

Improving Outcomes for Looked after Children

This page intentionally left blank

Improving Outcomes for Looked after Children

BY

JACQUI HORSBURGH

University of Glasgow, UK



United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2022

Copyright © 2022 Jacqui Horsburgh.
Published under exclusive licence by Emerald Publishing Limited.

Reprints and permissions service

Contact: permissions@emeraldinsight.com

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without either the prior written permission of the publisher or a licence permitting restricted copying issued in the UK by The Copyright Licensing Agency and in the USA by The Copyright Clearance Center. Any opinions expressed in the chapters are those of the authors. Whilst Emerald makes every effort to ensure the quality and accuracy of its content, Emerald makes no representation implied or otherwise, as to the chapters' suitability and application and disclaims any warranties, express or implied, to their use.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-80071-079-5 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-80071-078-8 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-80071-080-1 (Epub)



ISOQAR certified
Management System,
awarded to Emerald
for adherence to
Environmental
standard
ISO 14001:2004.

Certificate Number 1985
ISO 14001



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Table of Contents

Preface	<i>vii</i>
Chapter 1 What's the Problem?	<i>1</i>
Chapter 2 International Perspective	<i>17</i>
Chapter 3 Expectations on Classroom-Based Professionals	<i>29</i>
Chapter 4 Bethany	<i>45</i>
Chapter 5 Charlene	<i>61</i>
Chapter 6 John	<i>77</i>
Chapter 7 Cheryl	<i>95</i>
Chapter 8 Leanne	<i>109</i>
Chapter 9 Wayne	<i>125</i>
Chapter 10 Kenneth	<i>139</i>
Chapter 11 Developing Support Systems	<i>153</i>
Appendix 1	<i>165</i>
References	<i>167</i>
Index	<i>185</i>

This page intentionally left blank

Preface

While undertaking research for this book I spoke to a range of practitioners beyond those described in the case studies. My aim in talking to these professionals who worked closely with looked after children was to ensure that I had a clear understanding of the issues to be addressed. One of the people who was of particular influence was Shona, who had worked in multiple education settings for over 22 years. One of her firmly held beliefs was that the most significant rights children and young people can claim is their right to an education. She believed that it was her responsibility to use her skills and knowledge to support them to claim that right.

Beginning her work as a community worker Shona was totally committed to implementing article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989). This article emphasises children's right to express their views in all matters that affect them and to have their views considered and taken seriously. She provided training for practitioners in various organisations; produced resource packs on children's rights and participation; founded some of the first fully funded youth representation structures in Scotland; and worked with and on behalf of some of the least supported and underrepresented groups in Scotland, including young women, LGBT groups, families in poverty, refugees, asylum seekers and young gypsy travellers.

Recognising the crucial role that formal education plays in supporting individuals to achieve positive outcomes, Shona re-trained as a teacher. As a Head Teacher Shona was committed to building an ethos where children, staff and families worked together. She built communities where everyone was valued and played a significant role in improving the work of the school. In doing this she recognised that everyone had a crucial role to play and that individual family circumstances should not be a barrier to engagement and achievement.

Shona became very aware that the outcomes for care experienced young people were significantly behind that of their peers. Her outrage and disappointment and immense sense of frustration led her to taking on a Quality Improvement Role where she became determined to ensure that the outcomes for care experienced children and young people were improved.

In her role as a Quality Improvement Education Officer, Shona analysed the policies and procedures of the local authority to identify ways in which care experienced people were being advantaged or disadvantaged. By engaging staff in high-quality professional learning, outlining their roles and responsibility as corporate parents and when necessary, holding people to account, she promoted a

message that children who are care experienced belong to everyone and by working together they will be loved, safe and respected.

The work that Shona has done is clearly inspirational and has had significant impact for children, staff and families. What makes Shona's story even more remarkable is that she is care experienced.

When you speak to Shona and ask her who supported her to achieve, she responds without hesitating and can quickly name off a number of people who influenced, inspired and encouraged her. From a Modern Studies teacher who taught her the skills of debating, a music teacher who ensured she had access to an instrument, a social worker who demonstrated a depth of care and compassion, a neighbour who every year made her a birthday cake, a volunteer tutor she still remembers fondly, trusted friends who knew of and accepted her situation, a granny who despite needing a high level of support herself always called her 'the apple of her eye', to mentors who throughout her professional career recognised her skills and talents and engaged with her to ensure she was in a place to recognise and acknowledge them herself.

Unfortunately, Shona is an exception as many people who have spent a substantial part of their childhood in care do less well than their contemporaries. It was inspiring examples of those such as Shona who have succeeded against the odds, rather than the depressing data highlighting decades of underachievement, that motivated me to undertake research to try to identify ways of providing more effective support for looked after children.