

ATTACHMENT & TRAUMA AND IMPACT ON LEARNING

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Reasons children and young people come into care

- Abuse and Neglect – 61%
- Family dysfunction – 16%
- Separation and loss
- Trauma – acute, long lasting ie armed conflicts

75,420 children in care in England at 31 March 2018

One in three children in care have three or more placements in a year

Around 12,500 young people who are 16 + move into semi-independent or independent

A little data on CLA and CL aged 16+

- In 2018, at the end of **Key Stage 4**, the average Attainment 8 score for looked after children was 18.8 compared to 44.4 for non looked after young people
- 52% of CLA have a special educational need compared to about 15% of all other children and young people
- Almost 30% have an EHC Plan (Statement of SEN) compared to about 3% of all other children and young people

EDUCATION OUTCOMES

- In 2018, of 17 year old care leavers, 35% were in education, 14% in training or employment and 28% were not in employment, education or training (13% unknown)
 - For 18 year olds 48% were in education, 17% in training/employment and 30% were NEET (5% unknown)
 - For 19 to 21 year old care leavers, 6% were in higher education, 20% in other education, 25% in training or employment and 39% were NEET (compared to 12% of all young people aged 19 to 21 years).
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AS A CONSEQUENCE.....

Young people and adults who are care experienced are more likely to be:

Unemployed (40% compared to 13%)

In prison (over 25% of prison population)

In poor mental and physical health

Living in poverty, destitution

Homeless (36% - Centrepoin/Big Issue 2019)

BARRIERS TO EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

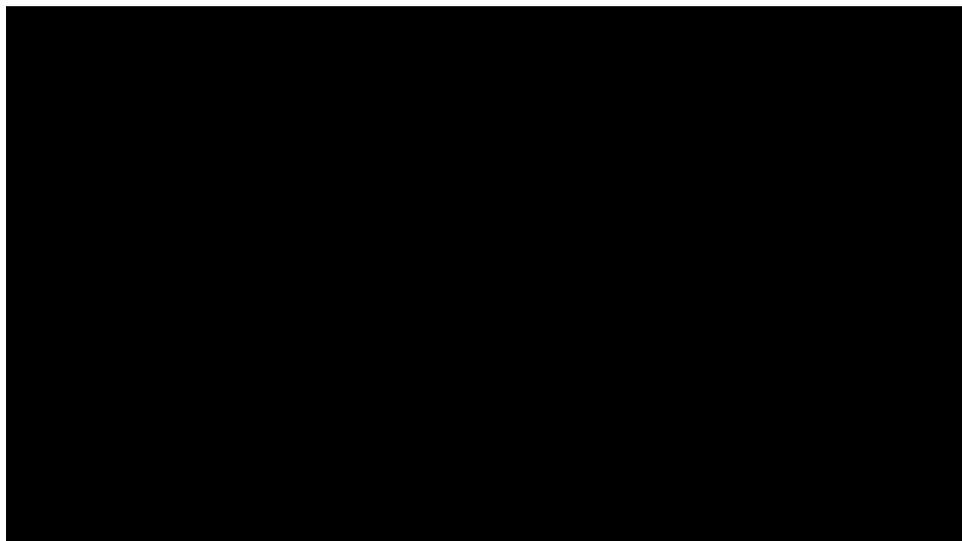
What are the reasons that 16+ CLA and CL do not achieve on a par with their non-looked after peers?

Trauma, disrupted/insecure attachment, fragmented education journey, and external circumstances all contribute...

..... This can be addressed and minimised so that young people achieve their potential



EXPLORING ATTACHMENT: STILL FACE EXPERIMENT



ATTACHMENT THEORY IN A NUTSHELL

Attachment is :

- “a lasting psychological connectedness between human beings” (John Bowlby, 1988).
- a deep and enduring emotional bond that connects one person to another across time and space (Ainsworth, 1973; Bowlby, 1969).
- Secure attachments support mental processes that enable the child to regulate emotions, reduce fear, attune to others, have self understanding and empathy for others.
- Insecure attachment affects relationship with self and others and can have a life-long impact

What factors can lead to insecure attachment?



