

## Barriers to Learning for Children in Care

The under-representation of children in care in the A,G&T population is a reflection of the barriers that prevent children in care achieving as well as their peers generally. The trauma of being separated from a birth parent and the impact of negative early life experiences are of course huge impediments in themselves. Additionally there are other barriers which can also all too easily prevent a child from reaching his or her potential:

- Instability in both care and school placements
- Very low self-esteem
- Lack of understanding by adults and children alike of what being in care involves which in turn creates a risk of stereotyping
- Lack of support in the foster home – due to inexperience, lack of resources or absence of any realistic role model
- Practical or logistical difficulties including transport, getting permission to attend out-of-school/hours events, having no access to internet
- Poor attendance
- Impaired executive functioning in the brain may mean that the child does not get maximum benefit from lessons without properly organised help
- Inflexibility/insensitivity in the curriculum
- Gaps in learning knowledge.

## A,G&T Children in Care – what do they need?

Children in care are most likely to reach their potential in a school where there is:

- A strong ethos of achievement and ambition
- A whole school commitment to overcoming the barriers to learning
- Close liaison between all the professionals involved
- Sensitivity in curriculum planning including SEAL programmes
- Careful and regular tracking of pupil progress
- Opportunities in the curriculum to demonstrate high ability or potential
- Systematic attention to care for the needs of individual pupils.

Further help/support can be found:

### General A,G&T

- [www.nagcbrtain.org.uk](http://www.nagcbrtain.org.uk) – The National Association for Gifted Children provides a wide range of advice for parents/carers including information on national networks
- [www.giftedmonthly.com](http://www.giftedmonthly.com) – a monthly newsletter for parents of able children
- [www.nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk](http://www.nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk)
- [www.aquila.co.uk](http://www.aquila.co.uk) – a 'fun magazine for lively minded children' aged 8 – 13
- [www.gridclub.com](http://www.gridclub.com) – lots of ideas to support able children
- [www.nace.co.uk](http://www.nace.co.uk) – a range of publications
- [www.mensa.org](http://www.mensa.org)
- [www.familyeducation.com](http://www.familyeducation.com) (USA)
- [www.masterclasses.co.uk](http://www.masterclasses.co.uk)
- [www.thomasarmstrong.com](http://www.thomasarmstrong.com) – multiple intelligences
- [www.villierspark.org.uk](http://www.villierspark.org.uk)
- Regional A,G&T websites**
- Eastern Region – [www.excellenceeast.org.uk](http://www.excellenceeast.org.uk)
- Leaflet 1 – Excellence Series 'Is my child gifted and talented?'

### Specific - Children in Care

- Kate Cairns – 'Learn the Child' and other books
- [www.baaf.co.uk](http://www.baaf.co.uk)
- LA - Virtual Headteacher/CiC support team
- G&T Education Guidance on Preventing Underachievement: a focus on Children And Young People in Care DCSF 2007**
- Guidance on Preventing Underachievement: A focus on dual or multiple exceptionality DCSF 2007**
- Care Matters: Time for Change DFES 2007**
- Additional Local Authority Support teams/Agencies, as appropriate**
- [www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk](http://www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk) – The Who Cares? Trust



The Eastern Region Partnership for Able, Gifted and Talented  
 "Working together to achieve excellence in the East"

## Able, Gifted & Talented Children in Care

Information for those involved in the care and education of Children in Care

This leaflet is intended to help those involved in or responsible for the care and education of Children in Care who are, or have the potential to be, Able, Gifted and Talented.

Leaflet 2 in the Eastern Region Excellence Series

## Introduction

"Data from the 2006 National Register for Gifted and Talented pupils tells us that out of the national Year 8 gifted and talented cohort of over 66,000, the number of children in care who were identified as gifted and talented was only 110."

