



CASE STUDIES AND IMPACT EVALUATIONS

FOSTER CARER & SCHOOL BASED EDUCATION CHAMPIONS 2018/2019



On the following pages we have collected a series of case studies and individual impact studies which have been written by Foster Carers and Education Settings who have been involved in the Caring2Learn project since it's launch in the spring of 2018.

They detail the experiences of participants involved with the Caring2Learn Award process and those who have had access to the training and support programme over the last 16 months and the impact this involvement has had on them and children and young people in the care.



The group Caring2Learn was started with 16 Foster Carer Champions chosen from interviews throughout Lincolnshire County Council. I was chosen to be part of this group. At first, I was shy and nervous about doing this and going forward with the project.

What's it all about?

Promoting life skills and helping with the education of the fostered (LAC) children that live with me permanently. This is carried out by working with professionals including: teachers, social workers and the virtual school.

Firstly, we started out by having monthly meetings and going through the work book that we had to complete in order to be awarded the Caring2Learn Learning Homes Award. This was a fantastic way to meet other people in the same boat as myself and made me less nervous as we talked about what goes on at home and school with our young people. We all attended the training schedule and met with teachers and foster carers from across Lincolnshire which greatly opened my eyes to the needs of the young people. The knowledge that I am learning is phenomenal and has made me more confident and outgoing in my day-to-day life. I have made great friends within the group and found support throughout this time.

The challenge that I was set was to work with a group of schools that were designated to me. I took upon myself the challenge to fulfil this and ended up with six schools all working together in a cluster, which meets once a term at each of the schools. I took the leading role giving talks to the group and am still part of this. On top of this, I have increased the number of schools in the cluster, by two new schools, making it eight in total. Excitingly there may be a possibility of adding a further nine schools (1 federation), in the near future.

The champions group are now organising coffee mornings to hopefully encourage more foster carers to come on board with the programme. Also I help out with new foster carers, on induction days by running through the Caring2Learn workbook and explaining how I worked through the award.

Going forward

We are reviewing the current workbook and will be presenting our new portfolios in three years' time proving that we are still a Learning Home. The benefits for myself belonging in the group is more confidence and being more involved with the children I look after. I am now less scared of talking to professionals as I realise we are all on the same page and doing our best for the young people in our care. We have learnt that it's ok to talk, that our knowledge and wisdom can make a difference.

Throughout the year I have really enjoyed being part of Caring2Learn. I have enjoyed all the training courses and the meetings but the best part is getting to know other foster carers and teachers from other schools in the county and the virtual school which has been excellent. The professionals that have travelled with me on my journey have been amazing and very supportive.

Tracy Chapman

Foster Carer Education Champion

HOW BEING AN EDUCATION CHAMPION WITH THE CARING2LEARN PROJECT HAS IMPACTED ON PLACEMENT STABILITY

My husband and I have been task-centred foster carers for almost five years.

We foster sibling groups, as we are passionate about trying to keep brothers and sisters together. Before becoming a foster carer, I was a primary school teacher, and so came into fostering with the reputation of being able to handle groups of children.

Five months ago, we received into our care three young brothers who have proved to be the most challenging placement we have ever cared for. Within their first week, each of them had run away at least once, my bannister spindle had been broken, the boys were constantly fighting with one another and I had reached the conclusion that I could not take them out on my own and be able to ensure that they were physically safe. At home their behaviour was wild, chaotic, noisy and requiring all of my available time to prevent them from hurting one another.

During my time as an Education Champion I have been privileged to be able to receive training provided by Caring 2 Learn in a lot of areas that were very relevant to my needs as I to seek to become more skilled in caring for traumatised, neglected children. At around the same time as the boys were placed with us, I started attending a ten-week course based on the Solihull Parenting Approach. This group was attended by mostly other foster carer Education Champions. This group was very cohesive and had an immediate understanding of and empathy with the issues that my husband and I were facing with the three boys. In the early weeks of the placement my husband and I were seriously questioning whether we were equal to the challenges that we were finding ourselves in and whether we would be able to sustain the placement. However, attending the Solihull course gave me the opportunity on a weekly basis to step back from the situation, discuss circumstances with other knowledgeable and empathetic carers and receive the support that I needed. Along with the trainer's emphasis on 'caring for the carer' and a weekly dose of humour, we managed to maintain the placement.

I also attended a course about Adverse Childhood Experiences by Dr Karen Treisman, my place having been provided through Caring 2 Learn. This too gave me great insights into the effects on the boys of the traumas that they had been through prior to coming into care. This made me more determined than ever that they should not have a failed placement to add to their catalogue of adverse experiences. Caring 2 Learn also purchased some of the resources written by Dr Treisman, to loan out to carers. I have been working through a workbook with my eldest young man to help him cope with his post-traumatic nightmares. These are now much reduced and he is developing strategies to prevent them and to deal with them should they arise.

