the future.

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