

**WHICH ‘IN-CARE’ AND EDUCATIONAL RISK FACTORS ARE
PRESENT IN THE LIVES OF LOOKED AFTER YOUNG PEOPLE NOT
ENTERED FOR GCSE EXAMINATIONS OR ALTERNATIVE
QUALIFICATIONS
(VOLUME ONE)**

BY

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**A thesis submitted to The University of Birmingham for the degree of
Doctor of Applied Educational and Child Psychology**

School of Education

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WHICH 'IN-CARE' AND 'EDUCATIONAL' RISK AND PROTECTIVE

FACTORS ARE PRESENT IN THE LIVES OF LOOKED AFTER

YOUNG PEOPLE NOT ENTERED FOR GCSE EXAMINATIONS OR

ALTERNATIVE QUALIFICATIONS?

Abstract

The educational achievements and wellbeing of Looked After Children (LAC) have been a cause of concern for government health and education departments for the past three decades. This is because of a continually growing body of research detailing the disadvantage and poor outcomes that this population is at risk of experiencing in many areas of their lives. This thesis was produced as part of the written requirements for the new full-time Doctoral training in Educational Psychology. Volume One contains three chapters: Chapter One introduces the research study and literature review, provides contextual information about the relevance of the subject area at local and national levels and reflect on the challenges of brokering the study. Chapter Two evaluates existing research evidence which claims to chart major risk and protective factors encountered by LAC throughout their care and school experience. Chapter Three reports on findings from research carried out with the Year 11, 2006-07 cohort of Looked After Children (LAC) under the care of a West Midlands Local Authority (LA) in the year (2007-08). A mixed method approach was adopted in order to identify educational and within care risk and protective factors for those LAC within this cohort who were not entered for GCSE examinations or alternative qualifications. Statistical analysis of quantitative data was carried out and a sub-sample of young people interviewed to elicit their views on factors which were influential in their educational outcomes.

To my wonderful husband Rob,
for all your love, everything you have sacrificed during the past three years,
and because you have managed not to read one word of this to date!

To Mum and Dad
(Peter and Trisha Hales)
for all your encouragement, prayers and love
Thank you

Psalm 138 v 8

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CHAPTER ONE

VOLUME ONE: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

VOLUME ONE: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1. The New Route of Doctoral Training in Educational Psychology

This thesis was produced as part of the written requirements for the new full-time Doctoral training in educational psychology. In September 2006 the three year Doctorate route superseded the one year Masters training, and I was one of the 10 students in the first cohort at the University of Birmingham. The Doctoral course requires students to attend university on a full-time basis for the first year of study, and secure work as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP), employed by a Local Authority (LA) during Years two and three.

This volume of work constitutes the first part of a two volume thesis, forming the written requirements for the Applied Educational and Child Psychology Doctoral programme. Volume two is made up of five professional practice reports (PPRs) on topics salient to Educational Psychologists' practice, whilst volume one consists of a small scale research study and linked literature review. Guidance was given by my employing Educational Psychology Service (EPS) on areas for research that they considered relevant and pertinent to LA and national contexts; however the choice of research questions, methods and the brokering of the study was left to individual preference, under university stipulations.

2. Overview of Volume One

Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview considers my dual roles as a researcher and employee of the LA, as a TEP, fulfilling work commitments and as a student meeting university requirements. The relevance of my research area of looked after children (LAC) on a local and national level is discussed and a summary of how the research study was brokered is presented. Finally I consider who the audience for this volume of work will be.

Chapter 2: Risk and Protective Factors for Looked After Children within their Care and School Experience; A Critical Review of the Research Literature and its Limitations provides a brief definition of who LAC are and the ways in which they may be taken into LA care. The challenges of carrying out research with LAC documented in existing literature are discussed, particularly the transient nature of the LA population, and the lack of data and records relating to their care and educational experiences. The concepts of resilience, risk and protective factors are introduced and presented with reference to Cicchetti and Lynch's (1993; 1998) Ecological-Transactional model. Research on the in-care and educational risk and protective factors experienced by LAC is then presented and critiqued in relation to the methodology used, sample size and the credibility of the data.

Chapter 3: Which ‘in-care’ and Educational Risk and Protective Factors are Present in the Lives of Looked After Young People Not Entered for GCSE Examinations or Alternative Qualifications? This chapter outlines the research brief and the methods used within the study, which comprised semi-structured interviews and template coding of transcripts. The quantitative analysis of the data file and the coding methods used to analyse

the interview transcripts are described, with the results presented in relation to each research question. Challenges to the validity and reliability of the findings are discussed and the implications for social services, EPS and LACES practice considered.

3. My Identity as the Researcher

As stated in Section 1, whilst carrying out the literature review and related research study, I was also working as a TEP for a West Midlands LA. My chosen professional training and the focus of the LA in which I worked were clearly influential in my choice of LAC as an area of study. For the past two years whilst working as a TEP in six schools within the LA I have been involved in consultation with schools concerning the educational progress and emotional and behavioural needs of LAC. I have also worked with the foster carers of two pre-school looked after children and contributed to the assessment and statmenting process for a further two LAC. Carrying out research exploring the effects of risk and protective factors on the educational outcomes of LAC was not only relevant to my professional practice, and will continue to be so, it is also relevant to the schools I worked in and the EPS by which I was employed.

My identity as a TEP is likely to have had both a conscious and unconscious influence on my choice and interpretation of existing research in the literature review and on my epistemological and ontological assumptions underpinning the design and methodology of the research study. In recognising that my experiences as a TEP, and prior to this as a teacher, will influence my understanding of the research literature and the qualitative data I collected as part of the study, I align myself with the ontological and epistemological assumptions of

naturalistic/ interpretative and critical theory methodologies, accepting that there are no truly neutral perspectives (Usher, 1996). There are, however, advantages to working within the system that you are researching, which include having access to LA data on LAC and having a knowledge of educational and social services policy and procedure which allowed me to understand how risk and protective factors in the lives of LAC may act to limit their educational outcomes.

4. Choice of Research Area: Relevance at Local and National Levels

For the past three decades it has been recognised by government, voluntary agencies, and researchers that the education of LAC is a cause for concern, (Colton & Heath, 1994). Recently the well being of LAC has been highlighted as a priority at both national and local levels following the publication of the White Paper, Care Matters: Time for Change (DfES, 2007). This government guidance was produced in response to the Green Paper, Care Matters: Transforming the lives of children and young people in care (DfES, 2006a) and reports from four working groups who investigated school practice (DfES, 2006b), care placements (DfES, 2006c), the future of care leavers (DfES, 2006d) and social work practices (DfES, 2006e). These publications recognise the poor outcomes of LAC in comparison to their non-looked after peers, affecting both their education and wellbeing, and the long term consequences these may have (DfES, 2007; DfES, 2006b).

Failings by LAs to protect children in their care have also been the subject of high profile media coverage and court cases, the most well known being the case of Victoria Climbié who died at the hands of her aunt and her boyfriend in 2000, despite being known to social

services and a number of other professionals working for the LA (Balen & Masson, 2007). The inquiry that followed Victoria Climbié's death (Laming, 2003) and the recommendations that came from it resulted in the Every Child Matters: change for children guidance (DfES, 2004) which provided a framework for professionals to work together and share information about children in order to achieve the best outcomes for them. More recently the case of Baby P drew further public attention to the failings of social services when, after 17 months of neglect and abuse, Peter was murdered by his mother and her partner (Timesonline, 2008). In November 2008 the government commissioned Lord Laming to report on the progress made by LAs to 'implement effective arrangements for safeguarding children' (Laming, 2009). Laming's 2009 report highlighted that more needed to be done to protect LAC, and emphasised the importance of better training for social workers and the need for senior managers within LAs to have experience in child protection, and to be held responsible for any failings of their employees to protect a child who is at risk.

On a local level, the social services in the LA in which the research was carried out was judged to be poor by Ofsted in 2004, resulting in a Children and Young People's Board being set up in 2005, and a Strategic Director of Children's Services being appointed (Ofsted, 2007). The Annual Performance Assessment of services for children and young people in 2008 (Ofsted, 2008) judged the overall effectiveness of children's services to be adequate; however 'staying safe' was judged to be inadequate. The report described social care outcomes as 'inadequate', asserting that the LA has a high number of LAC and child protection plans compared with similar councils, a high percentage of LAC placed in residential care and the percentage of LAC allocated a qualified social worker below comparators. The report also

noted ‘serious shortages in the social care workforce’ (p.8), something which may have been influential in the difficulties in contacting social workers which are outlined in Chapter 4.

In 2009 the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) issued an improvement notice to the current LA due to performance/decline in children’s social care and safeguarding. It is within this context that the research study took place, highlighting the relevance of investigating on a local level the educational and in-care risk factors experienced by LAC, and how these may impact on their educational outcomes. The focus of the research is also pertinent because of the outcomes data collected by Looked After Children Education Service (LACES) and presented to the DCSF on a yearly basis (see Section 5), one aspect of which is a report on the number of LAC entered for General Certificate of Secondary Educations (GCSE), and the results of those entered. Investigating the risk and protective factors associated with GCSE outcomes could provide LACES, and other services working with LAC, with valuable information on how better to support them in school and their care placement.

5. Brokering of the Research Study

The part-time secondment of three EPs within my EPS to LACES provided me with the chance to understand the role of the service from the perspective of the EPs working within it, and the opportunity to make contact with significant members of the service, allowing discussions concerning possible areas for research to take place. LACES is a service which supports the education of LAC by providing interim education when pupils do not have a school place, outreach support to residential children’s homes and schools, and work with

other services to ensure LAC's education is a priority through offering training and other forms of support.

A meeting was held with the Head of LACES, within which the outcome data for LAC in the LA were discussed. This information was available through the OC2 outcome indicators, published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), which detail outcomes for LAC who have been in care continuously for at least 12 months up to the 30th September of that year. The indicators published for each LA and nationally include absence and exclusion rates, achievement at key stages 1, 2 and 3, and the number of children who achieved at least one GCSE or equivalent at key stage 4.

During the meeting, concerns were raised about the number of LAC not entered for GCSE examinations, in both mainstream and special school, and whose achievements were not therefore represented in the OC2 data reported to central government. Initially the idea of carrying out research to determine if LAC in special schools were less likely to be entered for GCSE examinations or equivalents was suggested; however such a project had a number of challenges (see Table 1) which made it too complex and unrealistic to attempt within the university and service time restrictions.

Consideration of the challenges outlined in Table 1, and because from the 38% of LAC within the LA not entered for GCSEs in 2006/07, only a small minority attended special school, it was agreed with LACES that it would be more feasible for the research to focus on all LAC who were not entered for GCSE or alternative qualifications. The LACES project manager

was able to provide a range of data for the Year 11, 2006/07 LA cohort of LAC, on which the research project is based.

Table 1: Challenges of Researching Whether LAC in Special Provision Were Less Likely to be Entered for GCSE Examinations or Alternative Qualifications

Challenges	Possible solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcomes for LAC attending special provisions would need to be compared with outcomes for non-LAC at these schools • Outcomes for LAC attending special provision would need to be compared with outcomes for LAC in mainstream provision • Children in the LA can only attend special provision if they have a statement, so they would have to be compared with LAC in mainstream provision with statements • Need to consider why children have a statement; only their ‘main’ need is recorded in the data collected • Need to consider the severity of LAC’s needs, and how this may affect their opportunities to take GCSE examinations or alternative qualifications • Need to control for variance in services and opportunities offered by specialist provisions • Limited sample size, before gaining consent from schools and LAC themselves • Ethical consideration of gaining informed consent with some of the LAC, under the Mental Capacity Act (DOH, 2005) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek permission from head teachers in specialist provisions to access their outcome data • LACES collect data for LAC in mainstream provision • Children matched using LACES data • Look through Educational Psychology files for each child to find a profile of their strengths and needs • Look through Educational Psychology files for each child to find a profile of their strengths and needs • Matching of schools and pupils?

6. The Audience for Volume One

University guidance stipulated that both Chapters two (literature review) and four (research study) of volume one should be written up to journal specification for publications of students' choice (with the exception of the word limit and taking into account university requirements for thesis presentation). I chose the Oxford Review of Education because it accepts contributions with varying foci, from new research areas to articles with analytic or more reflective styles (Oxford Review of Education, 2009). The findings of the literature review and research study are relevant not only to specialist teaching services working with LAC, such as LACES, but also to the practice of social workers, EPs, teachers and carers, as well as managers working at a strategic level within children's services. It is for this reason that I have chosen a journal which is accessible to different professions, not aligning itself purely with social work, special education needs or teaching specifically. The Oxford Review of Education claims to

'preserve the highest standards of professional scholarship in education, while also seeking to publish articles which will be of interest and utility to a wider public, including policy makers.' (Oxford review of Education, 2009, accessed on line)

The Oxford Review of Education also aims to publish special topic-based issues on a bi-annual basis, for example their 20th volume 'The education of children in need' in 1994 (issue 3), which included an article on educating children in residential and foster care written by Sonia Jackson (Jackson, 1994). Should the journal choose to publish an updated special issue on vulnerable groups in education, the current literature review and research study would be submitted for consideration (See Appendix 1 for instructions to authors).

The findings of the literature review and research study have been presented in different formats for a number of different audiences. Oral feedback and a copy of the research report was provided for LACES, and a summary of the research findings was produced, in letter format for the young people who took part in the study (see Appendix 2: Public Domain Briefing I). A combination of the findings of the research and the literature review were presented to the EPS on a Continuing Professional Development Study Day in June 2009 (see Appendix 3: Public Domain Briefing II). Additional aims of this latter presentation were to share the written requirements for the new route of training, which were unfamiliar to the majority of the service, to increase EPs' awareness of risk factors for poor educational outcomes for LAC, and to discuss implications of EP practice. The research also had the benefits of raising EP awareness of how LACES functioned, in order to support future multi-agency working in schools.

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Appendix 2

Public Domain Briefing I: Letter to Interviewees

29/07/2009

Dear

I hope you are well. I am writing to you to summarise the findings from my research study which explored the reasons why some looked after young people (LAC) are not entered for any GCSEs or other exams.

In February 2009 you took part in an interview with me to find out what aspects of the school system and/or the care system had a negative influence on your education, and what could have been done differently to have helped you do better at school and have some qualifications by the time you left Year 11.

My research was made up from two parts: analysis of a data file for all LAC in the Year 11, 2006-07 cohort in [REDACTED] and interviews with 4 looked after young people (plus one practice interview). I faced a number of challenges when carrying out the research, these included difficulties contacting social workers and the looked after young people to organise interviews and missing data/information from the file.

The data file contained information kept by the [REDACTED] Looked After Children's Education Service (LACES), such as the number of schools young people have attended, the type of residential placement they were in during Years 10 and 11 and whether they had any special educational needs.

Analysis of the data file showed:

- LAC who weren't entered for GCSEs were more likely to attend an alternative educational placement rather than a mainstream school.

- Over half of LAC not entered for GCSEs were placed in a residential unit, compared with only 4.4% of LAC entered for GCSEs (however a lot of data about residential placement was missing).
- LAC's special educational needs did not have an impact on whether they were entered for GCSEs.
- LAC entered for GCSEs had been in care longer (5.5 years) on average than the LAC not entered for GCSEs (3.8 years).
- LAC not entered for GCSEs had an average number of just under 7 care placements (that were known/ recorded).
- More girls than boys were not entered for GCSEs and over half of the girls not entered were pregnant or had a baby.

Interviews with the looked after young people showed that risk factors for not taking GCSEs included:

- Leaving school before exams
- Negative friendships/ peer influence
- Truanting
- Negative teacher attitudes/ expectations
- Negative relationship with carers
- Social worker not showing interest in the young person's education

Positive/ protective factors which helped the looked after young people do well in school were:

- Not moving school often
- Having a good relationship with a teacher who had positive expectations
- A carer showing interest in their education

The findings from my research are similar to other studies which have explored why LAC struggle at school and in their GCSE exams compared with young people who aren't looked after. Research has shown the importance of adults in school and in care placements encouraging LAC and having high expectations for them. Research has also shown that children who truant from school are more likely to have poor GCSE results and that young

people who attend non-mainstream schools may have less choice over the GCSEs they take. Lots of school and placement moves have also been found to have a negative effect on exam results.

A report of my research (with all names, dates and places removed) has been given to LACEs, who help LAC who are struggling in school, and may be useful information to assist them to identify which LAC need support.

Thank you for taking part in an interview with me. Enclosed is a token to thank you for the time you gave up. Good luck in what you choose to do in the future, whether this is going to college or getting a job. Please feel free to contact me on the number below if you have any further questions about my research.

Best Wishes

Anna Kelley
Trainee Educational Psychologist

Appendix 3

Public Domain Briefing II: Presentation to EPS

Which ‘In-care’ and ‘Educational’ Risk Factors are Present in the Lives of Looked After Young People not Entered for GCSE Examinations or Alternative Qualifications?

Presentation of the literature review and research project forming part of
the Applied Educational and Child Psychology Doctoral Thesis

By Anna Kelley
10th June 2009

1

An Overview of the Written Requirements for the Applied Educational and Child Psychology Doctorate

Volume One

- Introductory chapter
- 8,000 word literature review on research area
- Research project/ study written up in 8,000 words
- Conclusions
- 2 x public domain briefings

Volume Two

- Introductory chapter/ overview
- 5 x 8,000 professional practice reports (with university guidance on topic areas)

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- Because it is a new course, and each university has different requirements in relation to the thesis- give an overview (on behalf of the 3 Birmingham University TEPs) so the literature review and research I am about to present is in context.
- Years 2 & 3 we had to produce 5 professional practice reports- based our work in LA, with 5 loosely given areas of: complex individual needs, multi-agency, longitudinal, specialist placement and organisational psychology.
- We also had to identify an area of research (preferably relevant and useful to the LA) and ‘broker’ it with those involved, carry out a literature review on research in that area, and a small scale study.

5 x Professional Practice Reports

- A Critical Analysis of the Use of the Label ‘Attachment Disorder’: The Implications for Children in School and Educational Psychology Practice, with Reference to an Illustrative case.
- The Challenges of Running a Parenting Programme in an Inner City School: a Review of the Evidence of What Makes a Parenting Programme Successful with Reference to a Case Study in a Birmingham Primary School.
- The Challenges of Working within School Systems: Application of Systems Theory to a Secondary School Behavioural Case Study, in Order to Understand Why the Opportunity to Work at a Systemic Level within the School did not Occur.
- Parents’ Perspectives on ADHD, its Diagnosis, Treatment and the Debate Surrounding it: A Review of the Literature with Reference to Two Case Studies.
- Stakeholder perceptions of Statutory Assessment

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•**My professional practice reports are on the following areas**

•My five professional practice reports (one of which is still in the early stages of being written) are based both on opportunities arising from working within 6 LA schools, but also from questions and areas where I’ve felt I’d like to learn more/ find out what the literature says.

•All anonymous- but will be kept in restricted access part of Birmingham University Library for 8 years- to reduce the risks of schools/young people etc being identified.

Brokering of Research Project

- Meeting with SSEPs seconded to LACES
- Meeting with the Head of LACES
 - Outcome indicators (OC2) for 2006-07 cohort discussed
 - OC2= outcomes for LAC who have been in care continuously for at least 12 months up to the 30th of September of that year, including: absences, exclusion rates, achievements at Key stages 1, 2 and 3, and the number of children who achieved at least one GCSE or equivalent at key stage 4.
 - Area of concern: number of children not being entered for GCSEs and so not recognised in OC2 data

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- All of the new TEPs had a meeting with SSEPs seconded to LACES about their role- I expressed further interest in carrying out research in this area
- Meeting arranged with Head of Laces, and supported by SSEP during which outcomes for current Year group discussed; 38% of Year 11 looked after pupils not entered for GCSEs, with only 13% achieving 5 A*-C grades, 175 missing 25 days of school or more.