Although our three boys still provide challenge on a daily basis, they have made massive strides in learning how to relate to one another, how to function at school, how to play and to start to benefit from the therapeutic approach that my husband and I can provide for them.

Jayne Arnold

Foster Carer & Education Champion



THE IMPACT OF TRAINING ON KNOWLEDGE AND SELF-CONFIDENCE

I have been a Foster carer for 13 years and I joined the caring2learn project as an Education Champion in 2018. During my 13 years of fostering I have been privileged to be a part of supporting many children, it's been a challenge at times but often has provided me with immense enjoyment and satisfaction seeing the children prosper. I gave up employment to become a Foster carer and it's not until joining the care2learn project that I realised how much this project has empowered me, it's great to be part of an adult team helping to promote the project. I now have the best of both worlds feeling part of an adult team but still being able to carry on my passion of fostering. I absolutely love what I do and can't wait to see how the project evolves going forward.

One of many positive outcomes on my caring2learn journey was a problem-solving circle that I ran to help with an issue I had with one of my placements, it helped to solve the problem and it's this sense of team work that I really like. I have met many new friends, colleagues and contacts that I couldn't have done without being an education champion and have also been privileged to attend some outstanding training courses over my time in the role.

Hazel Shaw

I have found that, as a Foster Carer, being part of the Caring 2 Learn project has been very positive. It has given me access to varied and relevant training, enabling me to up skill. All the training supports me in my on-going development as a Foster Carer, which is invaluable. With my increased knowledge, particularly around trauma and the impact it has on the developing brain, I have felt more equipped to access services on behalf of the children in my care.

An example of this was when I was dealing with a referral to the Community Paediatrician. My training from the project made me feel that I had more credibility and resulted in me being seen as more of a professional working within a team. Having the knowledge and training together with the language, resulted in a more productive appointment. In turn this saved time on future appointments/ planning as all the information was discussed to a degree of depth within the initial meeting. As a result of this the child in my care has received the appropriate intervention/support in a relatively short period of time and I have felt more equipped to champion for the child.

Linda Wright

Foster Carer & Education Champion



THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL PEDAGOGY TRAINING

It is not easy to comment about good practice as progress is not so measurable but I feel obliged to express how helpful Social Pedagogy has been for the young person in my care and me, even though we have ups and downs.

The young person in my care has serious behaviour difficulties which were dangerous to me, the dog and to my property at times and were so difficult for me to manage as a single carer that I was worried that I will not be able to provide placement for him anymore and I felt bad about it as he experienced rejection many times and I could see that underneath these behaviours was great, intelligent and compassionate young person and ending placement would not help in any way to address difficulties.

Participation in various "Caring to Learn" courses alongside teachers and social workers helped me to feel part of the community supporting young person and understand their role and appreciate their involvement a lot more. This made me more confident in standing for that young person, as I sometimes felt blamed or not listened to by professionals and these joined courses empowered me as part of the solution, not the problem and created amazing and supportive culture of working together and sharing experience.

6 day Social Pedagogy course provided time and space in company of wonderful people to reflect and improve practice. We were able to reflect on my young person's comfort and learning zone and this itself gave him a tool to manage his behaviour as he identified his room as a safe place to deal with own emotions rather than place of "time out" or punishment and I was able to learn a lot more about his life experiences, thoughts and feelings. We still have difficulties but they are manageable and placement does not feel in jeopardy anymore. We are developing language where we are learning to identify feelings and emotions what is not the easiest thing for someone who experienced a lot of neglect and rejection in his life. We share more activities together as I discovered that this matters a lot and is less stressful than pressure to talk and it makes talk easier when necessary. I observed so many positive changes related to improved self-esteem and ability to take responsibility for own behaviour, honesty and ability to cope with requests and rules. Young person is more adaptable to various situations and is able to form stronger, healthier, longer-lasting friendships. These successes make him feel good about himself and trying to enter territories which would be not accessible for him otherwise. Recently he express willingness to work towards going to mainstream school despite having experience of being excluded from them before. He is not ready yet but I think with right support and determination this is achievable and I feel increasingly stronger to support him with that alongside professionals.

Anna Filipiak
Foster Carer



IMPACT ON FOSTER CARER RESILIENCE

Carole and I completed training in April 2016, as tasked centred carers, and shortly after panel we were asked to foster two brothers aged 17 and 14. To say it was a baptism of fire is a massive understatement. The boys were a very challenging introduction to Fostering. They were deeply affected by the abuse and neglect they had suffered over a long period of time. They kept themselves very much to themselves, spending most of their time in their rooms. They gradually became more comfortable in our company but refused to interact on any level with our family and friends. They did go away with us for a week in Lake district, but again while there they just wanted to be on their own and did little with us. As time progressed the elder brother became more comfortable living with us, we helped him with his UCAS application, and he decided to “stay put” with us when he turned 18. As he became more comfortable with living with us, his brother’s attitude changed, and he became more and more disruptive and intent on breaking up the placement. He mainly targeted my wife and subjected her to torrents of abuse when they were alone such as in car when fetching or carrying back and forth to Bourne. Eventually it was clear that his placement could not continue and he was removed. At this his brother blamed us for splitting them up and refused to speak or engage with us on any level. He came home from school and stayed in his room. He also refused to make his contribution from his housing benefit towards his board and lodging under the Staying Put scheme. He eventually moved out in Feb 2017.