IMPLICATIONS TO ACCESSING LEARNING

Secure Attachment	Insecure Attachment
Can connect to others and inner self	Find it difficult to seek support and communicate needs/feelings
Exercising curiosity	In survival mode difficult to explore the world
Empathetic	Erosion of empathic feelings
Can focus on learning tasks well	Can find it difficult to maintain concentration for extended period of time
Problem solving	Difficulties accessing the thinking brain – survival again!
Can manage positively difficult situations/conflicts	Conflicts send the brain in Flight/Fight/Freeze mode
Adequate language development and communication skills	Underdeveloped communication skills – language processing, expressive, receptive communication

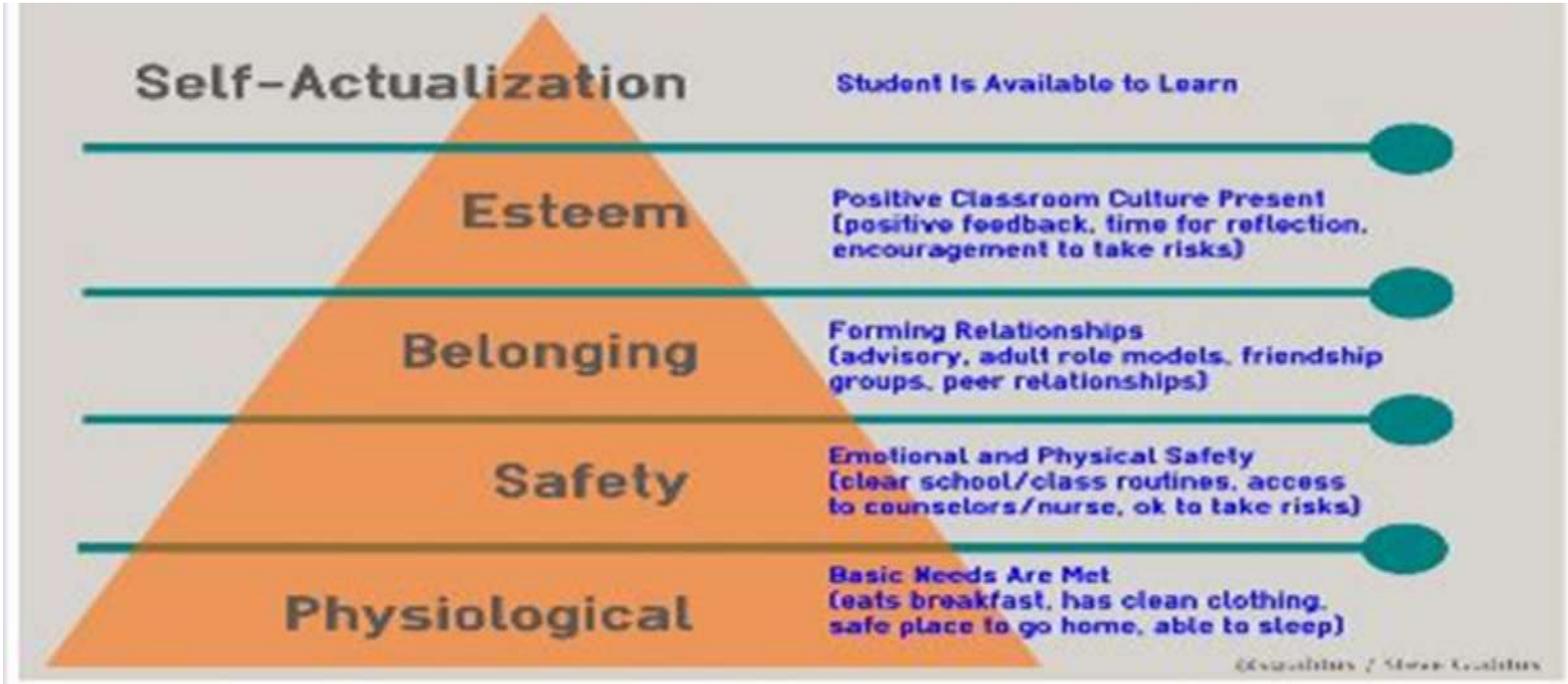
EDUCATION PROVISIONS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