Agreed to use data available- collected by LACES for OC2 returns to explore risk and protective factors for LAC not entered for GCSEs or alternative qualifications within the 2006-07 Year 11 cohort (chosen because OC2 data becomes available from October after the GCSE results for that year have been published (2007-08) would have been too late).

Data file made available by LACES

Data Provided for all LAC in the LA 2006-07, Year 11 cohort	
Information category	Definition/ possible responses
UPN	
Name	
Gender	
DOB	
Care start date	Date first taken into care, LAC may have been returned to their family and taken into care multiple times
Ethnicity	DfES categories used
Special educational needs	N= none, S= statement (with main need if recorded), A= school action, P= school action plus on the Code of Practice (DfES, 2001)
School type (2006-07)	M= mainstream, S=special, A = alternative provision, YOI= young offenders institute, PRU=pupil referral unit, FE=further education, IS= independent special school, N= none, RS= residential school
Local authority	LA or out of authority
DFES number	
Name of school (S)	Schools attended during Years 10 & 11
LAC	1= looked after, 0= non-looked after

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An example of the data file I was given by LACES with the information they collect for each cohort- plus some additional information I requested

Literature Review- Outcomes for Looked After Children

- Average attainment falls below the norms for their age (SEU, 2003).
- Poor outcomes extend beyond educational attainment; adults who grow up in care are more likely to require the help of mental health services, spend time in prison, become homeless (Jackson and McParlin, 2006) and have children who need public care (Jackson and Simon, 2005).
- Outcomes for the 60,000 children who are in care at any one time in England and Wales have improved over the period from 2000 to 2005 (DfES, 2006a) BUT not at the same rate as those for all children.
- Researchers argue experience of being ‘looked after’ compounds pre-care disadvantages (Fletcher-Campbell, et al, 2003), & the education system can exacerbate negative experiences rather than providing a source of stability (Borland et al, 1998).

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Following my meeting with LACES I went away and did a literature review focussing on risk and protective factors for LAC.

Outcomes for LAC have been recognised in research as a cause for concern for the past 3 decades- and of course even more currently with media coverage of ‘Baby P’s’ case, resulting in government guidance and legislation such as ECM (DfES, 2004) and Care Matters: Time for change (DfES, 2007).

LAC often come from backgrounds of low socioeconomic status and have experienced abuse or neglect; however the experience of being looked after is reported to compound these effects, whilst the education system can act to exacerbate negative experiences, rather than act as a source of stability for these children and young people.

I’m not going to focus on the literature for too long because of the excellent presentation given by the SSEPs working with LACES, however I am briefly going to give you an overview of the ‘in-care’ and ‘educational’ risk and protective factors for LAC that are identified within existing research. I chose to focus on within care experiences rather than pre-care experiences, because the latter are the ones we can influence through our practice, and also to keep the literature manageable in size.

Challenges of carrying out research with LAC

- Diverse group: age taken in to care/ age in leaving, length of time in care, reasons for being placed in care (pre-care experience), placement type, individual differences
- Lack of information: poor record keeping, transient population
'Although a seemingly simple task, identifying and 'counting' looked-after children may be one of the most difficult and, at the same time, one of the most revealing tasks we face.' (Jacklin et al, 2006) p. 2
- Ethical considerations – another professional entering the lives of LAC

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One of the challenges researchers face is untangling the many influential factors that contribute to a child being in care and shape their experience whilst in care in order to investigate how these influence their educational outcomes and wellbeing- a challenge for comparison studies because a ‘matched’ group will never be found.

Lack of information is a theme running through out the research (and one of my challenges) because of incomplete records, differing systems throughout the LA, often which can't be accessed simultaneously and the transient nature of LAC, frequent moves amongst schools, care placements, even LAs, and in and out of care. (undermine longitudinal research on outcomes)

This often leads to small sample sizes which can reduce anonymity.
Also Ethical considerations- which I will cover later, about being yet another professional, often asking difficult questions and entering the LAC's life

'In-care' Risk Factors for Looked After Children

- Children often report 'not feeling special' and a 'lack of personal investment' in them as a child, particularly from their carers and social workers (Jackson, 1987; Mallon, 2005)
- High achieving ex-care adults report significantly more interest and encouragement in relation to their education from carers and adults in their life (Martin and Jackson, 2002)
- Change in care placement recognised as a risk factor- may lead to change in educational placement (DfES, 2006b). Less than half of placement moves are planned (SEU, 2003)
- Conflicting evidence over whether type of care placement acts as a risk factor, recently 60% of LAC entering university were from foster placements, only one from a residential unit (Jackson & Ajayi, 2007).

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'high achieving' ex-care adults (who obtained 5 or more O-levels/ GCSEs at grade C or above, or who progressed to higher education) when compared with ex-care adults who don't meet that criteria.

Change in placement not just because of anxiety and instability that causes LAC, but also because it may lead to changes in educational placement also. Less than half are planned and SEU argues this leads to delays in assessment and intervention where LAC have medical and/or mental health needs.

Only one child from a residential unit- researchers suggest this may be because of lower expectations- young people expected to leave education at 16 years.
Also being placed out of authority- associated with poorer outcomes at GCSE

Educational Risk Factors for Looked After Children

- LAC 8 x more likely to be excluded than other children (DfES, 2007), possible implications include: reinforced feelings of rejection, increased pressure on care placement, disruption to education
- 13% of LAC in 2007 missed at least 25 days of school (DCSF, 2008)
- LAC are over represented amongst children with SEN: in 2007, 27.6% had a statement compared with 2.8% of all children at school (DCSF, 2008)
- LAC are more likely to attend low attaining schools (DfES, 2006a) and also experience more changes in their school placement in comparison with non-LAC (Barnardos, 2006)
- Research has suggested that teacher relationships and expectations can act as a risk or protective factor for LAC (Harker et al, 2004 & Martin & Jackson, 2002)

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Research on LAC who have been excluded from school suggests that they are likely to feel rejected, care placement may break down due to the pressures of the child being at home during the day, and their education is likely to be disrupted whilst a new school is organised.

Missing more than 25 days off school is linked with a significant reduction in the probability of achieving 5 A*-C grades.

Research suggests that two thirds of LAC's statements address emotional and behavioural needs and/or learning difficulties, this increases their chances of being educated in non-mainstream provisions or units attached to mainstream schools

Attendance at low attaining schools had been responded to through Care Matters: Time for Change (DfES, 2007) , with LAs having the power to direct high achieving schools to take LAC, even if they are full.

Changes in School placement has been linked with poor attendance (Davey and Pithouse, 2008)

Some looked after young people have identified high expectation of teachers as salient in their academic success, whilst others reported negative stereotypes held by school staff. Research by the Who Cares Trust (2004) found that LAC with reading ages of 16 plus were placed in lower ability class groups.



Conclusions from Literature Review

- Recognition that risk and protective factors will interact across and within different systems- may lead to increase or decrease in effects/ resilience
- There is substantial research evidence on risk and protective factors for LAC,

'however, it could be argued that the most salient and far reaching factor amongst these is the presence or absence of a positive and encouraging relationship with a significant adult, whether this is a teacher, social worker or foster carer. One question which remains unanswered in research to date is the extent to which a positive relationship with a significant adult could act to restrict the influence of other risk factors, or enhance the protective factors at all levels of the model.' (Kelley, 2009)

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Within my literature review I used the Ecological Transactional Model (Cicchetti and Lynch, 1993, 1998) to discuss how risk and protective factors may interact and cancel each other out, and to recognise that in reality they are not neatly divided into 'in-care' and 'educational'. An example of this is LA policy in relation to the provision of Special schools is likely to influence teachers' beliefs in relation to what children can achieve and where their needs are best met, which is likely to effect the timing and quality of intervention provided for them.

Research Questions

- *What risk factors can be identified in the educational experience of LAC which may contribute to their not being entered for GCSE examinations or alternative qualifications?*
- *What risk factors can be identified in the care experience of LAC which may contribute to their not being entered for GCSE examinations or alternative qualifications?*
- *What risk factors in their educational experience do LAC identify as contributing to their not being entered for GCSE examinations or alternative qualifications?*
- *What risk factors in their care experience do LAC identify as contributing to their not being entered for GCSE examinations or alternative qualifications?*
- *What protective factors in their educational experience do LAC identify as helping them at school?*
- *What protective factors in their care experience do LAC identify as helping them at school?*
- *What do LAC believe could have helped them to achieve GCSE examinations or alternative qualifications?*

Research- Method

- Mixed Methods approach:
 - Phase 1: **quantitative analysis** of the data file containing records held for all LAC in the 2006-07 Year 11 cohort and comparison with data for LAC not entered for GCSEs or alternative qualifications (fixed phase), in order to answer research questions 1 and 2.
 - Phase 2: **semi-structured interviews** with a small number of the LAC (n=4) not entered for GCSEs or alternative qualifications, producing qualitative data (flexible phase), which is then subject to a thematic analysis in order to answer research questions 3, 4, 5, 6 & 7.
- Can be described as containing aspects of a case study and also ex post facto research ('from what is done afterwards' or 'retrospectively') (Cohen et al, 2000)

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In the current study I've adopted a pragmatic stance, using positivist and naturalistic/interpretative methodological approaches to answer the different research questions.

Case study- where the case is the 2006-07 Year 11 cohort of LAC not entered for GCSEs or alternative qualifications- because attempts to identify cause and effect relationships and uses multiple methods of data collection.

Ex post facto- translated means 'from what is done afterwards' or 'retrospectively'. Allows the exploration of cause and effect relationships between current conditions and possible causal factors which have already occurred.

The current study is ex post facto because it uses historical records from the young people's care and school experiences to explore possible antecedents/ factors contributing to this sample not being entered for GCSE or alternative qualifications.

(Both an advantage and disadvantage of this approach is that the researcher has no influence on the independent variables, which means that results cannot be manipulated; however it also means that the researcher can not be truly confident in her findings, as there is always the possibility that other variables may be involved. Ex post facto approaches are often used in educational research because the more 'powerful' experimental methods are often neither possible nor ethical)

Sampling

There are three different samples referred to within this research:

- Sample I- all LAC within the LA except for those who are refugees or asylum seekers, in the 2006-07, Year 11 cohort (n=177).
- Sample II- LAC within this cohort who were not entered for their GCSEs or alternative qualifications (n=26; 18 females, 8 males)
- Sample III- individuals who were interviewed to gain their perspective on the risk and protective factors influencing their lack of GCSE qualifications (n=4; all female).

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Sample I was identified by LACES and included all young people in the 2006-07 cohort who were registered as looked after at the time.

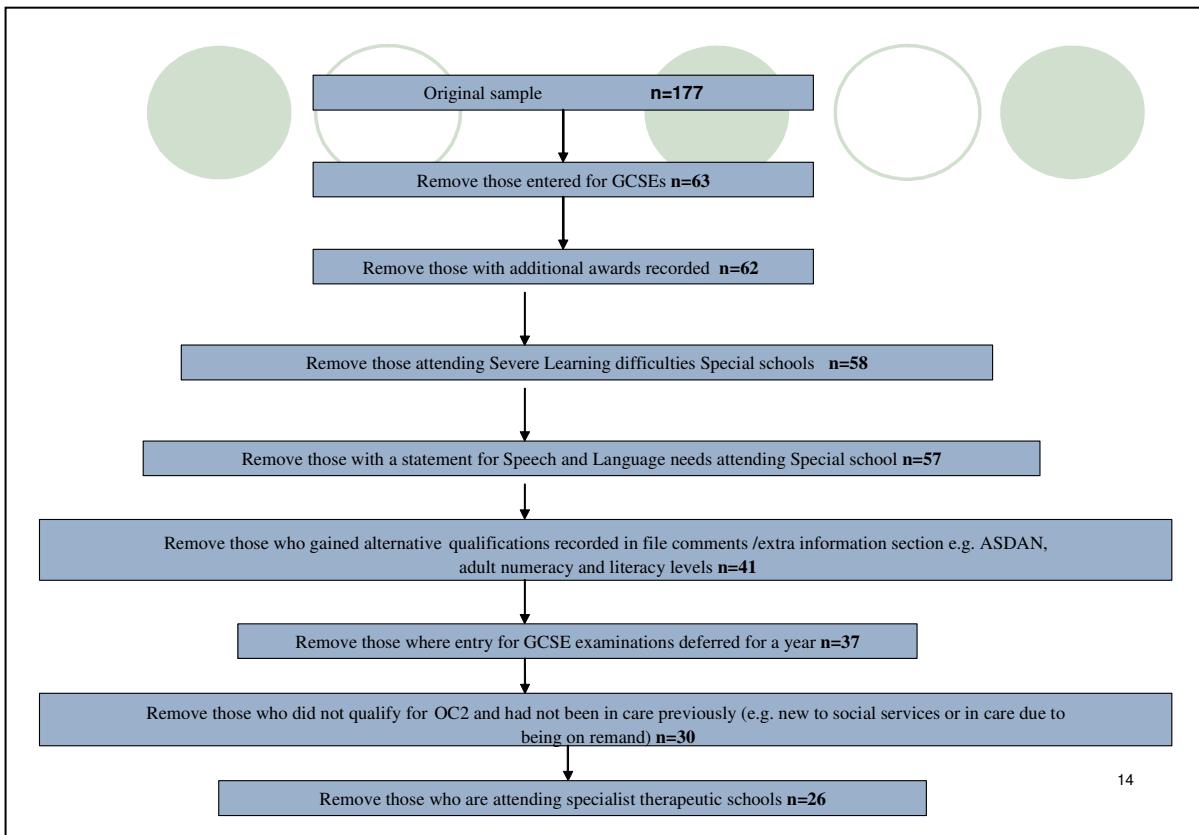
Refugees and Asylum seekers were excluded because many of them do not arrive within the time limits to be entered for their exams, and there are other influential factors such as learning English, and possibly going through traumatic experiences. A non-probability or purposive sampling strategy was utilised to select Sample II resulting in findings which can not be generalised beyond this particular group of LAC.

Originally there were 63 Lac not entered for GCSEs, however a filtering process was used to reduce this number to 26.

Filtering decisions were made on the basis of seeking to eliminate possible mitigating factors influencing the decision not to enter the young people for GCSEs e.g. those attending specialist therapeutic and SLD schools were removed on the basis that they may have not had the opportunity to be entered for exams.

Although this process can be criticised as being non-inclusive, it was necessary for a criterion to be used in order to exercise control over the wide range of factors which could influence whether pupils were entered for GCSE examinations.

Children attending MLD schools, and those where the main need on their statement was recorded as ‘behavioural difficulties’ were included.



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Research Constraints

	Barriers to making contact
With social workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rarely in the office to receive phone calls • Social workers themselves found it hard to contact young people • Young people did not want to engage with the after care service • Social workers were only required to have limited contact with the young people • Many demands on social worker's time • Social worker off sick so contact could not be made (n=1) • No named social worker so letter sent to the area team (n=3) • General pressures on social workers in Birmingham Local Authority where social services is under staffed (133 vacancies out of 386 posts, Guardian on line, 2009)
With young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response not received from social worker (n= 13) • Mobile phones turned off/ not answered and no reply to text messages (n=2 of 6 where permission was gained by social workers) • No longer living in England (n=1) • Young person did not give consent to be contacted (n= 6)

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One of the main research constraints was accessing the young people in order to carry out interviews- 2 barriers: accessing the social workers, who in turn had to speak to their 'clients', who I then had to contact in order to arrange interviews.

Some of the barriers are outlined in this table. Attempts were made over a period of approximately 4 months, during which phone calls and e-mails were used, and text messaging to the young people. Early February 2009 attempts had to be stopped because of university deadlines.

Meeting with the young people who were willing to be interviewed was also challenging, none attended educational provisions or were required to regularly call in to the social services offices. Although face-to-face interviews were my preferred method, ultimately only one interview was carried out this way, the remaining three occurred over the phone.

Additional constraints included inaccurate and incomplete data files, something which limited the Quantitative analyses which could be carried out.

Quantitative Data Analysis

- 5 Chi Square tests carried out, but validity undermined by missing data (residential status) and low numbers in subcategories (ethnicity & school type)
- Categories collapsed where possible and further Chi Squared tests carried out: entered for GCSEs Vs School type (mainstream Vs alternative provision)
- Comparison of the number of care placements and exclusions between groups could not be carried out as this data was only available for Sample II

Relationships between variables explored using Chi Square Test/ Fishers Exact Test

- Entered for GCSEs or alternative qualifications and gender
- Entered for GCSEs or alternative qualifications and stage at SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001)
- Entered for GCSEs or alternative qualifications and school type attended during GCSE years
- Entered for GCSEs or alternative qualifications and residential status
- Entered for GCSEs or alternative qualifications and ethnicity

T-test

- Significance of variance between mean number of years in care since last entered for LAC entered for GCSEs or alternative qualifications and those not entered

Data file provided by LACES was copied into SPSS and descriptive data produced. I initially planned to carry out Chi Square tests to test if there were significant associations between the variables listed at the bottom of the slide; however with ethnicity and school type there were very low numbers in some of the categories which undermined the tests. School types was collapsed into 2 broad categories of ‘mainstream’ and ‘alternative provision’, however ethnicity could not be meaningfully collapsed. Chi Square test could not be carried out on residential status because it was unknown for 86.9% of those entered for GCSEs.

Comparison of the number of care placements and exclusions between groups could not be carried out as this data was available only for Sample II, and was collected through the Project manager at LACES searching through the 26 children’s files- this information is not directly stored on a database. However the mean number of years in care for each group since last being admitted (they may have been in care previously) was compared using a t-test to see if there was a significant difference.

Quantitative Results

In-care risk factors

- 53.8% of those in Sample II were placed in residential units, compared with only 4.4% of the recorded placements for those entered for examinations.
- Comparison of length of time in care for those entered for exams (mean= 5.51 years, SD=3.84) and those not entered (mean= 3.88 years, SD= 3.33) found the difference to be significant [t ($df = 138$) = -1.99; $p = .049$].