Carole was so traumatised by the whole affair we took a break from fostering while we decided if fostering was for us. After a number of conversations with our SSW we started offering respite care to a number of children. This went well and confirmed to us that fostering for us. I also became involved with the Caring2Learn project as an education champion during this time. At the beginning of 2018 we agreed to go back onto the task centred register. In April we agreed to Foster 2 brothers from Vietnam and they have now been with us over a year in which we have supported them through the whole process of coming into care and facing a court case to decide whether or not a full care order was granted.

My involvement with Caring2Learn along with our SSW has more than any other support or training equipped me to cope with the pressures that fostering children bring. It has through some excellent training such as the Restorative Practice course I attended enabled me to tackle problems and issues in a different light and as a result although the role of foster carer is still a difficult one I feel far better equipped to cope. I see Caring to learn as an essential part of foster care training and the approach of linking schools and carers through the dual award is an innovative and ground breaking approach that seeks to ensure that looked after children in Lincolnshire get the best possible chance to succeed and achieve their full potential. As I said at the SSW team meeting, Caring2Learn needs to be promoted at all levels and become an integral part of foster carer induction and continuing training.

David Guy

Foster Carer & Education Champion



PERSONAL EXPERIENCE AS FOSTER CARERS

Hello, our names are Steve and Tracey Tyrrell we started fostering in 2001 we are Education Champions and a Learning Home. We are writing this as we believe our personal experience as foster carers should be acknowledged and may help shape the Caring 2 Learn project as it goes forward, it may also help shape the future thinking around services delivered to foster carers in Lincolnshire.

As foster carers we have in the past felt as we are mere tools in the overall corporate umbrella of looking after children within the local authority. The main reasons being that our main contact with the local authority or any of its professionals was at statutory reviews etc., training was always in isolation with other foster carers and limited in scope and quality and we did not get to work with other foster carers or other professionals.

As foster carers the C2L project has provided us with the opportunity to meet and work with many other foster carers and gain valuable knowledge from other carers in the way they interact with the children in their care and interact with the local authority. Because of the project we have networked and trained alongside all branches and professionals of the local authority providing us with a clear understanding of the local authority's services to children placed in care within the county.

The opportunities to access training, such as Restorative Practice, Social Pedagogy, Trauma Informed Practice to name but a few, which we have participated in with other professionals from the local authorities, social workers, teachers, early years etc has increased our capabilities and knowledge as carers to provide the best care to the children in our care and also equipped us as individuals to pass on the ethos behind such training to our children so that they may use it with their children in future years.

Our work with schools and networking with other carers has provided us with a clearer understanding of the importance of education, but education that also uses care and nurturing in its day to day practice and how this benefits our children at home and at school.

The C2L project has enabled and equipped us as carers to examine, challenge and reflect on our learning methodologies with the children in our care to identify new ways of providing learning opportunities within the home so that all our children benefit from living in a learning home. The outcomes for children and future children in our care will be priceless to their future well-being and education.

Steve and Tracey Tyrrell

Foster Carers and Education Champions



STURTON BY STOW PRIMARY SCHOOL

Sturton by Stow Primary is a small primary school just outside Lincoln, with a very mixed intake of children. We have a relatively large proportion of Looked After children, children eligible for Pupil Premium Funding and children on the SEND register. Because of this, our school ethos of ensuring that we see all children as individuals and aim to meet their specific needs and the multi-agency approach to the project, I was very keen to be involved in the pilot Caring 2 Learn Project. The support of vulnerable children is a key focus in school, and is strongly led by the leadership team. As head, I am also the Designated teacher for looked after and previously looked after children, our Assistant Head leads on Pupil Premium and our SENCo is a key member of staff. We pride ourselves on seeing each child as an individual and making sure that we know their likes, dislikes, worries, fears and hopes in order to support them in doing the best they can at school. Through our involvement in Caring 2 Learn, we have been able to review and evaluate the support we provide for our looked after children, for all vulnerable children and for all of our children. The key outcomes of this for our school were:

- There are many aspects of our work with vulnerable children that are very effective (e.g. meet and greet in a morning, pupil leadership roles);
- There are effective aspects of our work which we can further develop (e.g. working with parents and carers) to make them even more effective;
- There are some areas which we can focus on (staff training with regard to child mental health).

