

# The Journey Towards Adoption-Friendly Education

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# Why education?

# Attainment (DfE, 2015)



67%

80%

KS1

22%

53%

KS4

# Inclusion

2%

0.006%

AUK (2014)

25%

2%

20%

Sturges & Sellwyn (2007)

**15,000**

# The system until recently...

Looked  
After  
Children

Everyone  
else

# Changing context: Then (2013/14)

	LAC	PLAC
<b>Early years education</b>	15 free hours	
<b>School admission</b>	Highest priority	
<b>School funding</b>	Pupil premium	
<b>School support</b>	Designated Teacher	
<b>LA support</b>	Virtual Head	
<b>Therapeutic support</b>	CAMHS for LAC	

# Our journey



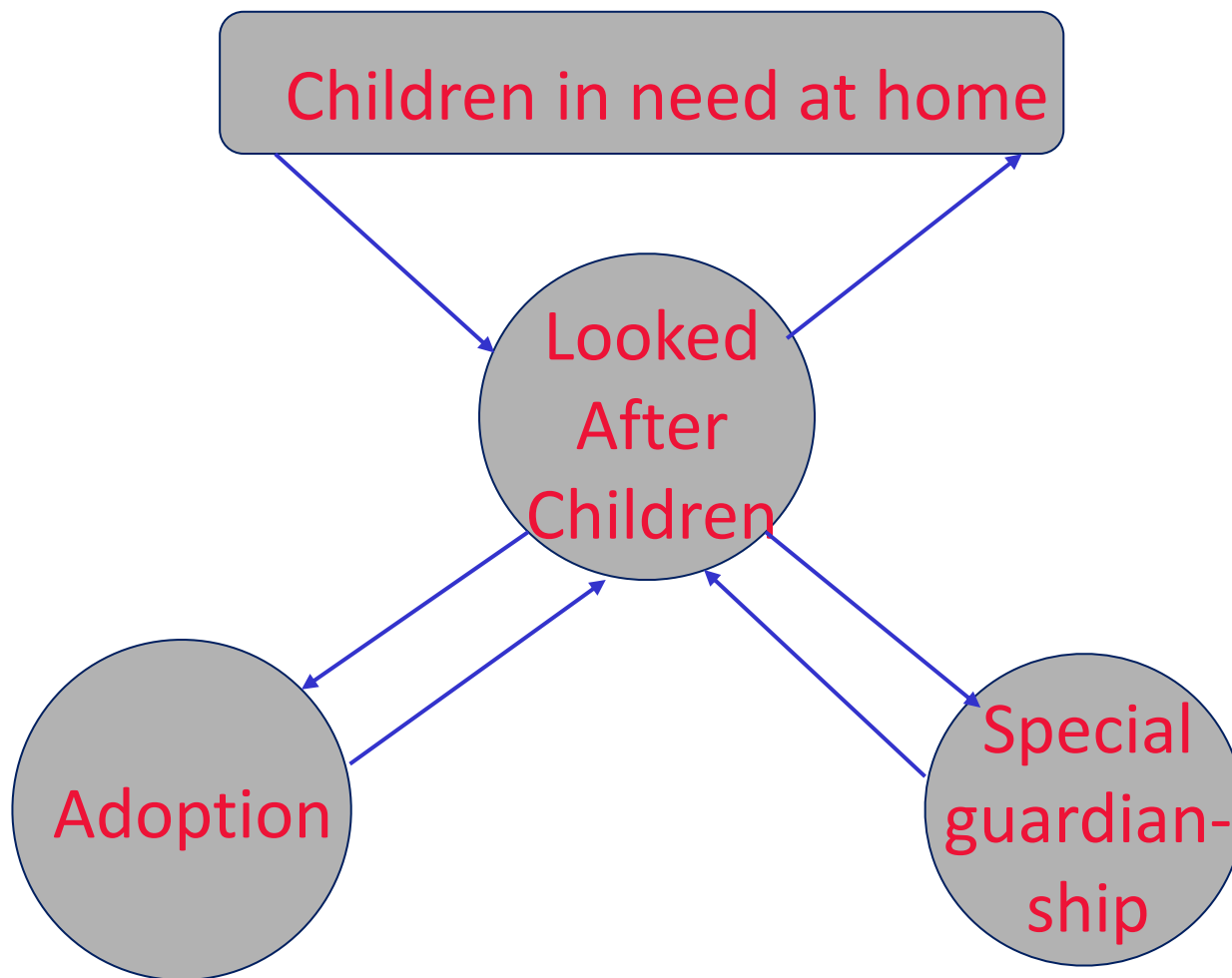
2009	Schools' training
2013	NLAC project
2014	WLAC project
2015	DfE project
2016	DfE P & I grant