Educational risk Factors

- No significant association between SEN (judged by stage on Code of Practice) and whether entered for GCSEs
- Significant association was found between children attending mainstream or alternative provisions and whether they were entered for GCSES ($X^2 = 18.96$; $df = 1$; $p = <.001$)

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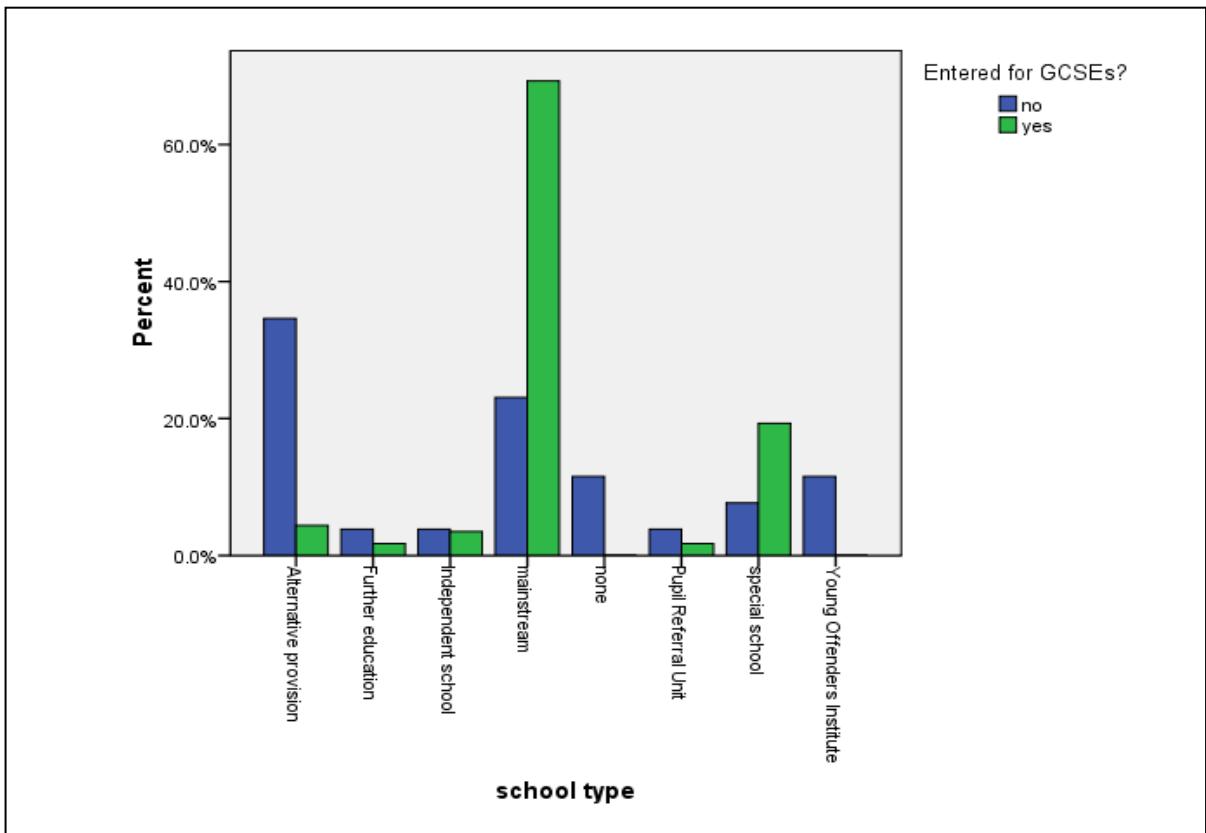
No significant relationship between SEN and being entered for GCSEs or alternative qualifications; interestingly 46.2% of those not entered had no recognised SEN, compared with 39.5% of those entered, however the sampling process, where children were eliminated on the basis of SEN limits conclusions that can be drawn.

A significant association was found between the collapsed categories of children attending mainstream or alternative provisions and whether they were entered for GCSES.

Descriptive statistics showed that 53.8% of those not entered for GCSEs were placed in residential units compared with 4.4% of the known residential placements for those entered. However because of the large amount of missing data relating to those not entered for GCSEs it is difficult to draw any conclusions for this.

T-test results showed that there was a significant difference between the two groups' mean length of time in care since last entry, with those entered for GCSEs having been in care longer.

Data collected for Sample II only showed 6.9 was the mean number of 'known' care placements- this could not be compared with those entered for GCSEs as this data is not normally stored in LACES system



This graph shows the distribution between different educational provisions for those entered for GCSEs and those not entered (Sample II)

Qualitative Data Analysis

- Semi-structured interviews used to gain insight into young people's perceptions of risk and protective factors during their care experience (n=4, all female)
- Substantive comments from taped interviews and written transcripts were analysed
- A template approach to data analysis was used (Robson, 2002), with key codes (n=39) determined prior to the analysis
- Code definitions were developed in a similar way

<u>WCR-within care risk</u>	<u>WCP-within care protective</u>
WCR-CI = carer degree of involvement in education	WCP-PS = Placement stability
<u>WCR- POB</u> = placement out of borough	WCP-CI = carer degree of involvement in education
<u>WSR-within school risk</u>	<u>WSP-within school protective</u>
WSR- LN = learning needs not identified	WSP-E = low/no exclusions
WSR-PB = peer bullying	WSP-AE = adult expectations

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Interviews consisted of 10 questions, 8 of which were open, with the opportunity for interviewees to add further comments at the end of the process. They lasted between 10-30 minutes.

A pilot interview was carried out with a Year 10 pupil attending a specialist PRU for LAC, identified through LACES.

Data analysis was based on a template approach with codes determined prior to analysis based on existing research, and new code added and further developed as the interviews were analysed.

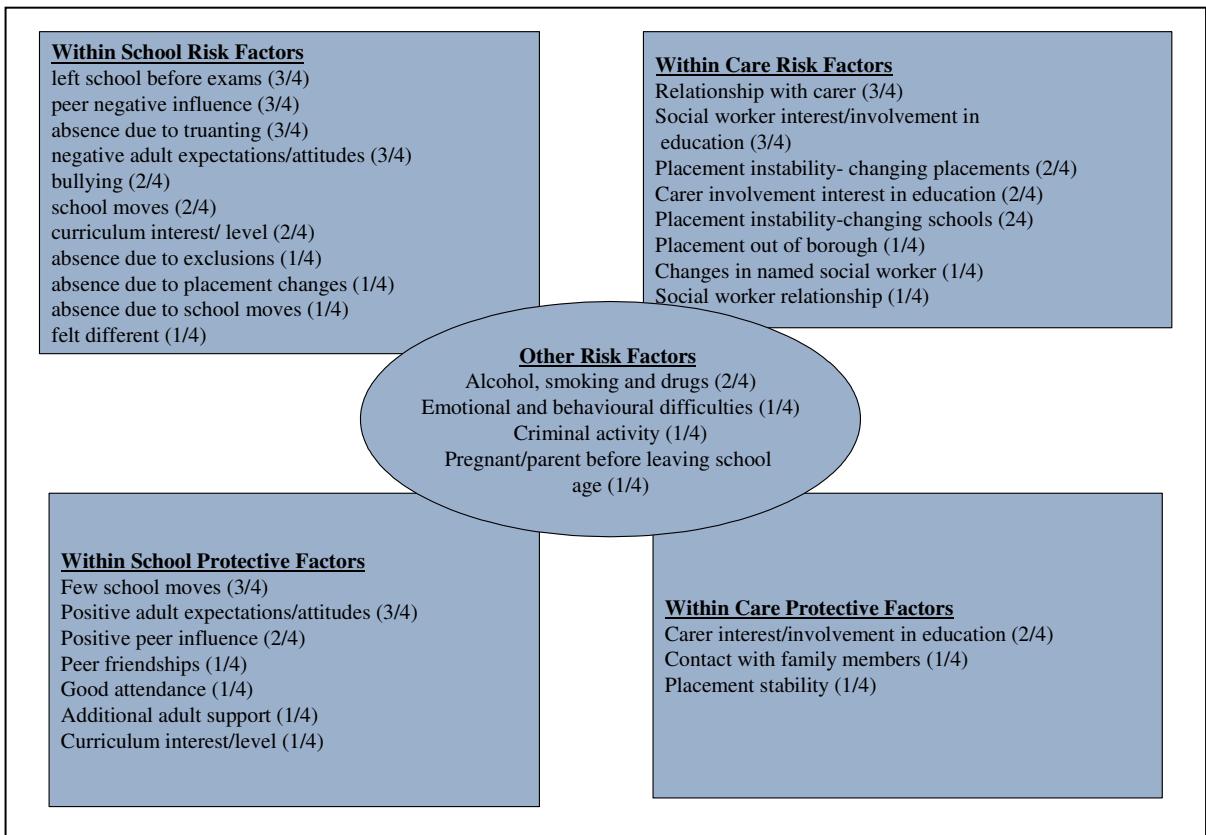
Inter-coder reliability was assessed and a 'good' initial score of 73.3% was achieved (usually you would expect 70% or less on an initial rating).

Qualitative Results

- **Educational risk factors (n=3):**
 - Leaving school before the examinations could be taken
 - negative influence of peers
 - absence from school due to truanting “*a couple of lessons turned into a couple of days- then it was every day*”
 - negative adult expectations or attitude “*you'll get excluded, you'll end up in a dead-end job*”
- **In-care risk factors (n=3):**
 - Relationship with their carer ‘One of the residential units we were treated like babies, baby monitors were placed on the landing “*we couldn't be ourselves*”.’
 - Social worker degree of interest or involvement in education ‘*education was not a priority*’
- **Educational protective factors (n=3)**
 - Few school moves were present in 3 of the 4 interviewee’s history, although they did not identify this specifically as a protective factor
 - Positive adult expectation “*She thought I could do it, and I knew if I stayed there and got into the work I could do it.*”
- **In-care protective factors**
 - Response to this were less well developed (see next slide)

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Here are the most significant findings from the interviews



Here is the interview data displayed in a conceptually clustered matrix.

Conclusions- Key Findings

Educational

- Significance of educational placement:
 - Lower expectations of staff, reasons why placed in alternative provision (EBD?), reduced hours and choices, staff expertise.
- Poor attendance/ truanting & negative peer influence
 - Falling behind in work, lower ability grouping, negative peer relationships & disengagement with school,
 - ? leaving school before exams
 - ? being educated in an alternative provision
- Positive expectations from teachers, positive peer relationships and few school moves

In-care

- Significance of relationships with carers and social workers
 - Relates to 5 of the 8 in-care risk factors identified
- Length of time in care?

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- Findings echoed many of those documented in existing research, particularly those expressed by the young people themselves.
- Why are LAC in alternative educational placements less likely to be entered for exams- especially in the light of the sampling process where children with main need identified as learning on statement in SLD schools removed? (6 of the 26 had statements). Could it be that the staff have lower expectations of pupils, or the reasons why they were excluded from mainstream or placed in alternative prevent them learning? Our experiences are that often children have reduced hours and choice of subject in alternative provisions. The DFES report 'Vulnerable children's access to examinations at Key Stage 4' (2005) recommends more flexibility in relation to time taken to complete courses and where exams can be carried out, and a greater number of staff trained to examiner level in alternative provisions. (links in with experience of interviewee D)
- Truanting (recognised in the literature as being linked with poor GCSE outcomes) and negative peer influence- arguably could be linked- the young people rarely reported absconding alone. Poor attendance could be seen as underpinning many of the other risk factors e.g. falling behind with work, SEN, leading to disengagement with school and either education in alternative provision or leaving school early.
- I would argue that many of the risk factors in LAC lives act to isolate them from pupils who are successful in school and positive peer influence.

- Positive expectations were reported from some school staff, for example a Deputy Head at one of the interviewee's schools, and positive relationships, however these were often undermined by school/ care placement moves, influenced, for example, by behaviour out of school.
- Little literature on positive influence of peers for LAC, however some on bullying that many report- a theme present in the interviews as 'feeling different' from peers. Interviewees has few school moves, however the ones they did have were at significant times in their lives and limited their choices, e.g. during Year 10 a move to educational provision at a residential home.
- In care findings relate mainly to relationships with carers and social workers, present in 5 of the 8 risk factors identified by interviewees, and could be linked to a further one- placement moves. One theme that came through interviewees was that major decisions e.g. placement school moves were based on non-educational factors- the impact these would have on educational outcomes were rarely considered. One interviewee felt very strongly that if she had not been moved out of borough to a residential placement she would have done her GCSEs.
- Results from the t-test were not what I would predict, that those who were entered for GCSEs had been in care significantly longer than those who weren't. Conclusions about length of time in care are difficult because of mitigating factors such as placement, reasons for being taken into care etc, however this could demonstrate that those who have been in care longer have time to adjust to it, or it may reflect the age of the children when entering care, and the significance of going through such trauma at different developmental stages, for example it may be harder for those who are taken into care in their teenage years- specifically if they are voluntarily placed in care by parents. There is a need for further research in this area.

Conclusions- Implications Children's Services

- Recruitment and training for social workers and carers
 - Education as a priority & their role in supporting this
 - Continuity and quality of relationship with young people
- Record keeping and shared database
 - Incorrect and incomplete records
- Laces practice
 - Use of database and knowledge of risk factors to identify pupils/ schools who need support.
 - Training for teachers
- Sex and relationship education
 - 9 of the 16 girls in Sample II were pregnant or had a child during Year 11

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- Although generalisability of my findings are limited to this particular cohort, as there was no attempt to make sure my sample was representative of all LAC-there are still implications relating to children's services practice within the LA, and these tie in with many of those made in Care Matters documentation- that apply to all LAs.
- The challenges of accessing social workers in order to carry out this research highlight the need (which we are all aware of) for greater recruitment within the LA. There is also the need for social workers to be trained in relation to the importance of decisions they make concerning care placement and how this may effect the education of the young person- educational outcomes need to be a priority in their decision making processes.
- Findings also highlight the importance of matching of social workers and carers with children and continuity of relationship to ensure moves and major changes in the lives of young people are carried out in consultation with them.
- My research was limited by lack of shared and accurate databases, the LACES project manager spent a lot of time searching through social services records to access information that I needed, for example number of placements; and education records to find number of school moves and exclusions. None of this information is stored together on one database- LACES expressed frustration that often educational information was not kept on social services records, something which arguably reflects the priority afforded to it by social workers.

- Creation of a joined up record keeping system (the guidance for which was through The Children Act 2004 which placed a duty on local authorities to ensure their key agencies work together and share information about LAC) would allow LACES to target their services to intervene preventatively where a pupil has a number of risk factors present in their care and educational experiences. 35% of Sample II did not have any recorded LACES involvement, this may have been because the school did not refer them or because they did not have recognised ‘SEN’, however research on teacher’s expectations in relation to LAC suggest they may not always refer young people in time, or may interpret their behaviour as ‘normal’ for LAC.
- It could be argued that there is a greater need for teachers to understand the importance of having high expectations for LAC and working preventatively to keep them in mainstream school.
- Chi square on the relationship between gender and being entered for GCSEs was only just above the .05 level of significance, with 73% of this sample being female. If similarly high levels of teenage pregnancies are present in LAC populations in other cohorts and other LAs, this could be an area that needs targeting.



Implications for EPS practice

- Supporting schools to identify LAC at risk and carry out preventative interventions
- Awareness of schools' tendency to inaccurately assess LAC's needs:
 - Academic work at too low a level/ place in lower ability groups ?
disengagement
 - Perceptions of behavioural difficulties being 'normal' for LAC ?
late referral, assessment and intervention by mental health services
- Role in supporting PRUs and residential units with educational provision attached where academic outcomes are poor

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I will leave you with this question- what are the implications for our practice as a service?

Use of data records to support schools to identify LAC who may be at risk of poor educational and emotional outcomes and encourage preventative interventions
Awareness of the tendency of schools to inaccurately assess LAC's educational needs e.g. place in lower ability classes base don behaviour, or not refer to external agencies because behaviour viewed as 'normal' considering what the child has been through.
Role in supporting education of LAC in residential units/ PRUs where educational outcomes are poor

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CHAPTER TWO

RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN WITHIN THEIR CARE AND SCHOOL EXPERIENCE; A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH LITERATURE AND ITS LIMITATIONS

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Abstract

The educational achievements and wellbeing of Looked After Children (LAC) have been a cause of concern for government health and education departments for the past three decades. This is because of a continually growing body of research detailing the disadvantage and poor outcomes that this population is at risk of experiencing in many areas of their lives. This paper considers different reasons why children may be in care and the varied factors which contribute to their experience of being in care.

Cicchetti and Lynch's (1993, 1998) Ecological-Transactional model is introduced as a framework through which to consider the resilience of LAC and risk and protective factors which LAC experience. This paper evaluates research evidence which claims to chart major risk and protective factors encountered by LAC throughout their care and school experience. The challenges that need to be negotiated when carrying out research with LAC are outlined and discussed, and the limitations of the different methodologies adopted are reviewed. This paper concludes by suggesting that a positive relationship with a significant adult may be one of the most salient protective factors within LAC's school and care experiences.

RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN WITHIN THEIR CARE AND SCHOOL EXPERIENCE; A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH LITERATURE AND ITS LIMITATIONS

(Paper written in accordance with author guidelines for the Oxford Review of Education)

1. Introduction

The education and wellbeing of children living in Local Authority (LA) care, also known as looked after children (LAC), has become a priority for professionals working in the fields of education, health and social care in response to the publication of recent government guidance such as Every Child Matters (DfES, 2004) and Care Matters: Time for Change (DfES, 2006a). For the past three decades it has been recognised in outcomes research by government, voluntary agencies, and other researchers, that the education of LAC is a cause for concern, (Colton & Heath, 1994) with the average attainment of this population falling below the national norms for their age group (Social Exclusion Unit, 2003). Jackson and McParlin (2006) argue that the poor outcomes extend beyond educational attainment and underlie many social problems, with adults who grow up in care being four times more likely to require the help of mental health services, 50 times more likely to spend time in prison, 60 times more likely to be homeless and 66 times more likely to have children who need public care (Jackson and Simon, 2005). Although this claim fails to take into account risk factors other than time in care encountered by adults who were formerly LAC, its fundamental message is

supported by the majority of research in this area; LAC experience disproportionate disadvantage and poor outcomes throughout childhood and into their adulthood.

The Care Matters Green Paper (DfES, 2006a) reports that outcomes for the 60,000 children who are in care at any one time in England and Wales have improved over the period from 2000 to 2005, with a four per cent increase in the number of children gaining five A* - C grades at GCSE and an eight percent increase in the number of looked after 19 year olds involved in education, employment or training. However these improvements are not occurring at the same rate as for all children. The majority of children in public care come from backgrounds with a low socioeconomic status and have experienced abuse or neglect; however the experience of being 'looked after' is reported to compound these disadvantages, rather than compensating for them (Fletcher-Campbell, et al, 2003). In addition to this, the education system itself can exacerbate negative experiences, described by some LAC as 'adding to the turmoil' of being in care, instead of providing a source of stability for them (Borland et al, 1998).

1.1 Literature Search Method

Using the University of Birmingham eLibrary service, the bibliographic databases "British Education Index" (1975 to date), "ERIC" (1966 to date), "Australian Education Index" (1979 to date) and "psycOVID" were searched for articles containing the following keywords: 'looked after children', 'children in care', 'foster children', and 'children in public care'. Where the initial searches produced too many results to read through and select relevant articles they were combined with additional keywords, such as 'academic achievement', 'risk and protective factors', 'resilience', 'placement' and 'education'. Government legislation and

guidance were searched for using the DfES website. In total more than 95 articles and papers from a range of different journals were identified and examined in further detail to determine their relevance to the questions being considered.

Within this paper I have chosen to focus on LAC's in-care experiences, as opposed to their circumstances and life events before being taken into care and in the years subsequent to it. This is in part because the research is too extensive to discuss within the limits of this paper, but also because LAC's in-care experience resides within the control of LAs' Children's Services, and may still be influenced and changed by educational, social work and health care practices. Drawing on the concept of resilience and using Cicchetti and Lynch's (1993; 1998) Ecological-Transactional model as a framework I have considered the following questions:

- What risk and protective factors are identified within LAC's care experiences?
- What risk and protective factors are identified within LAC's educational experiences?

The strength of evidence in support of these risk and protective factors is discussed in light of the limitations and assumptions of the research.

2. The Challenges of Carrying out Research with Looked After Children

LAC are a diverse group because of the number of independent variables on which they can differ, such as the reasons for being taken into LA care, the type of placement to which they are allocated, their age on entering and leaving care and the length of time they spend in care, in addition to individual differences in characteristics such as temperament and sociability.

One of the challenges researchers face is untangling the many influential factors that contribute to a child being in care and shape their experience whilst in care in order to investigate how these influence their educational outcomes and wellbeing. In addition to this, research with LAC can be ethically challenging; for example, when a child has had numerous professionals involved in their life, is it ethical for researchers to add to that number? LAC have to tell their story many times and research has shown that they are often concerned about personal information being shared inappropriately (DfES, 2006b). When sample sizes are small due to poor record keeping and multiple care and school placements (discussed in Sections 2.2 and 2.3) then it can be necessary to exclude the data for these groups from research in order to protect the anonymity of participants: a practice which risks distorting research samples.