A key aspect of Caring 2 Learn for me was the Restorative Practice training, which I found incredibly powerful. Again, there were aspects of this that we already used in school with the children and with staff. Through the two days of training I realised the powerful impact this approach could have with the children in school and also in how we work as a staff team to support the children and each other. This is something we will be working on this year and will be continuing to develop and embed across the school in the coming months. We pride ourselves on our work with parents/carers and with outside agencies, including the Virtual School, behavioural support and social care. However, with the pressures on us all, it can sometimes feel like we are all working incredibly hard to support the children without everything being completely integrated. The multi-agency approach of Caring 2 Learn is incredibly powerful and is a key strength of the project. It has provided us with the opportunity to share experiences and ideas with a range of colleagues, and to consider these from different points of view. Taking part in the pilot Caring 2 Learn project has been a valuable opportunity for our school. We have had validation of the good work we already do and we have been challenged to improve our practice further. It is great to know that we are already making a difference to the lives of some of our most vulnerable children, and that we now have practical ideas for making an even bigger difference.

Alison Simmons

Headteacher



BRIDGE HOUSE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL

The start of our Caring2Learn journey...

At Bridge House, our focus is always on change. It finds its way into the school motto – “Enter with a past, change it for a future”. It forms the basis of our ethos, that we, well all of us, can make improvements to become better at what we do. Better people, in fact. This is no preachy soundbite: we have seen this happen time and again to our pupils. Whole lives changing before us. The reason why change is so important

to our school lies in the nature of our cohort. They are a disparate bunch alright no generalising or pigeon-holing here! – but they all have some things in common: they did not succeed in mainstream education. They are bereft of confidence and self-esteem. And they are vulnerable. Exactly the type of pupils that Caring2Learn is for. Change is also something that we embrace as a staff group. We know that Caring2Learn will be a transformative process for our school, and we are up for the challenge! We are setting our sights firmly on the Gold level award, but know it will be hard won. We are also currently involved in the Promoting Achievement of Looked After Children (PALAC) Project, which aims to raise attainment for looked-after children, while also providing invaluable research into the efficacy of different practices. The PALAC Project, while still underway, is already starting to show us the importance to LAC pupils of what seem to us to be trivial matters. The introduction of termly rewards. Encouragement to attend after-school clubs. Our data show these leading directly to better effort and progress in the classroom – who would have predicted such a clear, immediate impact? I wouldn’t say we were sceptical at the start, but we were certainly cautious. Yet we were also open-minded and willing to make changes, and the results speak for themselves. This is why we are so excited to be embarking on another journey. Every school can always improve – being judged Outstanding does not mean Perfect. Bring on the change, as we strive for a Caring2Learn Gold level award!

With our LAC cohort increasingly dominating our overall school profile, joining Caring2Learn was an easy decision for our senior leaders to make. As we said before, our small school in Boston, Lincolnshire, caters for those who find themselves outside of mainstream education – disengaged and disinterested in their future and potentially impacting negatively on our communities in years to come. Once, a case worker referred to these individuals as “my tribe” and, as ever, our responsibilities towards these young people go well beyond educating, in an academic sense. It is imperative, as practitioners, that we educate the whole.

Caring2Learn has afforded us a period of reflection on our practice; a time to pause, and evaluate all the things we really desire to achieve. Also, to take pride in those things that we have already. Auditing provision in the Reflection and Progress Record can be an incredibly daunting task – a RAG system can often appear a tempestuous sea of colour. An unholy stained-glass window, with each shard of glass glowing with positive or negative connotations. The temptation to massage the palette is great: “I’ve just had two reds in a row, so this one had better be amber.” Or, in a different section: “They’ll never believe



all this green and amber; better slip a red in to make it look realistic.”

But on a cool, August morning, I prefer to see amber as a challenge; red, not as a stop sign that can never change, but an opportunity – the ultimate goal in shaping what we provide and taking it to the next level. There is no point being anything other than honest and humble, because otherwise the process is a waste of time.

Caring2Learn has already provided us with partnerships that may have otherwise never come to fruition. Tracey Chapman, our Foster Care Education Champion, has been a valuable contact, helping us to understand what it is like to be responsible for LAC pupils outside of the relative safety of school. We also have a meeting coming up with what we have grandly styled our “Caring2Learn Local Group” – all of the schools in our area who are part of the scheme. It will be hugely helpful and inspiring to hear their stories and plans... I just hope they’ve got a bit of red too!