National Strategies G&T Education: Guidance on preventing underachievement  
- a focus on children and young people in care

Pupils with gifts and talents exist within all groups of pupils, including children in care. Early childhood experiences can impact on the ability of any child to learn and make relationships with peers and adults as Kate Cairns, experienced foster carer, social worker and author, explains:

*"...the brain in the first eight months of life produces the maximum capacity for versatility and adaptability in the growing child. Infants whose caregivers do not respond appropriately to their attachment behaviour present a very different picture. The lack of interactive stimulation leads to a lack of production of some brain connections and a 'pruning' of connections already overproduced and not being used. There is thus a quantitative difference between the brains of securely and insecurely attached children. Securely attached children develop bigger brains."*

CAIRNS 2002

As a consequence it may be more difficult for a child in care to achieve his or her potential, but this potential should not be underestimated or overlooked. Encouragement at this point will not just help them now, but is likely to sow seeds for development in the future when their lives may be less chaotic.

If you look after or teach a child in care who you consider may be Able, Gifted and Talented and are unsure of what to do, this leaflet is for you!

**"Working together to achieve excellence in the East"**

## Who are Children in Care?

Children in Care (CiC) are those being looked after by the Local Authority (LA). Most are in foster care, although some will be in residential units or placed with kinship carers. Most have been abused and/or neglected prior to coming into care and will have unmet social and emotional needs. All will have a social worker who has the task of making sure there is a regularly reviewed Care Plan for the child.

## What do we mean by Able, Gifted and Talented (A,G&T)?

'Able, Gifted and Talented' describes children and young people with one or more abilities developed to a level significantly ahead of the year group (or with the potential to develop these abilities).

- 'gifted' learners are those who have abilities in one or more academic subjects such as maths, English, science and history.
- 'talented' learners are those who have particular abilities in sport, music, design or creative and performing arts.

## What support is there for Children in Care and how can this help a child who is also Able, Gifted and Talented?

### Social Worker

The child's social worker represents the LA who has ultimate responsibility for Children in Care. All educational decisions taken regarding CiC will need to be taken in consultation with the child's social worker. The social worker should therefore be informed if a child in care is identified as Able, Gifted and Talented. This would usually be through the Personal Education Plan.

### Foster Carer

The child's foster carer/s is responsible for the day-to-day care of the child. The carer may be the one to make the initial approach to the school. However other agencies have responsibility also and should be consulted. In educational terms carers are officially parents and their support will be critical in improving their educational attainment.

### Natural/Birth Parents

In many cases the natural parents of CiC retain parental responsibility and the plan is for the child to return home. Therefore it is essential to include them in any planning for A,G&T children.

## Designated Teacher for Children in Care

Every school has a designated teacher for Children in Care who is responsible for overseeing all aspects of the education of individual children in care in their school. They are responsible for providing appropriate information to staff on all CiC in their school, on a 'need to know' basis.

## Leading Teacher – Able, Gifted and Talented

Acts as an advocate; promotes the various elements of the personalisation agenda; identifies underachievement and evaluates provision; and exemplifies effective practice for A,G&T pupils.

## Gifted and Talented Co-ordinator

Has an oversight and responsibility for A,G&T provision; promotes good practice within the school.

## Heads of Year/Learning Mentor

Pastoral responsibility for pupils; key role in understanding the individual needs of pupils and liaising with relevant personnel.

## Local Authority Educational Support

Schools, carers, and social workers may also access support for A,G&T CiC from the LA through the Looked After Child Education Support Team, Virtual Schools, designated Educational Psychologists and Able, Gifted and Talented advisors. LA organisation and support may vary.

## Personal Education Plan (PEP)

Every child in care aged 3-16 will have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) which forms part of the Care Plan. This plan should identify the child's educational needs, targets and long-term aspirations. Ideally this should be the main vehicle for identification of the child as Able, Gifted and Talented and to determine provision. This would also be the channel for accessing the PEA.

## Personal Education Allowance (PEA)

This is an allowance that the Government have allocated for every child in care to help raise attainment where the child has been assessed as not meeting expected levels. LA arrangements vary.