2.1 Who are Looked After Children?

The 1948 Children Act was the first legislation to establish the care of children by LAs and resulted in the creation of specialist Children's Departments, which were later absorbed into social services departments. Our current care system is based on the Children Act 1989 which puts a duty on LAs to 'safeguard and promote the welfare' of all children within their authority who are in need, and to uphold these children being bought up by their birth families, as long as this does not compromise their wellbeing. A child in 'need' is defined as a child;

- who is unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable level of health or development;
- or
- whose health or development is likely to be significantly or further impaired without the provision of LA services;

or

- who is disabled (Children Act, 1989, part III, Section 17, paragraph 10).

The 1989 Children Act considers any child who is in the care of the LA or who is provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours to be ‘looked after’ (DfES, 2006c). The four routes through which a child can become looked after are summarised in Table 2. The two main routes are the court-mandated route, and the voluntary route. The court mandate constitutes a care order being made under Section 31 of the Children Act 1989 if the child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm due to the care they are receiving not being of the quality that would be expected from a reasonable parent or because the child is out of control. The voluntary route constitutes the child being accommodated with the parents’ agreement; this may be because the parent is unable to provide him/her with suitable accommodation or care, because the child is lost or abandoned, or because no one has parental responsibility for him/her. This is further complicated by the fact that there is variation in practice between Local Authorities, with different numbers of children being admitted into care under court orders and on a voluntary basis (DfES, 2006b). Differences in figures can partially be explained by socioeconomic variation; however some is due to divergent LA practice.

Children who are taken into care via the same route may have disparate reasons for meeting the definition of a child ‘in need’ set out in the Children Act 1989. In 2004 in 64% of cases children were taken into care as a result of abuse and neglect, with a further ten percent considered to have been living in dysfunctional families (DfES, 2006d) (see discussion in Section 3.2). However presently only the main reason for coming into care is officially

recorded, which Beyond Care Matters (DfES, 2006d) acknowledges prevents a true understanding of the complex interplay between factors which lead to the child being assessed as ‘in need’.

Table 2: Routes by which a Child Can Become Looked After

Section of the 1989 Children Act	Route by which the child has been taken into care
20	Accommodation under a voluntary agreement with parents (parental responsibility remains with the parent)
31 or 38	Child is the subject of a care order or interim care order (parental responsibility shared between the LA and parents)
44 or 46	Child is the subject of an emergency order for their protection (taken into police protection to prevent significant harm occurring to them)
21	Child is compulsorily accommodated, including children remanded to the LA or subject to a criminal justice supervision order with a residence requirement

Once in care, a child or young person is allocated to a placement, of which the most common are foster care and residential children’s homes, although the Care Matters Placement Working Group Report (DfES, 2006e) recognises that the range of available placements and access to these will vary amongst the 150 LAs in England. Over the past ten years there has been an increase in the number children placed in foster care, with 70% of the looked after population presently allocated to a foster care placement, of which there are varying types (DfES, 2006d).

Length of time spent in care may vary from 24 hours to 18 years or longer in cases where young people are supported financially during further education. In 2005 children who were leaving care having been under a care order had spent an average of 6.6 years in care, whilst those who were voluntarily accommodated spent an average of 425 days (DfES, 2006d). A significant minority of LAC do not remain in care continuously. Research has shown that 40% of children entering care have been looked after before; their return may be part of their care plan to offer respite to their family or it may be because of a failure to reintegrate them back into their family (Sinclair, Baker, Lee et al, 2007) or due to enduring or episodic family stress or parenting difficulties, which are never fully resolved.

2.2 Lack of Data and Availability of Records

In an attempt to provide baseline data for looked after children, the government, in 2001, began to publish, and continues to do so, outcome indicators for children who had been in care continuously for a period of 12 months (DoH, 2001), which equated to 70% of all LAC. Data collected include national test results, the most familiar of which are the number of pupils who attain 5 or more GCSEs at grade A* to C, employment or further education at age 16, cautions or convictions by the police, and health records (Jacklin, Robinson, & Torrance, 2006). The Department of Health itself (2003) recognised the challenges of collecting these data and included cautionary notes on statistical interpretation and comparison because of the problems some Local Authorities had in finding specific information about children.

Whilst researching the Year 11 outcomes of a small cohort of LAC within a region of England, Jacklin et al (2006) concluded that their most salient finding was the lack of data available for this sample:

‘Although a seemingly simple task, identifying and ‘counting’ looked-after children may be one of the most difficult and, at the same time, one of the most revealing tasks we face.’ (p. 2)

They used a range of information sources to identify their sample of LAC, including Local Education Authority lists, social services department lists and school files, as well as interviewing social services staff in an attempt to corroborate facts. Jacklin et al (2006) found a number of ambiguities and discrepancies in the databases; some children were on the LA list but not on the social services records and vice versa. In addition to this 12 of the 91 entries on the list were ambiguous and were unable to be verified without information additional to that held by the LA. These findings could be due to poor communication between LA departments or poor clerical practice; however they may also reflect the changeable nature of the children’s lives.

Similar problems were found by Fletcher-Campbell and Archer (2003) when investigating outcomes for looked after young people located in twelve LAs identified by the researchers as having ‘relatively sophisticated data tracking systems’. The databases were limited in the information they held because of the specified fields they had and often the information was available but from a range of different sources that could not be accessed in unison. Most strikingly Fletcher-Campbell and Archer (2003) found that little was known about the educational careers of LAC and often social workers were unaware of their future job/career aspirations. Having received data for only 63% of the sample they concluded that fragmentation of information was a major problem constraining informed planning for the lives of LAC.

The government has implemented changes in order to promote improved sharing of information between professionals. The Children Act 2004 put a duty on Local Authorities to ensure their key agencies work together and share information, and provides guidance for setting up a joint database to hold basic information about LAC. The Act also demanded greater accountability from Local Authorities by requiring Directors of Children's Services to be responsible for education and children's social services, as well as establishing joint area reviews to report on how children's services are functioning as a whole across the Authority. More recently Care Matters: Time for Change (DfES, 2007) has allowed for the piloting of virtual head teachers in 11 LAs who will monitor the progress of LAC in the Authority and will be in a position to challenge schools if they consider outcomes are too low.

Poor quality, partial data have implications for conclusions drawn for both government and independent research. If the data are incomplete for LAC then findings can not be truly representative or reliable, especially where data are not available for some individuals, in which cases the practice of allocating the worst possible score or outcome is adopted to prevent results being misleadingly positive (DoH, 2001). This is likely to negatively skew outcomes data for LAC and may contribute to schools and teachers having low expectations of them (see Section 4.3). The effects of limited sample sizes are particularly evident where samples of LAC are broken down into subgroups in order to examine differential patterns of causal influences and more sensitively reflect the complexity of factors which determine their looked after status. This is illustrated by Colton and Heath (1994) where results from only two of six subgroups could be reported because sample numbers were too small (described in greater detail in Section 5.3).

2.3 Transient Nature of the Looked After Children Population

The transient status of children within LA care can be considered on two levels: firstly in relation to a higher risk of permanent exclusion from school (see Section 4.2) and secondly in relation to the risk of having multiple care placements (see Section 5.2). The government recognised how these factors may combine to result in change of placement, because of the additional pressures on care placement when a child is out of school, or there is a change of school, following permanent exclusion or movement out of the catchment area when a child's placement changes (DfES, 2006b).

Frequent mobility and changes between educational and care settings can prove challenging for those researching this population. Colton and Heath (1994) reported missing data on the second round of testing in their longitudinal research because pupils could not be contacted. Fletcher-Campbell and Archer (2003) experienced similar difficulties when trying to identify pupils from their original sample in order to carry out case studies. This limits the relevance, validity and reliability of longitudinal research with LAC because it acts to reduce sample sizes and prevents cause and effect research being carried out within specific schools and care placements.

It is important to consider the challenges of carrying out research with LAC, discussed above, when contemplating the validity and reliability of the findings from different studies. The disparate pre-care experiences of LAC and the route by which they are taken into care add to the many different variables which contribute to the child's in care experience. LAC are a diverse population, which implies that studies carried out with comparison groups should be considered within the limitations of finding a 'matched' group. Where studies use existing

data and records on LAC caution should be taken when drawing conclusions because of the poor accuracy and partial nature of much of the data. These limitations are discussed, where relevant, in Sections 4 and 5 as studies exploring risk and protective factors in the education and in-care experiences of LAC are presented.

3. Resilience: Risk and Protective Factors

Dearden (2004) reports that historically research into risk factors developed through studies concerning substance misuse. However, this focus did not adequately address those cases where high-risk children and adolescents avoided negative outcomes. In response to such shortcomings, research began to consider protective factors, which led to the use of the paradigm of resilience. Resilience can be defined as positive adaptation and development in the context of significant adversity (Luthar et al, 2000). Jackson and Martin (1998) explain this as the extent to which risk factors within a child's life are balanced by protective factors, both individual and environmental. Dent and Cameron (2003, p.4) describe risk factors as 'life events and circumstances that combine to threaten or challenge healthy development' such as maternal depression, neglect, abuse and /or parental divorce, whilst protective factors are those that 'act as buffers to the effects of adverse experiences', such as having a supportive teacher or being part of a community group.

Kirkby and Fraser (1998) assert that risk factors 'may include genetic, biological, behavioural, sociocultural, and demographic conditions, characteristics, or attributes'. Rutter (1997) draws attention to the accumulation of risk and protective factors, emphasising the interactive nature of these influences, which he describes as processes or links in a chain of reactions. He also

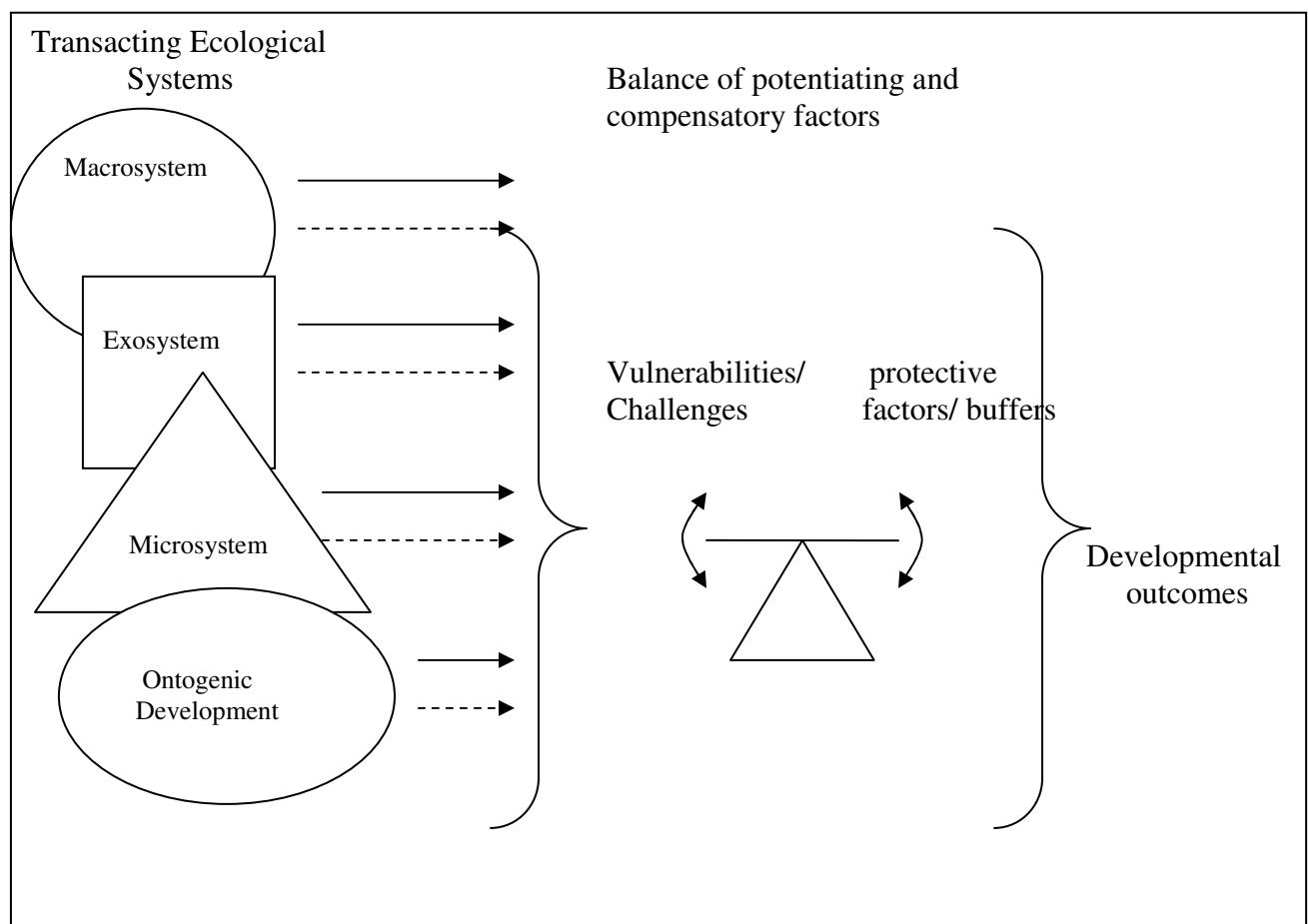
suggests that resilience is not constant and may be present in varying degrees at different times in a person's life, explaining why sometimes a person may appear to cope or achieve better than at other times (Rutter, 1987).

Cicchetti and Lynch (1993; 1998) proposed an Ecological-Transactional model of resilience, based upon Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model (1977), to explain the effects of child maltreatment on the developmental process (see Figure One). The model provides a framework to consider how risk (vulnerabilities/ challenges) and protective factors (buffers) at each ecological level, as well as the characteristics of individuals, influence the adaptive or maladaptive developmental outcomes of maltreated children (Cicchetti et al, 2000) and can be applied to consider the resilience of LAC.

The Ecological-Transactional model has four levels;

- the macrosystem, which consists of cultural values and beliefs;
- the exosystem, which is made up from formal and informal social structures such as the neighbourhood, community and factors associated with socio-economic status;
- microsystems, which comprise the family environment and other relatively intimate social contexts such as social clubs in which a child regularly participates;
- and ontogenetic development, which relates to the individual's characteristics and developmental stage (Cicchetti et al, 2000).

Figure 1. An Ecological-Transactional Model (based on Cicchetti et al, 2000)



The school can be positioned at both the exosystem and microsystem levels because the exosystem encompasses Bronfenbrenner's (1977) 'mesosystem', which consists of interconnected community settings, such as the church and school, while Bronfenbrenner conceptualised the microsystem as including the home, school and workplace because they are environments within which the developing person engages in direct interactions (Cicchetti et al, 2000). The model provides a contextualised approach to understanding the effects of childhood experience on developmental outcomes and allows the consideration of multiple

risk and protective factors, and how these interact with each other, whilst recognising that resilience can vary at different times in a child's life (Cicchetti & Lynch, 1998).

The current paper focuses on risk and protective factors experienced by LAC whilst in care and at school; influences mainly positioned within the exosystem, microsystemic and ontogenetic levels. However within the Ecological-Transactional model (Cicchetti & Lynch, 1993; 1998) the research discussed suggests that these factors will interact and be influenced by factors within the macrosystem, such as government guidance on provision and education of LAC.

Table 3: Example of Possible Risk and Protective Factors for a Looked After Child in a Foster Placement, Presented using the Ecological-Transactional Model

Level of Ecology	Vulnerability factors (enduring)	Challenges (transient)	Protective factors (enduring)	Buffers (transient)
Macrosystem	Lack of social mobility	Recession	Belief in children's rights	Increased government and media focus on LAC
Exosystem	Impoverished community	Lack of community services	Supportive social network	Gaining community resources
Microsystem	Financial hardship	Family conflict	Positive child rearing skills	Accessing family support worker
Ontogenetic development	Low self-esteem	Difficulty assimilating new learning	Positive peer relations	Positive relationship with current social worker

(Adapted from Cicchetti et al, 2000)

3.1 Why Focus on In-Care and Educational Experiences?

Much of the exploratory research into the poor outcomes of LAC that took place in the latter decades of the 20th century has focussed on the child's pre-care experience (Jackson & McParlin, 2006) and has concluded that children bring many of their problems into care with them (Essen et al, 1976; St Clair & Osborn, 1987). There is compelling evidence that LAC are more likely to come from adverse family circumstances, with ¾ of the 2,500 children who entered care in 1987 coming from families living on income support and only ¼ from a two parent family (Bebbington & Miles, 1989). St Claire and Osborn (1987) used data from the Child Health and Education Study, which followed 16,000 British children born during one week in April 1970, and collected information on their educational and behavioural outcomes at the ages of five and ten years. They found that at age five children who were fostered, in comparison to their peer group, were more likely to have come from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, lived in overcrowded, poor housing, have multiple siblings, be physically or mentally disabled and have parents who took little interest in their education.

In addition to social disadvantage, the most common reason why children are taken into care is abuse and/or neglect (DfES, 2006d) (see Section 2.1). Veltman and Browne (2001), in their review of 92 studies carried out between 1967 and 2000 investigating the relationship between child maltreatment and cognitive and language development and educational outcomes, reported that 31 of 34 studies found that maltreatment was associated with poor school achievement. Although they recognised a cause and effect relationship can not be demonstrated by these correlational data trends, in many of the studies other factors such as socioeconomic background were controlled for and the effects of maltreatment were still seen, suggesting it is closely linked with academic outcomes.

Jackson and McParlin (2006) argue that the research summarised above, and similar studies, acted to encourage a ‘within child’ conceptualisation of risk amongst professionals working with LAC, resulting in a focus on the background, pre-care experiences and relationships of a child rather than their in-care and educational experiences. They state,

‘If early adversity were the main reason for low attainment, one would expect children who come into care at an early age to do better than those who enter later, but there is no evidence that this is the case.’ (p. 91)

Heath et al (1994) suggest that if poor educational outcomes are mainly influenced by the pre-care background factor of socioeconomic status, then foster children could be expected to achieve around the national average because foster families’ circumstances have been shown to be similar to those of the average family (Heath et al, 1989). Both these statements are open to criticism because they would only be true if the care experience were restorative and acted to protect children against the adversity experienced in their pre-care lives. The authors themselves recognise the failure of many care placements and schools to address these disadvantages; however their statements are intended to challenge researchers who fail to acknowledge the flaws in the care system.

Mallon (2005) emphasises the importance of focussing on looked after young people who are an exception to the majority of the research findings, who gain higher than average qualifications on leaving school and have successful careers. He asserts that such children must have high levels of resilience in order to counteract the effects of exposure to significant risk factors, and that it is important to research the protective factors which make this subgroup resilient. Furthermore, Dearden (2004) argues that focussing on pre-care risk factors

such as poverty, family dysfunction and abuse is limited in its usefulness because these factors are not easy to change. It is for these reasons that I have used the Ecological-Transactional model (Cicchetti & Lynch, 1993; 1998) to review the research evidence relating to risk and protective factors that affect LAC in their care placements and within the education system.

3.2 Risk and Protective Factors that do not Fall Within the In-care and Educational Domains

There are a number of risk and protective factors recognised within the literature that can not be neatly categorised as either ‘in-care’ or ‘educational’. However some of these risk and protective factors could still be construed as having a significant influence on LAC’s care and educational experience, and may act to increase the likelihood of other risk factors occurring within these domains. The Care Matters Green Paper (DfES, 2006a) reports that young women, aged 15 to 17 years old, who have been in care are three times more likely to become teenage mothers than other girls their age. This increased likelihood of becoming a parent as a teenager does not apply only to females who are looked after; Berrington et al (2005) found that by the age of 20 a quarter of all children who had been in care were young parents. Suggested reasons why LAC are more likely to become teenage parents include the possibility that social workers and carers do not feel confident as confident as parents do to discuss sex and relationships with the young people, and frequent school changes and periods of time out of education reduce the opportunities for LAC to receive sex and relationship education (SEU, 2003). Research has also shows that girls who do not attend school are at a greater risk of getting pregnant (SEU, 1999).