Jade Corsson

Designated Teacher For Looked After Children



CARING2LEARN: BOSTON AREA CLUSTER GROUP

Key information

Foster Care Champion: Tracy Chapman

Schools involved: Boston West Academy Ceri Braybrook

Boston Witham Academies Federation Dina Nicholson

Bridge House Independent School Steve Barker Jade Corssen

Fourfields Church of England School, Sutterton Abigail Gray

Frithville Primary School Paul Bargh

St. Thomas' Church of England Primary School Cathy Riglin

Sibsey Free Primary School Graeme Wright

Swineshead St. Mary's C of E Primary School Abigail Gray

Wyberton Primary School Cathy Riglin

Timeline

April 2018 Six Boston Area schools entered the Caring2Learn process

Tracy Chapman (TC) assigned to the schools by the Caring2Learn team

September 2018 TC met with each school individually, starting with Bridge House

TC suggested meeting together as a local networking group

24/09/18 Meeting 1, at Bridge House

26/11/18 Meeting 2, at Boston West

November 2018 7th and 8th schools added to the group

12/02/19 Meeting 3, at St. Thomas'

21/03/19 Meeting 4 (scheduled), at Frithville

Summary

As part of Lincolnshire's commitment to improvements for Looked After Children, the Caring2Learn initiative aims to bring the corporate parents together to drive forward this shared goal.

Professionals within our cluster group are all at different stages of this journey: by working collaboratively, it is hoped a higher standard of practice can be achieved, resulting in direct impact upon the children and carers within our county.

Key to improving the provision offered by schools across Lincolnshire has been the identification and real-



isation of the barriers that pre-exist between carers and education. From this initial identification, a door can be opened to breaking down these barriers, with all parties working towards a positive relationship that puts the child at the heart of what we do.

Anecdotally, members of the cluster group feel that it has been a positive and productive enterprise, and we envisage the group continuing to meet – and growing in membership – for the foreseeable future.

Statement from Tracy Chapman

I was set the challenge of working with the schools that were designated to me.

I took upon myself the challenge to fulfil this and ended up with six schools all working together in a cluster, which meets once a term at each of the schools. I took the leading role giving talks to the group and am still part of this.

On top of this, I have increased the number of schools in the cluster: first, with two new schools joining ; then, by adding a further nine schools in the form of a federation.

As a group, we are now organising coffee mornings to hopefully encourage more foster carers to come on board with the programme.

Meeting 1 – 24/09/18 (hosted by Bridge House)

Theme: Introductions and goals

- ☐ General introductions
- ☐ Each member briefly outlined where their school was in the process and the size of their LAC cohort
- ☐ St. Thomas' / Wyberton already have the Gold Award
- ☐ Discussion of how we think the group should run – informal, with meetings not minuted, but overviews circulated afterwards
- ☐ Advice from Cathy about compiling evidence for a Caring 2 Learn bid
- ☐ Discussions on specific Caring 2 Learn criteria:
 - Networking and sharing good practice and resources with other settings

(2.7 Gold; 4.2 Gold; 4.3 Gold; 4.8 Gold)

- Involvement in community projects and support

(1.5 Gold)

- Helping carers to attend events

(3.4 Gold)

- ☐ Tour of the premises

Meeting 2 – 26/11/18 (hosted by Boston West)

Theme: Caring2Learn bids and next steps



- ☑ Further advice from Cathy on completing the reflection and Progress Record and compiling an evidence portfolio
- ☑ Discussion regarding the range of pastoral support and (specialist) interventions provided by schools
- ☑ Exchange of ideas regarding closer co-operation between our schools, for example:
 - Swimming lessons and enrichment for LAC pupils at Geoff Moulder Leisure Centre
 - Boston Food Bank: shared collections and drop-offs
 - Inter-school sports and activities
 - Recycling and green energy schemes
 - Shared training opportunities
 - Shared resources, e.g. kiln, bee hives, chickens and bushcraft facilities
- ☑ Tour of the premises

Meeting 3 –12/02/19 (hosted by St. Thomas')

Theme: Evidence gathering

- ☑ Welcoming our new members (Abigail and Dina)
- ☑ Discussion around the relative merits of different ePEP systems
- ☑ Update from Bridge House on their collaborations with Tracy, e.g. a coffee morning, swimming lessons for LAC pupils and a meet and greet with carers at a parents/carers evening
- ☑ An external research project, covering BWAf's Caring2Learn bid process
- ☑ Evidence observed at other settings of a restorative circle
- ☑ Cluster group case study presented in draft form, and questionnaire distributed

Achievements to date

- ☑ Bringing together 17 local schools to create a vibrant cluster group
- ☑ Meetings every term, at a different setting each time
- ☑ Providing support for those preparing a Caring 2 Learn bid
- ☑ Allowing the free and ready exchange of ideas and experiences
- ☑ Increasing co-operation and shared initiatives between schools
- ☑ With the benefit of the pupil in mind, increased sharing of information to ease transition into different settings