## DfE (2014)

“Many of these children have experienced **grief and loss and will have had traumatic experiences** in their early lives. **Their needs to not change overnight and they do not stop being vulnerable** just because they are in a loving home. Their experiences in early life can have a **lasting impact which can affect the child many years** after adoption. We therefore believe that **teachers and schools have a vital role to play in helping these children emotionally, socially, and educationally, to raise their attainment and address their wider needs.**”

# The system now



# Changing context: Now (2016)



	LAC	PLAC
<b>Early years education</b>	15 free hours EY Pupil Premium	15 free hours EY Pupil Premium
<b>School admission</b>	Highest priority	Highest priority
<b>School funding</b>	Pupil premium plus	Pupil premium plus
<b>School support</b>	Designated Teacher	... coming soon!
<b>LA support</b>	Virtual Head	... coming soon!
<b>Therapeutic support</b>	CAMHS for LAC	Adoption Support Fund

# Our service today

- Training
- Child-focused consultations
- Systemic support for schools
- CPD for professionals
- Information, support & advice for parents & guardians
- Specialist educational psychology service
- Therapeutic support in schools
- Resources & publications

# Areas of focus in work with schools

- Relationships with adults
- Emotional literacy and regulation
- Relationships with peers
- Executive functioning
- Coping with change & transition

# Strategies: Building relationships with adults



- Provide a key person
- Hold the child in mind & transitional objects
- Nurture and structure
- Reconnecting and repairing



# Strategies: Helping children to cope with change and transitions



- Put structure into unstructured time: boring is sometimes better!
- Goodbyes are as important as hellos
- Planning and preparation



# Strategies: Helping children to develop their 'air traffic controls'



- Think younger
- Lend your frontal lobe: provide a narrative
- Scaffold the activity
- Teach the child to use checklists and prompts





# Strategies: Helping children to stay calm

- Safe spaces
- Time in, not time out
- Routine and predictability
- Sensory grounding



# What young people tell us

- “We have to have someone in schools who actually understands what adoption might mean to us”
- “We want you to stop making snap judgements about our behaviour, and instead ask us what would help”
- “We need to support rather than punishment; someone to talk to and listen, who can help us deal with our emotions”
- “We want you to have training from specialists to help you understand why we sometimes get anxious, sad, feel mixed up, empty, confused, angry and lonely”

- “We want adoption to be out in the open so we feel we can talk about, rather than feeling ashamed or bottling it up”
- “We need you to stop the bullying by improving how you tackle it”
- “We want to learn about fostering and adoption in the same way that we learn about LGBT issues and other cultures and religions”
- “We want help to meet other adopted teenagers; there are probably others like us in school but we don’t know who they are”

# Adoption Friendly Schools Research

- Online survey Sept-Dec 2015
- 406 responses in total; 340 adoptive parents; 20 special guardians; 20 foster carers; 8 adopted adults; 38 teaching staff; 36 school leadership; 19 school governors; 10 adoption/fostering social workers
- England (91%), Scotland (3%), Northern Ireland (1%) and Wales (2%)

# Context: Pressures on schools

- Torn between attainment and nurture- external pressures including Ofsted
- “Meet the needs of the 29 or the one?”
- Key role of leadership- internal pressures
- No statutory frameworks as for looked after children
- ‘SEN or nothing’

# The Charter

**As an adoption friendly school, we...**

- (1) Identify adopted children's unique needs
- (2) Prioritise relationships
- (3) Respond empathically to behaviour
- (4) Work in true partnership with parents
- (5) Share information sensitively & effectively
- (6) Reflect & protect adoptive families
- (7) Support our staff
- (8) Use our resources wisely



# Adoption friendly schools are...

Rare and precious

A myth...

Ones you know when you find them

Too hard to find

Essential

Lifesavers

# Information & Support

- PAC-UK Education advice line & email

[www.pac-uk.org/education](http://www.pac-uk.org/education)

- Adoption UK schools' membership

[www.adoptionuk.org](http://www.adoptionuk.org)