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) outcome indicators for LAC (DCSF, 2009) show that 9% of LAC aged 10 or over were cautioned or convicted of an offence during 2008, over twice the amount of all children that age. LAC are three times more likely to receive a warning, reprimand or to be convicted of an offence than all other children (DfES, 2006a) and up to 50% of those placed by the court in secure accommodation come from a Local Authority background (Ofsted, 2001). The Home Office (2005) collected survey information concerning involvement in anti-social and offending behaviour from 30,000 primary and secondary school children in 24 areas of high deprivation and crime in England and Wales. The findings of the self-report surveys indicated that LAC were more likely to steal (42%) compared with all other children (23%), more likely to report attacking someone with the intention of harming them (21%) compared with all children (14%) and 21% of them reported carrying a knife. LAC are also four times more likely than their peers to smoke and misuse drugs and alcohol (DFES, 2007).

4. Looked After Children's School Experience: Risk and Protective Factors

4.1 Exclusion and Poor Attendance

In the DfES 2007 White Paper ‘Care Matters; Time for Change’ the government states that in the school year 2005 to 2006 LAC were eight times more likely to be excluded than all children (Statistics in Education, 2007) and that this figure has remained relatively unchanged over recent years. The Best Practice in Schools Working Group report (DfES, 2006b) recognises the negative impact of exclusion on pupils’ social and emotional well-being,

‘too often exclusions reinforce the sense of rejection that children in care may have and can compound their emotional problems.’ (p.12)

In addition to this, problems at school, particularly exclusions are recognised amongst the causes of care placement breakdown because of the pressure of having the child at home during the day (SEU, 2003, see discussion in Section 5.2). Harker et al (2004a) suggest that exclusion often results in more than the inevitable disruption to schooling; children can miss extended periods of education when there are delays or problems identifying alternative placements and during such extended periods, LAC may be in non-mainstream settings which provide only several hours of schooling per day, or may receive limited teaching in their care placement (SEU, 2003). Harker et al (2004a) stress some of the disadvantages of relying on government figures when they discuss the representation of LAC amongst pupils with fixed term exclusions, arguing that some schools use the strategy of internal exclusion, where a child is out of lessons, but still remains in school, while others avoid ‘official’ exclusions by requesting carers or residential workers take the child home for the remainder of the day. Hence it is reasonable to suggest that official statistics may under-estimate levels of exclusion of LAC.

Jackson and Martin (1998) (described in further detail in Section 5.1) compared the ‘circumstances and qualities’ of care and school experiences of 38 adults who had been in care during their childhood and who were judged to be high achievers, with a matched comparison group of ex-care adults who had not met the ‘success’ criteria of obtaining 5 or more O-levels/ GCSEs at grade C or above, or progressing to higher education. They found that the comparison group was significantly more likely to have been out of school for a term or more, through their own choice or because of permanent exclusion. The comparison group were also more likely to have been excluded (63.6%) than the high achieving group (23.7%),

which Jackson and Martin (1998) suggest is likely to have contributed to the fact that all but one of the comparison group left school at the age of 16 or earlier, whilst 21 of the 38 high achievers stayed on beyond the age of 15 years. However, the study failed to control for other variables which may have influenced outcomes, such as the quality of the school attended and ontogenetic factors such as intelligence and motivation.

Poor school attendance is documented in government statistics which show that in 2005/6 13% of children in care missed 25 days or more of schooling (Statistics in Education, 2007), compared to the national average of 13 days for all pupils (Statistics in Education, 2006). Although there are official data on exclusions, Fletcher-Campbell et al (2003) and the SEU (2003) emphasise that there is little research, other than case studies, on truancy amongst LAC and the possible causes of this. However the effects of poor attendance are clear, with research indicating that children and young people with high rates of absence are significantly less likely to obtain five good GCSE grades, judged by the government to be A* to C grades, than students with good attendance (Morris and Rutt, 2005). Fletcher-Campbell and Archer (2003) found a relationship between having a high number of educational placements in Year 11 and not being entered for GCSE exams, which demonstrates one of the ways in which permanent exclusion may act as a risk factor in the poor academic outcomes of LAC, although it should be recognised that exclusion is not the only reason for pupils moving school.

4.2 School Placement and Special Educational Needs

Much of the research on the educational outcomes of LAC recognises that they are overrepresented as a group amongst children with special educational needs. Fletcher-

Campbell and Archer (2003) documented that one third of their sample of LAC had a statement of special educational needs (SEN), with only approximately one fifth being entered for one or more GCSE examination. This figure is broadly supported by the outcome indicators for the school year 2001-2002 (DoH, 2003) where 27% of LAC were identified as having statements of SEN, compared with 3% of all children (DfES, 2002). Fletcher-Campbell and Archer (2003) investigated the principal and subsidiary needs recorded on statements of LAC and found that two thirds of the cohort were identified as having emotional and behavioural needs and/or learning difficulties. Kinder et al (2000) reviewed LA behaviour support plans and found that 90% of them referred to LAC, a trend which the researchers suggest is a reflection of an increased focus on this group due to government initiatives, and which is unlikely to provide accurate evidence of need.

In contrast to this the Social Exclusion Unit (2003) suggests that LAC's educational and behavioural needs are often not responded to as quickly as other children's because initial signs of these needs in the classroom are attributed to the child being in care and are viewed as a normal response to their situation. As a result of this, assessment and intervention often take place later than they should, when pupils have fallen further behind in their work, and/or behavioural problems and negative attitudes towards learning are further entrenched. Further compounding factors include moves between educational placements which may disrupt assessment or intervention, and the differing practice between LAs in giving children statements, which produce discrepancies amongst the provision available to all children with SEN.

A protective factor relating to educational needs and ability which was identified by Jackson and Martin (1998) was learning to read early and with fluency. In comparison with their high achieving group, a third of whom read by the age of four, most of the comparison group did not begin to read until they were at school, and one individual did not master the skill until the age of 11 years. An influential factor in this difference is likely to be early access to books; only 40.9% of the comparison group had regular access to books compared with 89.5% of the high achievers. Depending on the age of the child when they are taken into care, the risk associated with poor access to books could occur in either pre-care or in-care experience.

Evans (2000, cited by Martin & Jackson, 2002) carried out a four year study of children entering care within a LA in the West Midlands and reported that LAC were 13 times more likely to have a statement than all children, and that all those LAC with statements were within special schools, whilst the majority of children with statements who lived at home with their biological families were in mainstream schools. Fletcher-Campbell and Archer (2003) ascertained that only just over two fifths of their sample of 377 LAC in 12 LAs attended mainstream school and one fifth attended special school, with the next highest allocations to alternative provisions (6%), pupil referral units (4%), or no provision (4%). The researchers emphasise that these categories in practice are not discrete: pupils may be dual registered, or excluded but registered at an alternative placement; also the number of educational placements experienced by the sample of 377 young people reached 893, reflecting their mobility between settings. Where LAC are in mainstream school, research suggests high proportions are more likely to be allocated to special units, which may have a stigmatising effect and where academic success is often limited (Galloway et al, 1994; Jackson & McParlin, 2006); they are also less likely than their peers to attend high performing schools

(DfES, 2006b) - a disadvantage addressed by the Schools Admissions Code (DfES, 2007), albeit with levels of implementation and outcomes yet to be reported.

4.3 Teacher and School Expectations

Harker et al (2004a) discuss the stark contrasts in studies which have elicited young looked after people's views concerning the role of teachers in their educational outcomes,

'Many positive examples of increased educational motivation due to additional support and encouragement from teachers are contrasted with reported instances of negative stereotyping, low expectations and a failure to understand issues associated with being looked after.' (p.189)

In their own research they report that over half of their, relatively small, sample of looked after young people described how teachers supported academic achievement, and motivated them to believe in their ability by providing both study-specific and emotional support. However some interviewees felt that negative stereotypical views about LAC were held by teachers, and they also highlighted incidents where teachers had insensitively revealed their looked after status in front of a class of their peers. Nearly a third of the 'high achieving' ex-looked after adults in Martin and Jackson's (2002) study identified the need to overcome negative perceptions about LAC and for teachers specifically to be educated about the 'labels' given to them.

Jackson and McParlin (2006) suggest that teachers' low expectations of LAC, leading to their often being unfairly placed in lower ability classes and over half not being entered for public examinations, are the cause of poor educational outcomes, rather than within child factors,

‘even if we accept... that the ability of children in care may be skewed towards the lower end, that would still leave large numbers within the average or above average range and therefore capable of achieving much better educational levels than they do at present.’ (p.92)

The Who Cares? Trust (2004) commissioned independent psychological assessments of a sample of LAC and found that some with reading ages of 16-plus were allocated to lower ability class groups. These decisions could be influenced by low expectations of the child’s ability but may also be predetermined by the presence of behavioural difficulties, something which Comfort (2004) argues teachers’ current training does not equip them to manage. Elliott (2002) suggests that teachers may have low expectations concerning LAC’s ability to meet homework deadlines consistently; however the researcher, in his small sample, did not find a significant difference between teachers’ expectations of attendance and academic performance for children in care and those living with their parents.

In addition to the risk and protective factors outlined above, LAC identify bullying in school as a common experience (Harker et al, 2004b; Dearden, 2004), with six out of ten claiming to have been bullied (SEU, 2003) compared to approximately one in six of all children (The Youth Justice Board, 2002).

Schools will vary greatly in the risk and protective factors experienced at class, year group and whole school level by LAC. There is not sufficient scope within this paper to consider all of these factors; however the literature does identify the importance of normalisation or not feeling different from their peers for looked after young people within schools (Fletcher-Campbell et al, 2003), with pupils preferring support at a private personalised level, rather than in front of the whole class (Borland et al, 1998). Some LAs and schools run incentive

and reward schemes aimed at improving educational outcomes for looked after young people, which research has found to be influential and motivating for some pupils (Harker et al, 2004b).

5. Looked After Children's Care Experience: Risk and Protective Factors.

5.1 Role of the Social Worker and Carer

Mallon (2005) investigated risk factors for adults who had spent ‘some or all of their childhood in care’, using unstructured interviews followed by content analysis to identify themes. His sample consisted of 18 adults aged between 26 and 69 years, divided equally into two groups: a Higher Education group and Non-Higher Education group. Of the 35 risk factors identified that were relevant to the sample’s care experiences, the most frequently discussed were: ‘no personal investment in the child’, ‘didn’t feel special’ and ‘lack of love and affection’, whilst the next most frequently mentioned factors related to the carer’s influence on education, such as timing of placement, lack of interest in homework and encouragement in education. A lack of personal interest or investment in LAC is a factor that has also been identified by Jackson (1987) and Kahan (1979).

Professor Sonia Jackson has been involved in a number of research projects aiming to identify the risk and protective factors experienced by LAC. Two of these studies in particular chose participants who were successful in continuing to higher education (Jackson and Martin, 1998; Martin and Jackson, 2002; Jackson et al, 2005). The first study took place in two parts; the initial phase involved the completion of questionnaires by 105 people who had been in care for over a year, obtained 5 or more O-levels/ GCSEs at grade C or above, or who progressed

to higher education. The latter part of the study constituted in-depth interviews with 38 participants who had continued to higher/ further education. In response to the question “What part did your social worker play in your progress in education and planning for higher education?” 92% replied “none”. When this was explored further in interviews with the high achieving group there was, however, some evidence of help from social workers to organise funding for higher education and more rarely to support the child on returning to school after an exclusion or a change of placement. Overall, however, Jackson and Martin (1998) concluded,

‘Direct help to overcome *educational* problems or provide enhanced opportunities was seldom mentioned, and most respondents claimed that social workers played no part at all in encouraging or supporting their education.’ (p.573)

Jackson and Martin (1998 and Martin & Jackson, 2002) went on to compare those who returned their questionnaires but did not meet the educational criteria with their higher achieving group, who were similar in age, ethnic background and care experience. They found that the high achieving group reported significantly higher levels of interest and encouragement from carers and adults in their life regarding their education, than the comparison group. In their interviews the higher achieving group stressed the influence of well qualified and well educated carers and the importance of having a positive relationship with a social worker, which included feeling supported by them even in the absence of trouble. Over half of this group commented on the lack of practical provision available in children’s residential homes for carrying out school work; for example, many were not provided with desks or key books. These findings were echoed in research by Rees (2001) with adult care leavers whose care experience was similar to that reported by some of the participants in Jackson and Martin’s research.

In the second study, Jackson et al (2005) tracked three consecutive cohorts of university students who were in care at the age of 16 years and had been in care for a period of five years or more, and collected data using semi-structured interviews. As with the earlier studies, Jackson et al (2005) concluded that one of the main protective factors that differentiated these students' care experiences from other LAC's experiences was placement in a foster home that 'gave value and importance to education' (cited by Jackson & McParlin, 2006. p91). Harker et al (2003) found support for this factor when they carried out semi-structured interviews with 56 looked after young people aged 12 to 16 years, on two occasions 18 months apart. 18 of the young people felt that encouragement to succeed in education and to attend school from within their care placement helped them to do well at school. Jackson at al (2005) report that carers' appreciation of education was often expressed in practical ways such as attending school events, providing good conditions for studying, supervising homework and celebrating educational success. It was also found that the foster family continued to support the looked after young person through formal qualifications and further education, often providing a home for them as long as it was required.

Within these three studies carried out by Jackson and her colleagues a number of limitations and methodological challenges are recognised, including the impossibility of gaining a representative sample of adults who have left care because of the difficulty in tracing them. Jackson and Martin (1998) assert that although the Children Act 1989 requires LAs to provide for LAC up to the age of 21, few do so in a 'systematic' way and many young people leave care at the age of 16 and have no further contact with social services. This limits the ways in which former LAC can be contacted by adverts in newspapers or appeals in material

specifically relating to the care system, resulting in research samples who are literate enough to access newspapers and who have some interest in keeping up to date with the care system.

5.2 Placement Stability and Endurance

Change in care placement has been seen as a risk factor not only because of the insecurity and anxiety that surrounds it but also because it often results in a change of educational placement (Care Matter, DfES, 2006b). Over half of the LAC consulted by the Social Exclusion Unit had moved schools twice because of changes in care placements (SEU, 2003). Research has shown that changes in care placement and school often occur without consideration of how to minimise disruption to education, and may take place during term times rather than school holidays, resulting in time being missed from school (Jackson, 1989). This may be because under half of such moves are planned, and one in five occurs because of breakdown in the relationship between the child and carer (SEU, 2003). Fletcher-Campbell and Hall (1990) identified this problem 18 years ago in their comprehensive study of the education of children in care, stating that,

‘Little attempt was made to synchronise care and education timetables, with the result that placement changes involving changes of school were made without reference to school terms or natural dividing points.’ (cited by Jackson, 1994, p. 275)

There is a lack of research that focuses exclusively on the effects of placement changes for LAC; much of the evidence is anecdotal and comes from case studies, rather than identifying measurable effects on outcomes such as exam results. This is likely to be due to the fact that the effects of pupil mobility on educational attainment are difficult to isolate because change in school often occurs along with other influential factors such as family breakdown, or

placement breakdown in the case of LAC, compounded by the trend for schools with high levels of pupil mobility to be in areas of social disadvantage (Ofsted, 2001).

Dearden (2004), in a small scale qualitative study, interviewed 15 looked after young people aged between 13 and 19 years and found that those who rated disruption to their schooling as ‘high’ or ‘very high’ attributed this to change in care placements and periods of poor attendance. Harker et al (2004a) reported that looked after young people felt being in a stable care placement was conducive to educational progress, associating it with doing well at school, ‘feeling supported’ in education and making it ‘easier to think about school’. Stein (1994) found an association between movement of care placement and poor educational outcomes in three quarters of a sample of looked after young people who had four or more moves, compared with just half of young people who had experienced no moves whilst in care. In their report on raising the achievement of LAC which was based on research findings from 120 schools within 12 LAs Ofsted (2001) identified children who were frequently moved from one foster placement to another, or who were placed in a children’s home where there was a high turnover of staff and stability was difficult to achieve, as being more likely to be excluded from school, truant and become homeless.

Importantly it should not be assumed that all breakdowns in care placements result in changes to school placement. Fletcher-Campbell and Archer (2003) (see Section 2.2 for description of research) found that from a sample of 377, half the young people had a greater number of care placements than educational placements, whilst one quarter had more educational placements than care placements and the remaining quarter had an equal number. However Fletcher-Campbell and Archer do provide compelling evidence of the consequences of multiple care

placements on educational outcomes. Of the 93 young people who had six or more care placements 15% achieved five or more GCSEs (grades A-G) in comparison with 45% of the 126 young people who stayed within the same care placement during their secondary school education. The researchers highlight the complexity of this topic by emphasising the different reasons why young people's placements may change frequently, such as a pupil moving between their foster home and that of their biological parents, and also note that changes in school and care placement may prove beneficial for the young person. Care placement will also be affected by ontogenetic features of the child, such as developing learning difficulties or challenging behavioural problems, which may make a child more challenging to both care for and educate.

Research suggests that the consequences of instability and movement in care placement affect the mental health of LAC. A report by the Children's Rights Director (CSCI, 2006) which collected the views of 86 young people and children in care found that lack of information about placement moves was a source of anxiety for LAC. Additional stressors included the time it took to find a new placement, which could be up to six months and the fact that young people were often not given a choice between possible placements. Frequent moves were associated with delays in assessment and treatment of health needs, and in provision of support (SEU, 2003). While the scope of this paper does not allow for in depth deliberation on the subject of the mental health of LAC and research surrounding this area, it is important to recognise the effects of the uncertainty and anxiety that multiple care placements may produce.

5.3 Type of Care Placement

There is evidence which suggests the type of care placement may constitute either a risk or protective factor. As discussed in Section 2.1 care placements may be within the child's extended family, with foster careers, in a children's home or secure unit, and all of these could be within the child's LA or 'out of authority'. The Care Matters Green Paper (DfES, 2006a) recognises that children who are placed close to their home are more likely to succeed in education because of the support networks that are already in place in the form of friendship groups and extended family. The paper reports that from the LAC in residential and foster placements who left care in 2004-05, 55% of those placed out of LA failed to achieve any GCSEs compared with 48% of those who remained within their LA; however they recognise that 'out of authority' placements may be necessary where a child has complex or unusual needs.

St. Claire and Osborn (1987) carried out cognitive, behavioural and social measures with a cohort of children at five and ten years. This sample was divided into 5 groups:

- children who had spent a period of time in care before the age of five (less than 50% for 8 weeks or more);
- children who had been separated from their mothers for at least a month between birth and five years, but were not formally taken into care;
- children who were taken into care between the ages of five and ten years;
- children who had been adopted; and
- children who did not fall into any of these categories, who formed the comparison group.

They found that the average level of achievement of the ‘in-care’ groups at the age of 10 years was significantly lower than the comparison group. Furthermore children who had spent some time in residential care during their pre-school years were more likely than any other groups to show behavioural problems at age ten, although the authors point out that behaviour problems may have been a reason why the child was not fostered, as opposed to being an outcome of the residential home experience. However Harker et al (2004b) found that some children reported children’s homes as being a source of positive adult support because there were a number of staff that could be accessed at any time. St. Claire and Osborn (1987) report that children who were adopted were found to be in ‘child-centred, socially advantaged’ families and had above average cognitive and behavioural scores at age five, suggesting that adoption may compensate more adequately for the effects of pre-care social disadvantage than other forms of placement. However this same group was slightly below average in their reading at age ten and also had an increased risk of anti-social behaviour in contrast with the comparison group, an effect which the authors ‘speculate’ could be due to inherited problems, low self-esteem or a decrease over time in the child-centeredness of the adoptive family.