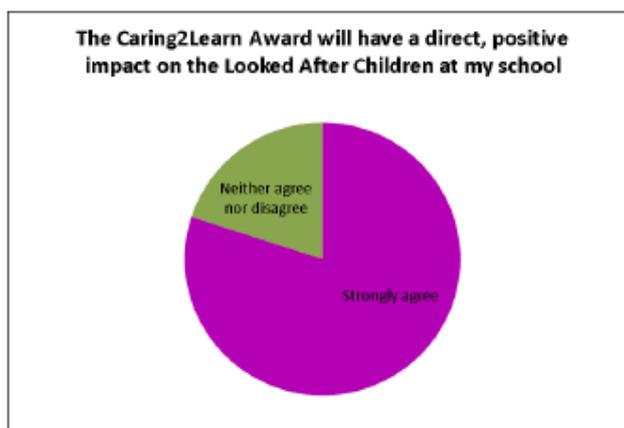
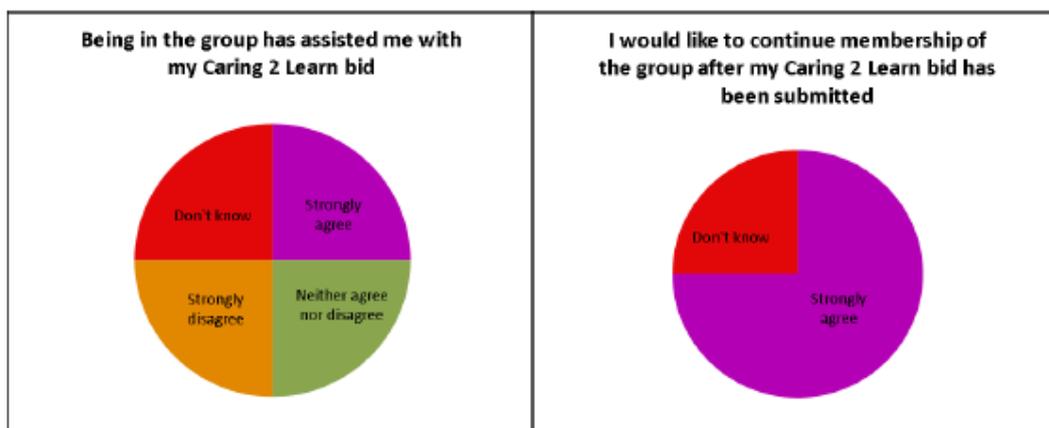
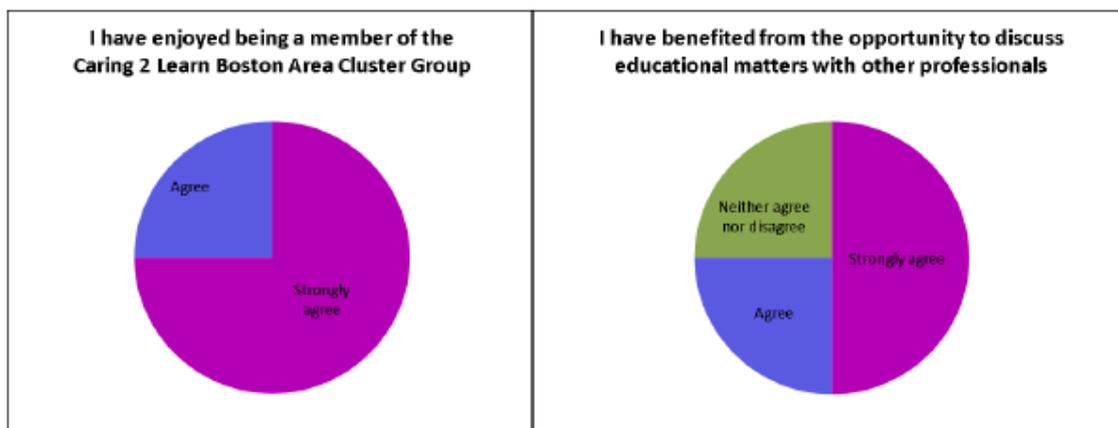
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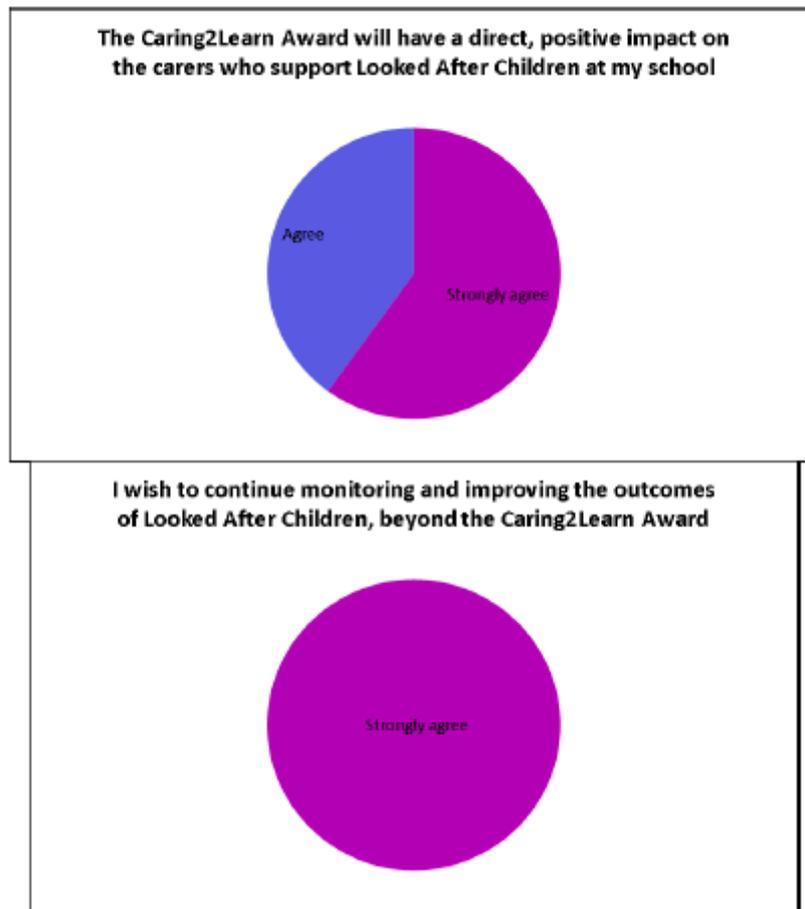
- ☑ For all members of the group to successfully bid for the Caring2Learn Award at their chosen tier
- ☑ For the group to extend beyond the initial Caring2Learn award