- School life, with its rich environment of new relationships and tasks, presents young people with occasions to identify, develop and establish fresh, more robust and socially valued aspects of the self (Howe et al, 1999, p.260)
- Colleges/universities work with adolescent brains – social self & sense of identity more important than other aspects of life

EDUCATION PROVISION CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Children with attachment difficulties did not have the usual opportunities for growth in their early years. Rather than leaving them 'stuck' in their development, we can choose to provide them with the opportunity for 'second chance learning'. This involves offering opportunities through which a young person can have a corrective experience, so that they can negotiate earlier incomplete developmental processes, and move forwards. (Bomber, 2007, p.47).

MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS: IMPACT ON CAPACITY TO LEARN



WHAT MIGHT HELP – WIDER ENVIRONMENT?

- Inclusion policy and practice for CLA: whole college ethos
- Make good use of research and statutory and non-statutory guidance
 - Professionals working together to provide tailored support
 - All teachers and staff aware of, and sensitive to, the young person's needs to pre-empt triggers
 - Positive relationships with trusted adults are key to recovery
 - Facilitating peers support groups
 - Build on the individual young person's unique strengths, skills, successes and potential – high aspirations and high expectations – talk about the future -



REES CENTRE RESEARCH FINDINGS

- Young people should be placed in **mainstream education with appropriate support** wherever possible
- We need to **support colleges not to exclude them**
- **Teachers need better understanding** of young people's social, emotional and mental health problems
- Schools and local authorities should use **extra help** such as paired reading and one-to-one tuition that are supported by evidence
- The Virtual Schools, schools, social workers and foster carers should **work closely together** and **involve the young person** in decisions affecting them

IN THE LEARNING GROUP/CLASSROOM

- Ensure classroom practice takes into consideration the background and complex needs of vulnerable young people e.g. developmental age, lesson content
- Behaviour is communication
- PACE – playfulness, acceptance, curiosity, empathy (Dan Hughes)
- Careful use of language to avoid triggering shame or stress
- Naming and validating feelings; continually teaching how to build and maintain relationships
- Help the young person problem solve, repair and restore relationships where possible



IN THE LEARNING GROUP/CLASSROOM

- Curriculum content, teaching and learning styles
- Lesson structure and clear, sequenced activities
- Signal transitions clearly
- Offer small number of positive choices
- Use pair and small group work; allocate role responsibility
- Written and verbal feedback to build self-esteem and confidence
- Checklists /visuals to help develop organisational skills
- Laughter – oxytocin, reduces stress and builds relationships



SCENARIOS

17 year old asylum seeker from Eritrea, arrived a year and a half ago. Has made little progress learning English, still at EL1 in spite of additional tuition and an education mentor. Good attendance and keen to learn, participates in homework club. Often late, very tired and does not do any homework set.

- What are the issues?
- What would you find out?
- What would you do?

Alisha was brought into the care system because she was sexually active from a young age after being prostituted by her mother. In spite of this she did manage to get through secondary school and pass some GCSEs. She tends to over-disclose to her peers. She currently has a boyfriend who is not in employment or training and who is perhaps earning money from criminal activity. Since becoming involved with him, her attendance at college has dipped and she is missing deadlines. In her studies and in exams she tends to lack confidence and gives up at the first sign of difficulty, hence her grades do not reflect her true ability.

Jake is seventeen and had to be a carer to his younger siblings and mentally ill/alcohol dependant mother when he was a young child. He is academically capable, but was angry about being brought into the care system. He was excluded from two secondary schools in Key Stage Three, because he was very challenging to authority figures. He assaulted an older man on a bus and spent two years in a young offenders' prison from the ages of fourteen to sixteen. He didn't focus on education in the prison because he felt he had to establish himself as 'top dog' through fighting to survive. He has enrolled on a course at college.



***“I am not defined by my scars but
by the incredible ability to heal”***

Chancellor of Manchester University,

Poet and broadcaster,

Lemn Sissay

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