Colton and Heath (1994) present contrasting evidence to that outlined above from a longitudinal study with 49 children in foster care aged between 8-14 years who had been in care for a minimum of six months (mean placement length = 6 years) at the beginning of the study. Over three years the children’s academic attainment was assessed using standardised tests, whilst behaviour questionnaires were filled in by teachers and parents/foster carers. During the final year of the research it was apparent that the original two groups, (foster group

and comparison group), had divided into six subgroups which are outlined in table 4. Some of these subgroups were too small to include in the analysis; however children who had remained in the same foster placement and therefore experienced relative stability showed no further progress in reaching the national average scores for pupils of their age than the other groups. A similar pattern was shown with those whose legal status had changed during the study. The researchers had predicted that custodial and adoption orders would have positive effects on the educational attainments of this subgroup because they indicated stability in placement for them; however an improvement in expected scores was not seen.

Table 4: Six Subgroups identified by Colton and Heath (1994)

Original groups	Groups formed by the final round of testing
Original 'in-care' group	Children whose foster placements had broken down
	Children whose legal status had changed because of custodial and adoption orders
	Children who were reunited with their families
	Children who were fostered and had experienced no change
Original comparison group	Children who were taken into care
	Children who remained in their family home

It is clear from the research which employed methods such as case studies and semi-structured interviews that LAC are able to identify factors and experiences which had proved helpful to them, or not, in their educational outcomes and wellbeing. There are many in-care factors which are likely to influence LAC's experiences in care; however it is clear from the studies discussed that structural factors alone appear unable to account for differential

outcomes and that the interactions between risk and protective factors for LAC is likely to be more subtle and complex.

6. Conclusions

6.1 Limitations of the Research

The research studies referred to throughout this literature review are subject to criticism on a number of levels, including their epistemology, methodology, the identity of the researchers, the sample used and their chronology. Much of the research produces descriptive, qualitative data using comparative, correlational and case-control study designs. The challenges of carrying out research outlined in Section 2, particularly the difficulty in controlling for pre-care experiences, largely prevent positivist approaches, such as randomised controlled trials, being used. There would also be grave ethical difficulties with giving vulnerable children and young people disparate opportunities in their care and school placements in order to determine the effects this has on their well-being and academic outcomes.

Positivist approaches are used by St. Claire and Osborn (1987) and Colton and Heath (1994). They use methods such as teacher and parent reports, and standardised measures of cognitive ability, sociability and behaviour, but neglect to ask the children themselves why they are falling behind in school or what they think affects their learning. A further assumption in both studies is that science separates facts from values and is therefore value-free (Cohen et al, 2000). The researchers assume that parents and teachers are able to fill in behaviour measures without being influenced by their own values or feelings towards the child. In light of the

evidence relating to teachers' and social workers' expectations discussed in Sections 4.3 and 5.1, these reports may be neither valid nor reliable indications of the LAC's behaviour.

Naturalistic or interpretive approaches to research also have their disadvantages. Methods such as semi-structured interviews can be subject to confirmatory bias through the ways in which they are interpreted and reported, depending on the identity of the researcher. Several of the researchers referred to within this review grew up in the care of social services, such as Mallon (2005) who used unstructured interviews with his subjects and recognised that this 'interactive process' lacked objectivity because of his own experiences. Further caution is required when interpreting Mallon's (2005) findings and those reported in similar research, because the participants were adults, many of whom had left care many years ago, and whose memories may therefore have become fallible and selective over time.

Some of the most salient studies concerning the consequences of care placement, such as St. Claire and Osborn (1987) and Colton and Heath (1994), are now dated and have not recently been replicated. Whilst research relating to LAC's academic achievement and school experiences over the past 20 years has been similar in its identification of poor outcomes, it is difficult to generalise findings from older studies because of the frequent changes in social services, LA and government practice and policy over the intervening years.

New research opportunities are likely to arise as the recent Care Matters: Time for Change (DfES, 2007) government guidance is implemented across the country. This White Paper allows for improvement in record keeping and increases the accountability of schools concerning LAC's attainment. It provides equality of access to good schools for LAC,

prioritised access to assessment and intervention from medical and educational professionals and outlines the support to which LAC are legally entitled within schools. The effects of such improved provisions positioned at the macrosystemic and exosystemic levels may filter down through levels of ecology and positively influence schools' culture and practices and teachers' beliefs about LAC. However further research will be required to determine its true influence on the well-being and educational outcomes of LAC.

Many of the studies utilise data provided by schools and LAs in their research. The disadvantage of this is that often records are out of date, and/or limited in the information they store, for example, recording the number of school placements a child has had, but not the reasons as to why these occurred (see Section 2). This leads to conclusions being drawn that do not reflect the complexity of LAC's experiences. The transient nature of LAC's life circumstances, their often frequent changes in care and school placement can also act to limit sample size in many of the studies, for example Harker et al (2004a) and Colton and Heath (1994); this can lead to subgroups with low numbers being combined with other groups or excluded from studies altogether. Jackson and Martin (1998) in their research with adults who were in care during their childhood, highlighted the challenges of finding a representative sample, where poor records meant participants often had to be contacted using newspaper adverts, which in itself may predetermine the educational and socio-economic status of those who respond.

6.2 The Importance of Significant Adults in the Lives of Looked After Children

It could be concluded that the level of ecology within the Ecological-Transactional model at which the most salient risk and protective factors occur during a child's in-care experience is

the microsystem. School and care experiences occur at this level, as do relationships with significant adults and children which occur within these environments.

There is compelling research evidence supporting the importance of relationships with significant adults, such as teachers, social workers and foster carers, and the implications of the expectations these adults hold about LAC's educational achievement. Qualitative research, commonly in the form of interviews with LAC, frequently identifies the significance of these adults who are the providers of 'corporate parenting' in LAC's lives (Harker et al, 2004a; Jackson et al, 2005). However, even LAC who were academically successful, still often identify a lack of support from their social worker, teacher or carer (Martin & Jackson, 2002), suggesting that there were other protective factors which were influential in their academic outcomes.

Key adults' expectations could be argued to have an indirect effect through their influence on systems within education and care services and in their impact on the LAC's self-theories, expectations and aspirations. It is the cumulative effect of dominant negative perceptions concerning LAC which creates the risks, identified in the research, at the exosystemic and macrosystemic levels. These include the way in which social services are run, attitudes and beliefs within schools concerning the abilities and behaviour of LAC (Who Cares? Trust, 2004), wider cultural beliefs relating to where children with SEN or behavioural problems should be schooled, government construing about what outcomes indicate success for this population and how they should be measured.

6.3 Risk and Protective Factors Present in Looked After Children's School Experience

Looked after children's experience of school as a 'normalising', accepting environment where they feel supported and their needs are responded to, is likely to act as a protective factor and positively influence aspects of their ontogenetic development such as self-esteem, motivation, task achievement, academic success and the formation of relationships. However, government and independent research confirms relatively high levels of exclusion and poor attendance amongst LAC (Statistics in Education, 2006, 2007), as well as interrupted and often delayed assessment of behavioural and mental health needs, all of which have been identified as risk factors. Furthermore, there is strong quantitative research evidence (DOH, 2003; Campbell & Archer, 2003) which suggests that LAC are more likely to be at the School Action or School Action Plus stages of the Code of Practice (DfES, 2001), have a Statement of Special Educational Needs and /or be placed in specialist provisions.

6.4 Risk and Protective Factors Present in Looked After Children's In-Care Experience

There is persuasive evidence concerning the effects of breakdown in care placement, and the resulting moves between placements, and how these risk undermining LAC's resilience, in terms of managing the anxiety provoked by multiple uncertainties, and the pragmatic consequences of interruptions in their education. However, research concerning the influence of different types of care placement is less clear (Section 5.3), with St. Claire and Osborn's (1987) now dated study suggesting the characteristics of and stability offered by adoptive families may be a protective factor for LAC, whilst Colton and Heath (1994) found that increased stability in foster placements does not have a positive effect on academic outcomes. Again both of these studies are subject to the challenges of researching LAC, particularly small sub-group sizes for each of the placement types, as well as lack of control for ontogenetic

characteristics which are likely to influence placement success. Overall therefore, specific features of LAC's care experience and their impact on children and young people's developmental trajectory have yet to be reliably ascertained. This is an area in which further research is required.

6.5 Risk and Protective Factors that do not fall within 'In-care' and 'Educational' Experiences

Amongst the research literature documenting the disadvantages experienced by LAC is strong evidence for the risk factors of teenage parenthood, substance abuse and antisocial/criminal behaviours (see Section 3.2), the causes and effects of which extend beyond allocation to either 'in-care' or educational domains, hence highlighting the limitations of grouping research findings into these two areas. It is clear from the literature that rarely does a risk or protective factor work in isolation, for example the DfES (2006f) recognises that alcohol and substance misuse, low educational attainment, leaving school at 16 with no qualifications, mental health problems, Conduct Disorder and involvement in crime are all factors associated with high teenage pregnancy rates. This finding is reflected in the Social Exclusion Task Force (Cusworth et al, 2009) report which investigated the risks of social exclusion experienced by young people (not just those in care) aged 16 to 24 years,

'Lack of educational qualifications and experience of NEET [not in employment Education or training] were particularly high amongst young people who had their own children'. (p. 35)

Further research is needed to investigate the ways in which these risk factors interact in the lives of LAC, particularly how they impact on educational outcomes, and why they are so prevalent in the lives of this vulnerable group.

7. Final Conclusions

When considering the research evidence for risk and protective factors at the different levels of the Ecological-Transactional Model (Cicchetti and Lynch, 1993, 1998) it is clear how these may interact within and between systems and ecological levels to increase in intensity or contribute to the effects of other factors. For example, LA practice concerning pupils with SEN, and the use of special schools within that authority, are likely to influence teachers' beliefs about what pupils can achieve and where their needs will be best met, which in turn influences the type and timing of intervention and support which is made available to them. However, there also seem to be factors which function more independently in their influence on LAC outcomes, such as availability of types of care placement.

In conclusion there is persuasive research evidence documenting the in-care and educational risk and protective factors which may influence the educational outcomes of LAC. However, it could be argued that the most salient and far reaching factor amongst these is the presence or absence of a positive and encouraging relationship with a significant adult, whether this is a teacher, social worker or foster carer. One question which remains unanswered in research to date is the extent to which a positive relationship with a significant adult could act to restrict the influence of other risk factors, or enhance the protective factors at all levels of the model.

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CHAPTER THREE

**WHICH ‘IN-CARE’ AND ‘EDUCATIONAL’ RISK AND PROTECTIVE
FACTORS ARE PRESENT IN THE LIVES OF LOOKED AFTER
YOUNG PEOPLE NOT ENTERED FOR GCSE EXAMINATIONS OR
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WHICH ‘IN-CARE’ AND ‘EDUCATIONAL’ RISK AND PROTECTIVE

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Abstract

This paper reports on findings from research carried out with the Year 11, 2006-07 cohort of Looked After Children (LAC) under the care of A West Midlands Local Authority (LA) in the year (2007-08). A mixed method approach was adopted in order to identify educational and within care risk and protective factors for those LAC within this cohort who were not entered for GCSE examinations or alternative qualifications. A statistical analysis of quantitative data (number of care and educational placements, length of time in care, number of exclusions, type of school attended, special educational needs, ethnicity and gender) was carried out in order to determine if there were significant relationships between not being entered for official examinations and these factors, and a sub-sample of this group (n=4) interviewed in order to find out what they perceive to have been influential risk and/or protective factors on their educational outcomes. Research findings show that there is a significant relationship between the length of time Lac were in care, the type of school they attended and whether they were entered for GCSE examinations or alternative qualifications. The LAC identified the importance of ‘significant adults’ having high expectations of them and showing interest in their education and the negative effects of placement instability, poor school attendance, and ‘getting in with the wrong crowd’. The research findings are considered in relation to existing research on educational outcomes of LAC, and the limitations of the study are discussed with reference to the challenges of carrying out research with this group.

WHICH 'IN-CARE' AND 'EDUCATIONAL' RISK AND

PROTECTIVE FACTORS ARE PRESENT IN THE LIVES OF

LOOKED AFTER YOUNG PEOPLE NOT ENTERED FOR GCSE

EXAMINATIONS OR ALTERNATIVE QUALIFICATIONS?

1. Introduction

The education and wellbeing of Looked After Children (LAC), has become a priority for professionals working in the fields of education, health and social care in response to the publication of recent government guidance such as Every Child Matters (DfES, 2004) and Care Matters: Time for change (DfES, 2007). For the past three decades it has been recognised by government, voluntary agencies, and other researchers, that the education of LAC is a cause for concern, (Colton & Heath, 1994) with the average attainment of this population falling below the national norms for their age group (Social Exclusion Unit, 2003). Jackson and McParlin (2006) argue that the poor outcomes extend beyond educational attainment and underlie many social problems, with adults who grow up in care being more likely to require the help of mental health services, spend time in prison, become homeless and have children who need public care (Jackson and Simon, 2005).

The Care Matters Green Paper (DfES, 2006a) reports that although outcomes for the 60,000 children who are in care at any one time in England and Wales have improved over the period from 2000 to 2005, these improvements are not occurring at the same rate as those for all children, and with government requirements for LAs to report outcomes for

vulnerable groups, there is increased pressure at local and national levels to improve practice in relation to LAC. The majority of children in public care come from backgrounds with a low socioeconomic status and have experienced abuse or neglect; however it has been suggested that the experience of being looked after can compound these disadvantages (Fletcher-Campbell, et al, 2003), whilst the education system itself can also exacerbate negative experiences, rather than providing a source of stability for LAC (Borland et al, 1998).

This study focuses on the risk and protective factors present in the lives of LAC whilst they are in care; children's developmental difficulties, family histories and structural effects, such as poverty, which influence them being taken into care, are not addressed. This is in part because all the outcomes research for LAC is too extensive to discuss within the limits of this paper (see DfES, 2006a and Kelley (2009) for comprehensive reviews) but also because LAC's in-care experience resides within the control of Local Authorities' Children's Services, and may still be influenced and changed by educational, social work and health care practices.

1.1 Risk and Protective Factors Experienced by LAC within Care and Educational Systems

The study of risk and protective factors underpinning the paradigm of resilience is historically founded in research relating to substance abuse (Dearden, 2004). Jackson and Martin (1998) explain resilience as the extent to which risk factors within a child's life are balanced by protective factors, both individual and environmental. Dent and Cameron (2003, p.4) define risk factors as 'life events and circumstances that combine to threaten or

challenge healthy development', and protective factors as those that 'act as buffers to the effects of adverse experiences'. Rutter (1997) emphasises the accumulation of risk and protective factors, and their interactive nature, which results in levels of resilience varying over the course of a person's lifetime (Rutter, 1987).

1.1.1 Educational Risk and Protective Factors

The DfES 2007 White Paper 'Care Matters; Time for Change' states that in the school year 2005 to 2006 LAC were eight times more likely to be excluded than all children (Statistics in Education, 2007). The implications of this include reinforcing feelings of rejection (DfES, 2006b), increased pressure on care placement, sometimes leading to breakdown (SEU, 2003) and disruption to schooling whilst alternative provision is organised (Harker et al, 2004). The OC2 (outcome indicators) for LAC who have been in care for 12 months or more on 30th September 2007 (DCSF, 2008) show that 13% of those attending school missed at least 25 days during the preceding school year. The repercussions of missing up to half a term of schooling on the educational outcomes of LAC are clearly documented by research, which demonstrates a relationship between 'poor' attendance and a significantly reduced probability of achieving five A*-C grades at GCSE (Morris and Rutt, 2005).

LAC are overrepresented as a group amongst children with special educational needs; 27.6% of LAC in 2007 had a statement of special educational needs compared with 2.8% of all children at school (DCSF, 2008). Research suggests that two thirds of LAC's statements address emotional and behavioural needs and/or learning difficulties (Fletcher-Campbell & Archer, 2003), and this may increase their chances of being educated in non-

mainstream provision or specialist units attached to mainstream schools (Galloway et al, 1994; Jackson & McParlin, 2006). The Care Matters Green paper (DfES, 2006a) recognises that LAC are more likely to attend low attaining schools and also experience more changes in their school placement in comparison with non-LAC (Barnardo's, 2006); a factor which Davey and Pithouse (2008) link with poor attendance.

Research studies which elicit the views of LAC and young people have found that teacher expectations and relationships can act as either a risk or protective factor in the educational outcomes achieved by this group. Harker et al (2004) and Martin and Jackson (2002) report that some LAC identified teacher support as a salient motivational factor in their education, whilst others felt teachers held negative stereotypes about children in care, and that as a result they received less praise than their peers (Barnardo's, 2006). The Who Cares? Trust (2004) found that some LAC with reading ages of 16-plus were allocated to lower ability class groups; although such grouping decisions may be influenced by behaviour as well as ability, they have long-term outcomes, such as not being entered for examinations (Jackson and McParlin, 2006).

1.1.2 Within Care Risk and Protective Factors

Qualitative research using interviews and questionnaires, has found that adults who were looked after as children often report ‘not feeling special’ and a ‘lack of personal investment’ in them as a child, particularly from their carers and social workers (Jackson, 1987; Mallon, 2005). Jackson and Martin (1989) and Martin and Jackson, (2002) compared a group of ‘high achieving’ ex-care adults (who obtained 5 or more O-levels/GCSEs at grade C or above, or who progressed to higher education), with a group who did

not meet this criterion and found that the higher achieving group reported significantly more interest and encouragement in relation to their education from carers and adults in their life. Interestingly the majority of the sample from the higher achieving group still reported a lack of interest in their education from their social worker.

Change in care placement has been seen as a risk factor not only because of the insecurity and anxiety that it may provoke, but also because it often results in a change of educational placement (DfES, 2006b). The degree of instability in the lives of LAC is highlighted by Davey and Pithouse (2008) who found then less than half of their relatively small sample of young people ($n=14$) had continuity of educational placement, residence and carer over a four year period. Research has shown that less than half of placement moves are planned, often resulting in disruption to education, delays in assessment and treatment of health needs, and in provision of support (SEU, 2003).

There is conflicting evidence relating to whether the type of placement may constitute a risk or protective factor; few comparative studies have been carried out, and their findings are limited because many LAC have experienced more than one type of placement, and because of other influential variables, such as the child's character, behaviour and pre-care experiences can not be controlled for. Some research findings suggest that residential homes can have a negative influence on the educational outcomes of LAC (St. Claire and Osborn, 1987; Davey & Pithouse, 2008), whilst other research has documented little advantage for LAC in foster and adoptive placements (Colton and Heath, 1994).

In a recent study of 129 care leavers in further education, 60% entered university from foster care, the rest were living independently or with relatives/friends, and only one came from a residential unit. The authors suggest this may be because residential units still expect LAC to leave education at 16, therefore limiting their opportunities if they wish to continue (Jackson & Ajayi, 2007). The Care Matters Green Paper (DfES, 2006a) recognises that children who are placed close to their home are more likely to succeed in education because of family and friend support networks that are already in place; 55% of LAC in residential and foster care between 2004-05 who were placed out of Authority failed to achieve any GCSEs compared with 48% of those who remained within their Local Authority.

1.1.3 Risk and Protective Factors that do not fall Within the In-care and Educational Domains

There are a number of risk and protective factors recognised within the literature that can not be neatly categorised as either ‘in-care’ or ‘educational’, but which can be construed as having a significant influence on LAC’s experiences of education and care, and which may increase the chances of other risk factors occurring. For example young women, aged 15 to 17 years old, who have been in care are three times more likely to become teenage mothers than other girls their age (DfES, 2006a) and by the age of 20 a quarter of all children who had been in care are young parents (Berrington et al, 2005). The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) outcome indicators for LAC (DCSF, 2009) show that 9% of LAC aged 10 or over were cautioned or convicted of an offence during 2008, over twice the amount of all children that age. LAC are three times more likely to receive a warning, reprimand or to be convicted of an offence than all other children (DfES, 2006a). LAC are

also four times more likely than their peers to smoke and misuse drugs and alcohol (DFES, 2007).