- ☑ For the group to expand and attract new members
- ☑ Increased monitoring of the direct impact of the initiative on Looked After Children
- ☑ Increased monitoring of the direct impact of the initiative on carers
- ☑ Regular opportunities for carers to be involved in the education of their children – achieved through shared initiatives
- ☑ Increased pooling of resources and communication between the professionals in the group

Questionnaire results





Selected comments

- ☑ “... the group were very welcoming and supportive. I am in no doubt that, through this network, our school practice and provision for Looked After Children will improve.”
- ☑ “I can see the opportunities that may well present themselves regarding wider professionals sharing best practice and supporting schools in achieving the Caring Schools Award.”
- ☑ “I have found the group meetings hugely beneficial - not only for my school's Caring2Learn bid, but also for my own CPD. The other professionals have all been very generous in terms of sharing their insights and expertise, and I believe that the group could potentially have far-reaching benefits within and beyond the Caring2Learn process.”
- ☑ “I would be interested in remaining within the group should we be given the opportunity to carry out joint projects or become involved in other shared learning opportunities.”
- ☑ “Very much looking forward to embedding [Caring2Learn] into the whole school Improvement Plan.”

CARING 2 LEARN AT GANF

Grantham Additional Needs Fellowship comprises of two Grantham-based schools, Ambergate Sports College and Sandon School. We cater for pupils between the ages of 3 and 19 with moderate to severe learning difficulties and complex needs. Our pupils' needs are wide ranging; many are on the autistic spectrum, with others having ADHD and varying degrees of developmental delay, and some with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties. As such many of our pupils have an extra vulnerability and a proportion of pupils are Looked After, Previously Looked After or eligible for Pupil Premium Funding. Our mission of every second to be Valuable, Inspiring and Personalised underpins everything we do and fits with the ethos of the Caring2Learn project.

As part of the pilot cohort we were very excited to be involved. The impact of the Caring2Learn project both for myself as a practitioner leading it in school and for GANF as a whole has been incredible. There has been no other project like this one nationally and Lincolnshire are leading the way in bridging the gaps between care and education to raise the expectations and outcomes of looked after and vulnerable children.

The many training opportunities provided by the project have impacted the schools directly. This training has been multi-disciplinary and included foster carers, social workers and educators. This in itself is innovative and really broadens the experiences offered in group settings and allows professional reflection. My training in Restorative Practice enabled me to enhance my own teaching and learning skills as well as implement changes throughout the schools. I adapted the knowledge and skills I gained from the training to meet the needs of the pupils in our special school setting. Once I had achieved a suitable model for our schools I led whole school training to develop staff awareness and promote changes across GANF. The feedback from this training was extremely positive and has contributed to the wellbeing of staff and students through this knowledge of a different approach. This allows us as a school to be constantly refining our practice and focus on the welfare and progression of the pupils we work with.

We were extremely proud to achieve the Gold Caring Schools Award in September 2018, validating the outstanding practice we carry out on a daily basis with pupils and carers in our setting. The project has also helped us to refine and promote our practice as well as to add valuable ideas to our toolkit of support for our vulnerable pupils.