These additional risk factors of teenage parenthood, substance abuse and criminal/anti-social behaviour highlight the complexity of the relationships between risk and protective factors, and the limitations of grouping them into in-care and educational categories. It is clear from the literature that rarely does a risk or protective factor work in isolation, for example the DfES (2006f) recognises that alcohol and substance misuse, low educational attainment, leaving school at 16 with no qualifications, mental health problems, Conduct Disorder and involvement in crime are all factors associated with high teenage pregnancy rates.

1.1.4 Research Methods and Methodology used in Past Research

Much of the research into outcomes for LAC produces descriptive, qualitative data using comparative, correlational and case-control study designs. The challenges of carrying out research with this transient population, particularly the difficulty in controlling for pre-care experiences and working ethically, largely prevent positivist approaches, such as randomised controlled trials, being used. Positivist approaches are used in some studies; however where these are based on adult reports of behaviour and ability, for example, St. Claire and Osborn (1987) and Colton and Heath (1994), they could be argued to be compromised by other research concerning teachers' and social workers' expectations (discussed in sections 1.1.1 and 1.1.2) which suggests such reports may be neither valid nor reliable indications of the LAC's behaviour and progress.

Naturalistic or interpretative approaches to research used, for example by Mallon (2005), also have their disadvantages. Methods such as semi-structured interviews can be subject to confirmatory bias through the ways in which responses are interpreted and reported, depending on the identity of the researcher. Several of the researchers referred to within Section 1 grew up in the care of social services, such as Mallon (2005) and McParlin (Jackson & McParlin, 2006) and so their findings could be criticised for lacking objectivity because of the influence of their own experiences. Some of the most influential studies concerning the consequences of care placement, such as St. Claire and Osborn (1987) and Colton and Heath (1994), are now dated and have not recently been replicated.

The current study seeks to add to the already substantial and growing body of knowledge relating to the education and wellbeing of LAC by focussing on a specific subgroup of the population, who were not entered for GCSE examinations or alternative qualifications. The research sample is taken from the 2006-07 Year 11 cohort in a West Midlands Local Authority. The 2007 OC2 report for all LAC in England and Wales (DCSF, 2008) asserts that 32% of Year 11 LAC did not sit GCSE or GNVQ examinations, compared with 0.5% of all children.

2. Research Brief

2.1 Brokering the Research Project and Ensuring Relevance at a Local Level

This research was developed from, and in response to meetings with the Head of the LACES team and three Educational Psychologists (EPs) working for the LA who were seconded part-time to LACES. At these meetings concerns were raised about the OC2

outcomes data which each LA is required to report to Central government on a yearly basis. This data records outcomes for LAC, particularly their achievements in official end of Key Stage examinations. At this time the head of LACES reported a high number of LA LAC not being entered for their GCSE examinations (38%, n=63), and expressed interest in understanding why this occurred.

It was agreed that the study could use LACES data to look for relationships between not being entered for examinations and educational and care experiences, in addition to interviews to gain young people's perceptions of what factors may have contributed to this, and what could have helped them achieve qualifications (see Appendix 1 for research proposal).

The LACES project manager was able to provide a range of data, including GCSE outcome data for the 2006/07 cohort of LAC within the LA (See Appendix 2). This data period ran from 1st September 2006 to 30th September 2007 and took several months to be collated from the final date. When discussing what data would be easily available to inform selection of a sample for the research, this cohort was suggested because waiting for the 2007/08 data would not be viable within the time limits of the research project. One disadvantage of using the 2006/07 cohort, which became obvious as the research progressed, was that of these young people, now aged 17 to 18 years, many were living independently and no longer attended educational provisions, and therefore contacting and gaining access to them was challenging.

2.2 Research Questions

The research questions were generated in a basic form during the meeting held with the head of LACES and representatives from the EPS. The decision to group the research questions according to ‘within care’ and ‘within education’ risk and protective factors was based upon a review of the existing research on risk and protective factors in the educational outcomes of LAC (Kelley, 2009), and the need to consider factors that can be influenced by LA practice, in order to bring about change.

1. *What risk factors can be identified in the educational experience of LAC which may contribute to their not being entered for GCSE examinations or alternative qualifications?*
2. *What risk factors can be identified in the care experience of LAC which may contribute to their not being entered for GCSE examinations or alternative qualifications?*
3. *What risk factors in their educational experience do LAC identify as contributing to their not being entered for GCSE examinations or alternative qualifications?*
4. *What risk factors in their care experience do LAC identify as contributing to their not being entered for GCSE examinations or alternative qualifications?*
5. *What protective factors in their educational experience do LAC identify as helping them at school?*

6. *What protective factors in their care experience do LAC identify as helping them at school?*
7. *What do LAC believe could have helped them to achieve GCSE examinations or alternative qualifications?*

2.3 Ethical Considerations

The main ethical considerations which had to be addressed when carrying out the current research concerned the age and vulnerability of the participants who form Sample III and ensuring confidentiality and protection of the data, to which I had access, relating to 2006-07 Year 11 cohort. Participants who were interviewed were aged 17 to 18 years when the research was carried out, and so were able to independently give consent; however permission was sought through their social worker initially. Prior to commencing the interviews, an introductory script was used to ensure consistency of explanation when outlining the purposes of the research project, how data would remain protected and confidential, that participants could withdraw at any time, and to gain consent from the young people (see Appendix 3). All data was kept anonymously and within LA guidelines on confidentiality.

An additional consideration was my identity as a researcher and employee of the LA, and how this may have influenced interactions with the young people whom I contacted and interviewed. My role as a Trainee Educational Psychologist was made clear in initial letters to social workers and the young people themselves, this may have been advantageous, as my employer, would have been familiar to them. However it may have resulted in the

young people construing me to be another professional/authority figure entering their life, resulting in an unequal power relationship, which may have influenced, either positively or negatively, their decision to engage with the research.

The option of providing ‘payment’ for the young people in recognition of the time they had given up to participate in the research, was discussed with LACES, who were able to offer a book or experience voucher to those who were interviewed. It was made clear in the introductory script that withdrawal from the interview would not influence this payment, which would be sent to the participant when the data collection process was completed (see Appendix 4 for ethics form).

3. Methods

3.1 Methodology

The current study adopts a pragmatic stance, using positivist and naturalistic/interpretative methodological approaches to answer the different research questions. There are two phases of data collection and analysis:

- Phase 1: quantitative analysis of the data file containing records held for all LAC in the 2006-07 Year 11 cohort and comparison with data for LAC not entered for GCSEs or alternative qualifications (fixed phase), in order to answer research questions 1 and 2.

- Phase 2: semi-structured interviews with a small number of the LAC not entered for GCSEs or alternative qualifications, producing qualitative data (flexible

phase), which is then subject to a thematic analysis in order to answer research questions 3, 4, 5,6 and 7.

The fixed phase of the research could be described as positivist because it seeks to find causal relationships through the identification of risk and protective factors in the care and educational histories of LAC. However it is not ‘purely’ positivist because it is carried out retrospectively, prohibiting the researcher from manipulating the independent variables, and so is also described as ex post facto (see Section 3.2). The flexible phase of the research is underpinned by naturalistic or interpretative approaches because it seeks to elicit from a sub-sample of the LAC knowledge that is qualitative and subjective; relating to their experience of the care and educational system. This research also recognises the influence of the researcher on the information offered by the LAC, how this is analysed and reported.

3.2 Design

As stated in Section 3.1, the current research utilised a mixed methods design, comprising a fixed and a flexible phase; however it does share many of the characteristics of a case study, which is identified as flexible. Flexible designs are traditionally associated with qualitative data; however Miles and Huberman (2002) argue that the quantitative/qualitative distinction is not clear cut,

‘In principle (and not uncommonly in practice), so-called qualitative designs can incorporate quantitative methods of data collection.’ (p.164)

which is demonstrated in the approach chosen for this study. This study does not claim to be free from existing pre-conceptions relating to the research questions, as a grounded theory tradition would, because the literature base on risk and protective factors for LAC was used to inform aspects of the study, such as the interview design.

This research uses a case study approach, where the ‘case’ is the sample of LAC in the 2006-07 Year 11 LA cohort who were not entered for GCSE examinations or alternative qualifications. Cohen et al (2000) assert that case studies allow the study of ‘real people in real situations’ (p.181), can ‘establish cause and effect’ relationships in real contexts and can contribute to action and intervention. Typically case studies use multiple methods of data collection which may include quantitative data (Miles & Huberman, 2002). Using different methods to answer research questions has advantages, as outlined in Figure 2, and within this research it could be argued that the contrasting methods are used to address different, but complementary research questions (Miles and Huberman, 2002). For example quantitative analysis methods were used to identify retrospectively risk and protective factors for LAC from their records by carrying out statistical analysis to see if there is a significant association between such factors and whether the LAC are entered for GCSE or alternative qualifications.

Carrying out interviews in parallel to the analysis of existing data provided an opportunity for the young peoples’ voice to be heard, and their perception of trends suggested by quantitative data to be explored. This concern to ascertain the subjective perceptions and experiences of young people is particularly important in work with a vulnerable group such as looked after children.

This study can also be described as being ex post facto; a phrase which when translated means ‘from what is done afterwards’ or ‘retrospectively’ and allows the exploration of cause and effect relationships between current conditions and possible causal factors which have already occurred (Cohen et al, 2000). The current research is ex post facto because of the historical data and records from the young people’s care and school experiences on which the quantitative analysis was carried out. Independent variables were abstracted and explored in retrospect for their possible relationship with, or effects on the dependent variable or current condition, allowing the exploration of possible antecedents/factors contributing to this sample not being entered for GCSE or alternative qualifications.

Figure 2: The Advantages of Using Mixed Method Approaches in Research

- It allows the triangulation of data to confirm and corroborate results
- It can add further information and detail to the analysis
- It can reveal new questions and alternative hypotheses
(Bryman, 1992)
- Quantitative data can highlight the generality of specific qualitative findings
(Sieber, 1973).
- The approach reduces ‘inappropriate certainty’, as differing methods may produce differing answers to research questions
- Data produced by different methods can be used to facilitate the interpretation of relationships between different variables.
- Mixed method approaches enable both researcher and participants’ perspectives to be considered. (Miles & Huberman, 2002)

Both an advantage and disadvantage of this approach is that the researcher has no influence on the independent variables, which means that results cannot be manipulated; however it also means that the researcher can not be truly confident in her findings, as there is always the possibility that other variables may be involved. Ex post facto approaches are often used in educational research because the more ‘powerful’ experimental methods are often neither possible nor ethical. Of the two possible designs identified in ex post facto research- the co-relational study and the criterion group study, this research can be described as co-relational study, also known as ‘causal research’, which is concerned with ‘identifying the antecedents of a present condition’ (Cohen et al, 2000).

3.3 Sampling

There are three different samples referred to within this research:

- Sample I- all LAC within the LA except for those who are refugees or asylum seekers, in the 2006-07, Year 11 cohort (n=177).
- Sample II- LAC within this cohort who were not entered for their GCSEs or alternative qualifications identified following the filtering process (n=26; 19 females, 7 males).
- Sample III- individuals who were interviewed to gain their perspective on the risk and protective factors influencing their lack of GCSE qualifications (n=4; all female).

Sample I was identified by LACES and included all young people in the 2006-07 cohort who were registered as looked after at the time. This excludes adopted children and young people who were in care prior to the 12 month period starting on 30th September 2006. All

LAC who were asylum seekers/refugees were removed from the original sample because of the possibility that they would skew the results, as many were not in the country long enough to be entered for GCSEs examinations.

A non-probability or purposive sampling strategy was utilised to select Sample II, because a particular group of LAC, not entered for their GCSEs or alternative qualifications, was targeted with full knowledge that findings could not be generalised beyond the sample itself (Cohen et al, 2000). From the original data file a filtering process was used to eliminate those who should not be in the sample, taking the sample from n= 63 to n=26 (see Figure 3). The majority of filtering decisions were made on the basis of seeking to eliminate possible mitigating factors influencing the decision not to enter the young people for GCSEs or alternative qualifications.

Upon the advice of LACES, pupils attending therapeutic schools or special schools for children with severe learning difficulties were removed as their access to the national curriculum and their opportunities to be entered for qualifications were judged likely to have been affected primarily by the natures of the educational needs for which they had been statemented. Although the removal of these pupils can be criticised as being non-inclusive and biasing the sample, it was necessary for a criterion to be used in order to exercise control over the wide range of factors which could influence whether pupils were entered for GCSE examinations or alternative qualifications, especially in light of the limited data/records available for each child and the fact that only their primary educational need was recorded. With this group of vulnerable young people there would

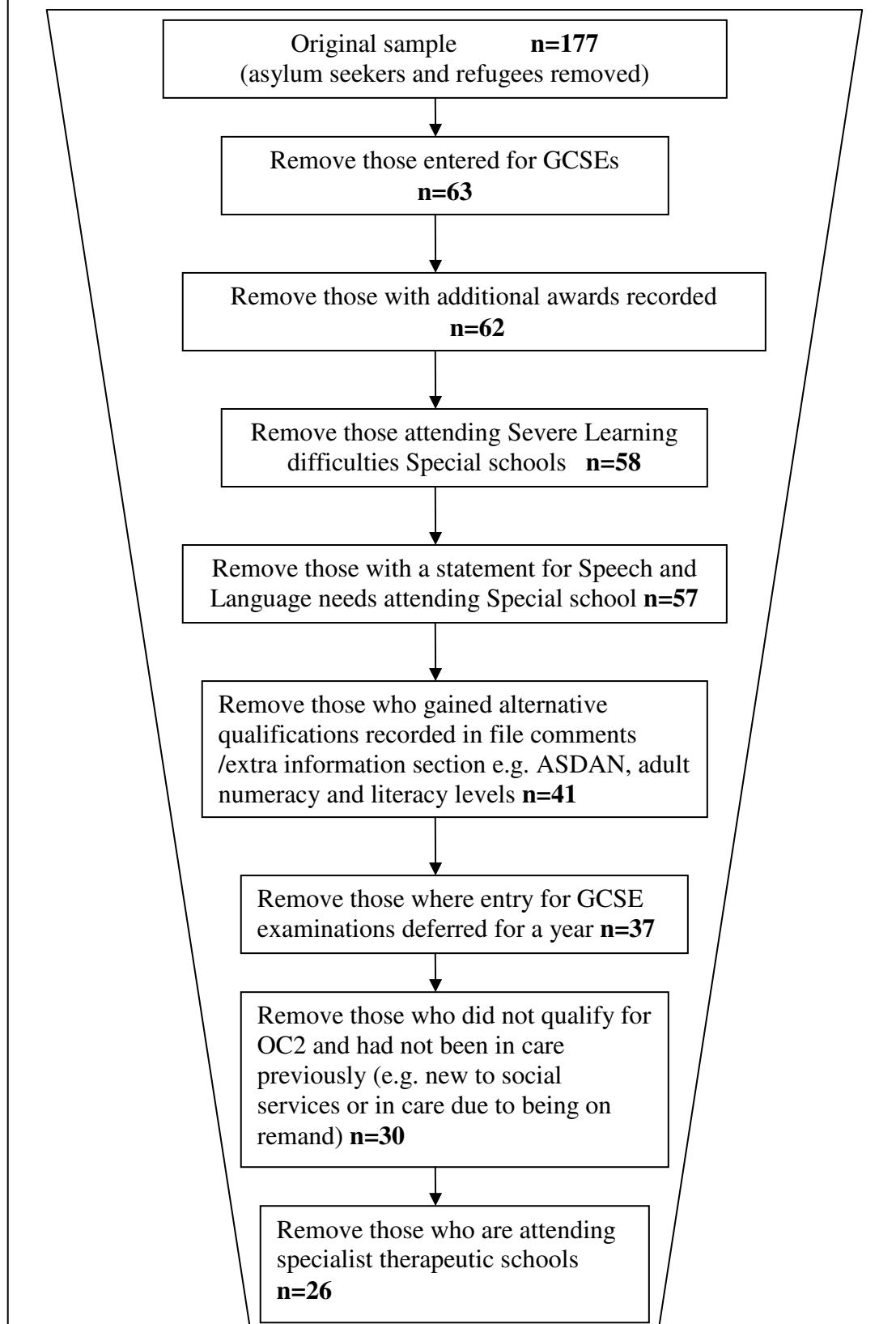
are also have been particular ethical challenges relating to working with and gaining informed consent in order for them to participate in the research (DOH, 2005).

Young people with statements attending schools for children with ‘moderate learning difficulties’ were included, as were those with statements where the main need was ‘behavioural difficulties’. Some young people who did not meet the OC2 criteria, who had not been in care continuously for 12 months to 30th September 2007, were included, because they had spent several years in care previously, but had been moved to ‘independent living’ prior to the end of Year 11, which excluded them, albeit on an arbitrary basis, from the OC2 data.

Following the sampling process additional data were provided for LAC not entered for GCSES or alternative qualifications (Sample II) by the LACES project manager (see Appendix 2) to be used in conjunction with interviews to gain the young people’s perspectives of the risk and protective factors which were influential in their not being entered for their GCSEs or equivalents.

The sampling method used to select the young people to be interviewed (Sample III) was limited by the ‘hard to reach’ and vulnerable nature of the population and because many of the young people no longer attended educational provisions or the social services offices, for example to collect ‘living’ allowance, on a regular basis. Access to the young people’s contact details was through their social worker, who would then contact the young person to gain their permission to pass on their telephone number so an interview could be arranged. This resulted in two barriers to carrying out the interviews: firstly making contact

Figure 3: Filtering/ Decision making Process used to Identify Sample II



with the social workers and secondly making contact with the young people themselves. Therefore, and also because there were only 26 young people who could be contacted, convenience, also known as accidental or opportunity sampling was used (Cohen et al, 2000).

Robson (2002) describes convenience sampling as

‘choosing the nearest and most convenient persons to act as respondents’ (p.265).

However, in the current research attempting to contact and interview the young people was far from convenient or easy. Initially letters were sent to the named social workers for all 26 young people (see Appendix 5), with a letter to be passed on to the LAC (see Appendix 6) in early November 2008, followed by phone calls where messages were left or brief conversations took place and the research was explained. The main barriers to contacting the social workers and the LAC are set out in Table 5.

A record of successful and attempted contacts with social workers was kept which demonstrates that with a number of them, despite frequent endeavours, no contact was achieved. Although all social workers were contacted by letter once and e-mail twice, those from whom responses or interest was originally shown were followed up further than those from whom there was no response. Where no contact was made with the social workers it is unclear if this arose because they chose not to be involved in the research or because the young person had made this choice.

In early February 2009, when attempts to contact social workers had occurred on a weekly basis for more than three months, the contact details of six of the young people from

Sample II had been received. At this point I decided that no further attempts to contact others would be made due to time limitations inherent in my own role as a Trainee Educational Psychologist, working to externally imposed deadlines.

Table 5: Barriers to Contacting Social Workers and Looked After Young People

	Barriers to making contact
With social workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rarely in the office to receive phone calls • Social workers themselves found it hard to contact young people • Young people did not want to engage with the after care service • Social workers were only required to have limited contact with the young people • Many demands on social worker's time • Social worker off sick so contact could not be made (n=1) • No named social worker so letter sent to the area team (n=3) • General pressures on social workers within the West Midlands Local Authority where social services is under staffed (133 vacancies out of 386 posts, Guardian on line, 2009)
With young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response not received from social worker (n= 13) • Mobile phones turned off/ not answered and no reply to text messages (n=2 of 6 where permission was gained by social workers) • No longer living in England (n=1) • Young person did not give consent to be contacted (n= 6)

The six young people who had shown interest in the study proved as hard to contact as their social workers, even though telephone and text messages were again used. Of the six LAC, contact was made with four, one face-to-face interview was arranged, two telephone

interviews were arranged for later dates and one telephone interview took place on first contact.