Torie Workman

Designated Teacher and Pupil Premium Lead for Sandon School



DEVELOPING TRAUMA INFORMED PRACTICE

Case Study: Bxx 7 year old boy in mainstream school

Bxx is previously looked after (birth parent – child protection order in utero for neglect and drug and alcohol misuse, previous five (siblings) children in care or adopted; foster placement to adoption – death of foster mother; moved to emergency foster care where teenagers with severe behaviour issues were placed; moved out of county for adoption. He attended local nursery where he had full inclusion funding which was “topped up” by the nursery to allow fulltime 1:1 support for Bxx when he was in nursery.

He then moved to the Early Years’ class of a very small local primary school. The school did not apply for any top up funding for Bxx however, the EYFS class was very small in number approximately 12 children with much adult support i.e. 4 adults. Bxx seemed to have a fairly settled year although towards the end of EYFS he became “more difficult” to handle needing an individualised curriculum delivered by one teaching assistant. When he moved to the Year 1 class his behaviour deteriorated dramatically with daily violent outbursts resulting in Bxx physically attacking children and adults. He was excluded a total of 17 times from September to the beginning of February. After October half term he attended school for a total of 2 hours in the afternoon.

His parents applied for a place for Bxx at our school, a very large local primary academy at the end of January after visiting the school and discussing Bxx’s needs and story with the Headteacher. Bxx moved to our school at the beginning of February when in Year 1.

His difficulties included:

- Bxx had been “deaf” for a number of years; only recently being fitted with hearing aids

- Speech was very poor

- Gross motor skills poor – due to being “contained” in a high chair which did not allow him to develop control and muscle mass

- Severe attachment disorder

- Autism

- Rare Genetic disorder which could mean learning difficulties

Bxx attended school mornings only until teaching assistant cover could be found to support Bxx all day. This was funded from the school’s budget. Once cover was found Bxx attended all day. A personalised curriculum was devised and a stock room converted into a “safe space” with tent and learning materials including toys and construction for Bxx.

We believe in a “nurturing and relationship securing” environment. All the staff have been trained in attachment. The Headteacher, pastoral lead teaching assistant and Bxx’s one to one teaching assistants have had further training regarding attachment and trauma. The Headteacher worked with the parents to secure an ECH plan. This was agreed and Bxx was given monetary support which would secure 25 hours one to one teaching assistant time. The Headteacher and parents appealed this decision and eventually support was increased to 32.5 hours.



The Headteacher has encouraged the teaching assistants working with Bxx to encourage complete attachment dependence until Bxx is secure enough to allow himself independence. This has included the use of transitional objects; playing with Bxx and then modelling play to Bxx; but in all interactions with Bxx PACE (Playfulness, acceptance, curiosity and empathy) is used by all key adults.

Bxx's academic learning is currently secondary to his emotional learning and ability to feel safe in his environment. Bxx takes the lead in both play and more formal learning. Some days Bxx is outside most of the day, other days he spends his time in the Headteacher's office being her Deputy Head – writing, phoning and talking. At Christmas Bxx managed to introduce the Key Stage One Christmas concert to the audience; during merit assembly he stayed for ten minutes in the hall with other children. These are huge achievements for Bxx and his school.

Most days Bxx has aggressive outbursts where he will kick, bite, punch and slap children or adults; or run around the school switching on and off lights; or trash his safe room. Most days the Headteacher and/or Deputy Head will work with the teaching assistant to deescalate the situation and lower Bxx's arousal. If this happens at the end of the day Bxx's parent will come into school to collect him rather than him going into the playground to be collected. Bxx will nearly always then attack his parent.

Bxx is still in mainstream school. There are short times when he can be supported in the classroom (a massive achievement) but mostly he is still learning outside the class. The school is working on ensuring secure attachment and self-regulation for Bxx who has experienced relational and developmental trauma. This work is ongoing. (training via Caring2Learn)

Being involved in Caring2Learn has allowed the staff of my school to access training on trauma informed practice, restorative practice and attachment; this has supported them in their understanding and day to day handling of Bxx. As a result of this Bxx has felt "safer" and more able to self-regulate in school and at times access some academic learning. The Caring2Learn team including the Education and Foster Carer Champions have also been invaluable in offering support and problem solving for staff when days with Bxx have been difficult. Through the training and support of Caring2Learn Bxx and school have achieved a great deal.

At the last Annual Review parents comments were: *"Bxx is a changed boy since attending this school. Not only has his reading, writing and numeracy improved, but his mood, attitude and willingness to learn have also greatly improved. We are really grateful to all the staff. We understand that Bxx still has a long way to go before catching up with his peers and that this may never happen. If possible, we would like him to continue to attend this school where he is happy and settled. However, we are open to your views and expert knowledge and experience if you feel this is not in his best interest. Our main aim for Bxx is that he will learn in a happy and stress free environment, which is his current setting. Thank you to all those involved in Bxx's education."*

Bxx and school have "come a long way"; there is still a long way to go but with support of other "like minded practitioners" in Caring2Learn the school can remain a nurturing and relationship securing environment where children like Bxx can succeed.

Lorraine Marcer

Headteacher

Education Champion