3.4 Data Collection

3.4.1 Interview Method

The current research used a semi-structured interview style. This was chosen because it was judged appropriate in meeting the aims of the exploratory and illuminative type of research being carried out (Robson, 2002). The purpose of the interviews was to gain ‘insight’ in to the LAC’s experiences of care and education, and to find out what they identified as risk and protective factors affecting them. Some closed questions were used to elicit ‘fact’ from the young people; however information relating to their care and school experiences, described in Appendix 2 was available to me, as the interviewer, prior to meeting them. Holstein and Gubrium (1995) emphasise the importance of having some background knowledge relating to the cultural context within which the interview is taking place; allowing the interviewer to support the respondent in fully exploring their circumstances, actions or feelings.

The interview consisted of 10 questions, two closed and eight open, with a final opportunity for the interviewee to add further information or a comment at the end of the process (see Appendix 7). Probes were used to encourage the interviewee to expand on their response, particularly if a predetermined answer was given to the closed questions. Prompts, described by Gillham (2000) as ‘common components that every interviewee needs to address’ (pg. 45) were identified for a number of questions and used in all interviews where the respondents had not already addressed the area/theme.

The questions used in the interview were trialled with two Educational Psychologist colleagues preceding the pilot interview. Feedback was given in relation to the clarity and phrasing of questions, and the prompts which may be required in order to elicit a ‘rich’ response.

The interviews were carried out either by telephone or face-to-face, depending on the preference of the young person and the practical challenges of meeting up with them (see Appendix 8 for contact records). Face-to-face was the preferred method because the study met the majority of the criteria set out by Gillham (2000) against which to judge if face-to-face interviews are appropriate (see Figure 4). Some of the topics discussed during the interview were sensitive in their nature; as a consequence of this the opportunity to meet the interviewee and build rapport with them may have influenced their willingness to talk openly. Because of the limited sample size it was important to ensure that the interviews were arranged at the convenience of the respondents in order to reduce the risks of cancellation or non-attendance. When given the choice between arranging a meeting or carrying out the interview over the phone, three of the sample chose telephone interviews, the advantages and disadvantages of which are discussed in Section 5.3.

On completion of the interview the name and address of each respondent was taken so a voucher could be sent to them, in recognition of the time they gave up in order to participate in the study and a copy of the research. Data was recorded by hand, including verbatim quotes, during telephone interviews, and a tape recording was taken during the face-to-face interviews (pilot and Interview B).

Figure 4: When are Face-to-Face Interviews Appropriate, Necessary or Possible?

- Small numbers of people involved.
- People are accessible.
- Most of the questions are open and prompts or probes may be needed to explore responses.
- Every respondent is ‘key’ and you can’t afford to lose anyone/ have no response from them.
- Trust between interviewer and respondent is necessary because material may be sensitive.
- Anonymity is not necessary, although confidentiality may be.
- Depth of meaning is essential.
- Research aims require insight and understanding.

(adapted from Gillham, 2000)

3.4.2 Pilot Interview

A pilot interview was carried out with a 15 year old male student who was attending a specialist Pupil Referral Unit for looked after young people who had been excluded from or were not attending a mainstream secondary school. The pupil was selected by staff there as someone who was willing speak to an adult about his educational experience, and why he had not been entered for GCSE examinations. The pupil gave oral consent to the interview, chose to answer all the questions, which took approximately 20 minutes, and provided feedback on the process once it was completed (See Appendix 9). Although in my view the length and amount of information produced was manageable, the young person reported that he found some of the questions ‘difficult’ and ‘hard’ to answer. This may relate to the contrived nature of the interview where he was required to speak to a

stranger about his care and educational experiences. However the pilot interviewee's comments may also reflect the number of prompts used for each question and the challenge of responding to each of these individually, or holding them in his mind in order to provide a response to them.

On reflection, I formed the view that the interview situation was too formal, and decided to sit next to the interviewee in future interviews in order to create a more relaxed atmosphere. In two of the three interviews carried out by phone I was able to speak to the young people beforehand to develop some rapport with them, with the intention of making the interview more relaxed. Following the feedback of the interviewee, prior to starting the interviews I explained that I would be using prompts to help them consider a number of different influences when discussing risk and protective factors, and they could request for these to be repeated at any time.

3.5 Data Analysis

3.5.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

The data files provided by LACES were transported into SPSS files in order for data analysis to take place. Frequencies and percentages were calculated for all the categories in each Sample and are presented in Table 6 (see Section 4).

Initially statistical analysis of the relationships between not being entered for GCSEs or alternative qualifications, and other risk factors identified within the literature was carried out using Pearson's Chi Square test (see Appendix 10). This test is used with categorical data and measures the degree of association, or relationship, between two variables. It does

this by determining if there is a significant difference between the frequencies in each cell of the contingency table (in which the data are displayed) and frequencies which would be expected if there were no association between the variables (known as expected counts). Conventionally if the Chi Square value is significant at $p<0.05$, it can be concluded that there is a relationship between the variables (Robson, 2002). Testing of the five relationships, set out in Figure 5, was carried out using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

Figure 5: Relationships Between Variables Explored Using Chi Square Test/ Fishers Exact Test

- Entered for GCSEs or alternative qualifications and gender
- Entered for GCSEs or alternative qualifications and stage at SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001)
- Entered for GCSEs or alternative qualifications and school type attended during GCSE years
- Entered for GCSEs or alternative qualifications and residential status
- Entered for GCSEs or alternative qualifications and ethnicity

However, in some categories, such as ‘school type’ and ‘ethnicity’, the sub-categories contained such small numbers, for example two pupils not entered for GCSEs were in special school placements, that movement of one pupil would significantly alter the relationships between categories, thus undermining the validity of the test. As a result of this the ‘school type’ sub-categories were collapsed into ‘mainstream’ and ‘alternative provisions’ and a Chi Square test was carried to determine if there was a significant

relationship between being entered for GCSEs and the category of educational provision attended by the LAC. Although there are differences between the alternative provisions which were grouped together, such as young offenders institutes and special schools, they all have in common the fact that those attending them are not educated within ‘normal’ schools, or do not have the same educational experiences as the majority of children of their age. Collapsing of sub-categories within ‘ethnicity’ was not possible, because they could not be combined in a meaningful way in order to achieve valid findings.

The Chi Square test for ‘care placement’ was invalid because of the high number of records where placement was unknown, particularly amongst those entered for GCSEs.

Finally an independent-samples t-test was carried out to compare the mean time in care (from the last date they entered the care system) for LAC entered for GCSEs or alternative qualifications, and those not entered (See Appendix 10). Results from statistical tests are reported in Section 4.

3.5.2 Qualitative Data Analysis: Coding of Interviews

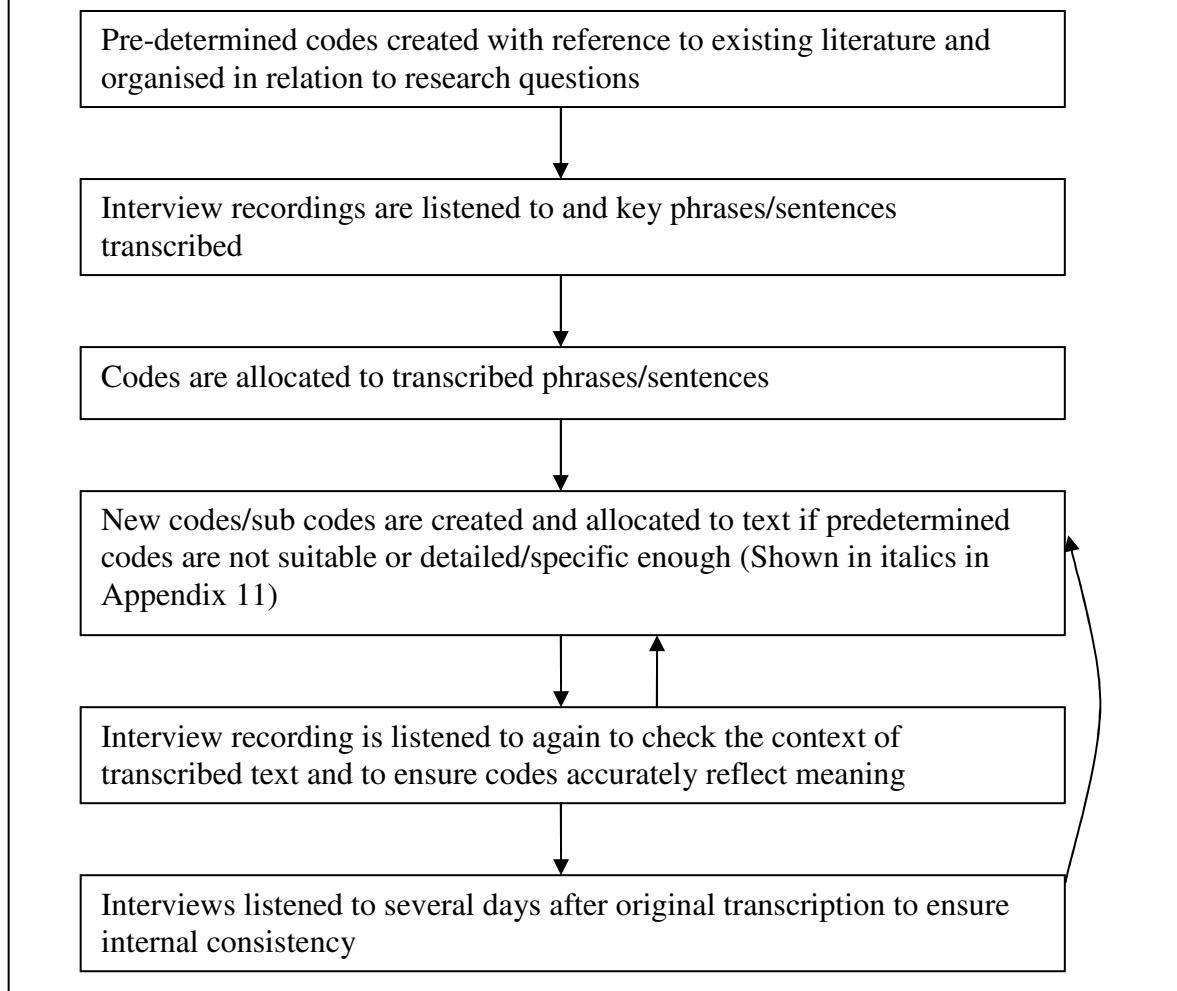
A template approach to data analysis was used (Robson, 2002), with key codes determined prior to the analysis, based on risk and protective factors identified in existing research considered in the literature review (see Kelley, 2009) and the research questions (see Section 2.2). These codes were used as a template for data analysis, with ‘second level’ coding, where initial codes were divided into more discrete themes or units of meaning (Miles & Huberman, 1994), occurring throughout the coding process, and new codes being created where new information was generated (see Figure 6). Codes were initially split into two main categories; risk (R) and protective (P) factors, each of which was then further

divided into ‘within school’ (WS) and ‘within care’ (WC) factor codes, with further categories under each of these sections (See Appendix 11).

In order to ensure time efficiency the tape recorded interviews (pilot and Interview B) were not transcribed in full; instead the tapes were listened to and substantive comments recorded against the question to which each was a response. One disadvantage of this technique is that the ‘redundant’ material often provides a context or adds to the meaning of substantive statements. To avoid this, the tape recordings were listened to several times to ensure the transcribed responses contained all the information needed to understand them in context. Similarly written transcripts from the phone interviews (A, C and D) were reviewed and rewritten if necessary to ensure only relevant information was included (see Appendix 12 for interview transcripts).

A colleague coded one of the interviews and the codes used were compared with those selected by myself when coding the same interview in order to give a measure of intercoder reliability (see Appendix 13). An initial inter-coder reliability score of 73.3% was achieved, which Miles and Huberman (2002) suggest is difficult to achieve on an initial coding, where usually intercoder reliability does not exceed 70%. Where there were disagreements between the codes used or not used, these appeared to occur for two reasons: firstly where an opportunity to allocate a code was missed and secondly where two possible codes could have been allocated. This exercise highlighted the importance of cross checking code definitions and the need to check interview transcriptions carefully to ensure all possible codes had been allocated.

Figure 6: Coding Process Used to Carry Out Qualitative Analysis of Interviews



The definitions of codes were developed in a similar way to the codes themselves (see Appendix 14), with the initial definitions developed prior to coding being adjusted and added to in response to the pilot interview, peer review, and as the actual interviews were carried out. In particular the pilot interview (See Section 3.4.2) highlighted that some of the codes and related definitions may not be mutually exclusive and therefore needed to be coded at a more detailed level with definitions that reflected this. For example, the coding for the within care risk factor of placement instability (WCR-PI) had to be split into two codes; placement instability leading to changes in school and placement instability leading

only to a change in placement. The literature indicate that both changes in school and care placement are ‘risks’ for LAC, however they can occur independently, or as a result of one another (in which case both codes would be allocated).

Data from the coding of the interviews were displayed in two conceptually clustered matrices, one showing coded responses for each participant (see Appendix 15) and the other showing the combined responses of all the participants (see Appendix 16). Both were organised conceptually under ‘within care/school risk/protective factors’. The possible interactions between risk factors and protective factors identified by the interviewees are presented in separate matrixes (see Appendix 17).

3.6 Challenges to Validity and Reliability

3.6.1 Limitations of the Data: How Representative is it?

The data available were incomplete for some of the records; for example the residential status of many of the LAC was not recorded, therefore a statistical analysis could not be carried out to determine if this was a significant factor. In addition to this the LACES project manager reported that sometimes the service relied on schools to update information held about LAC, which was often subject to error. Interestingly the number of schools attended reported by some of the interviewees differed from that recorded in the LACES data. For example, Interviewee D reports going to two mainstream secondary schools, and two specialist placements attached to her care placement, whilst LACES record her attending two schools. It could be that educational provision through care placement is not recorded as a school move amongst the data; however such a move still

has equivalent implications for curriculum discontinuity, settling into a new environment and forming new friendships with peers and relationships with teachers.

Data was not readily available concerning the number of exclusions, school moves and care placements experienced by the LAC. This information had to be extracted from individual children's care files or through contacting their school and, as a result of the time this took, could only be obtained for Sample II.

The sampling methods used have implications for the validity and reliability of the study's findings (see Section 3.3). The criteria for inclusion in Sample II were pre-determined, and so a non-probability/purposive strategy was used, limiting the generalisation of findings to the sample studied. However convenience sampling was used to select Sample III, a decision made because of the difficulties, recorded in numerous studies, in accessing LAC, especially those no longer attending schools, many of whom had left the care system. Even with the use of convenience sampling only four of the six female participants who agreed to be contacted were interviewed. Clearly this is not a representative sub-sample of Sample II, because male LAC are not represented, nor are those who were placed in the full range of residential and school placements.

3.6.2 Interview Data

The 'truth' of an interview can be assessed in terms of its reliability, the extent to which the questions yield the same answers across times and locations, and validity, the extent to which the questions elicit the 'true' or 'correct' answers (Kirk & Miller, 1986). Holstein and Gubrium (1995) argue that if the interview is a dynamic, active process then these

criteria for validity and reliability do not apply; what is important is how meaning is construed, rather than the content of the answers. In the current study the ‘truth’ of interview data relating to ‘facts’ in the interviewee’s lives can be verified to an extent through the LACES records; however the purpose of the interviews was to elicit the young people’s views, and so for some of the questions there were no ‘correct’ objective answers. It is important to consider possible ‘interviewer effects’, where there is a perceived imbalance of power between the interviewer and interviewee, affecting the responses given (Kvale, 1996). Within the current study this effect was limited (but not eradicated) by the neutral identity of the interviewer and the promise of confidentiality, both of which were explained in the introductory script (see Appendix 3).

The reliability and validity of the coding process also needs to be considered; as Gillham (2000) emphasises, categories are a product of the human brain and are therefore subjective. Codes can not be definitive, or the headings, by themselves, convey the meaning of the statements classified beneath them. Peer review, for example getting someone ‘equally as competent to yourself’ (Gillham, 2000) to check the coding or categories a researcher has placed statements into, was the method used in this study to check coding reliability (See Section 3.6.2). Robson (2002) outlines ‘deficiencies of the human as an analyst’ (p. 460) a number of which are relevant to the analysis of the interview data in this study. For example ‘data overload’: being limited in the amount of data that can be remembered and processed at one time, is relevant because of the number of codes which were used. However listening to the interviews and checking the coding again, several days after the initial coding, was a step taken to limit the ‘human’ errors made during initial coding.

4. Results

Two variables which do not fit under the headings of either education or care are gender and ethnicity (judged using the DFES definitions (see Appendix 18). A Chi square test was not carried out on ‘ethnicity’ of LAC in the 2006-07 Year 11 cohort and whether they were entered for their GCSEs or equivalent qualifications, because of the very low numbers in some of the sub-categories. However a Chi Square test was carried out on ‘gender’ and entry for GCSEs or alternative qualifications, and the results were just over what is considered to demonstrate a significant relationship between these factors ($X^2 = 3.35$; df = 1; p = .067). This reflects the high number of girls not entered for GCSEs, 73% (n=19) compared with boys, 27% (n=7), which may be due to the fact that nearly half of the females were either young mothers or expecting babies during Year 11 (n=9).

4.1. What Risk Factors Can be Identified in the Educational Experience of LAC Which May Contribute to Their Not Being Entered for GCSE or Alternative Qualifications?

A Chi square test showed no significant association between the special educational needs (as judged by stage of the code of practice) of LAC in the 2006-07, Year 11 cohort and whether they were entered for their GCSEs or equivalent qualifications. The descriptive statistics show that there is a higher percentage of pupils in Sample II with no recognised special educational needs (46.2%, n=12) compared with pupils entered for their GCSES (39.5%, n=45) (see Table 6); however it is difficult to make comparisons in relation to this variable because of the selection process which was carried out in order to identify Sample II (see Figure 3), one aspect of which involved removing children with statements

attending therapeutic or designated special schools accommodating severe learning difficulties (see Section 3.3).

A significant association was found between the ‘collapsed’ categories of school the LAC in the 2006-07, Year 11 cohort attended (mainstream vs. alternative provisions) and whether they were entered for their GCSEs or equivalent qualifications ($\chi^2 = 18.96$; $df = 1$; $p = <.001$) (see Appendix 10). Although this test does not identify the direction of the relationship, Figure 7 highlights that 69.3% of those entered for examinations attended a mainstream school, compared with 23.1% of Sample II, demonstrating that attending a mainstream school is significantly associated with being entered for GCSEs or alternative qualifications.

Number of schools attended and number of days of fixed term exclusions for Sample II, could not be compared with LAC entered for their GCSEs because these data are not collected by LACES. The mean number of days of known/recoded fixed term exclusions for Sample II was 7.6 ($SD = 15.4$), whilst the mean number of known/recoded schools attended was 2 ($SD = 1.07$), with a maximum number of 4.

4.2 What Risk Factors Can be Identified in the Care Experience of LAC Which May Contribute to Their not Being Entered for GCSE or Alternative Qualifications?

As stated in Section 3.2.1, a Chi Square test could not be carried out to determine if there was a relationship between residential status of the LAC in the 2006-07 Year 11 cohort and whether they were entered for GCSEs or equivalent qualifications because of missing data. Descriptive data show that 53.8% of those in Sample II were placed in residential units, whilst only 4.4% of the recorded placements for those entered for examinations were in

residential units. If all residential placements were recorded, the number of those entered for GCSEs who lived in residential units would be likely to rise, however it can not be predicted whether it would be a similar percentage to that seen in Sample II.

Figure 7: School types attended by LAC entered for their GCSEs and alternative qualifications, and LAC not entered (Sample II)

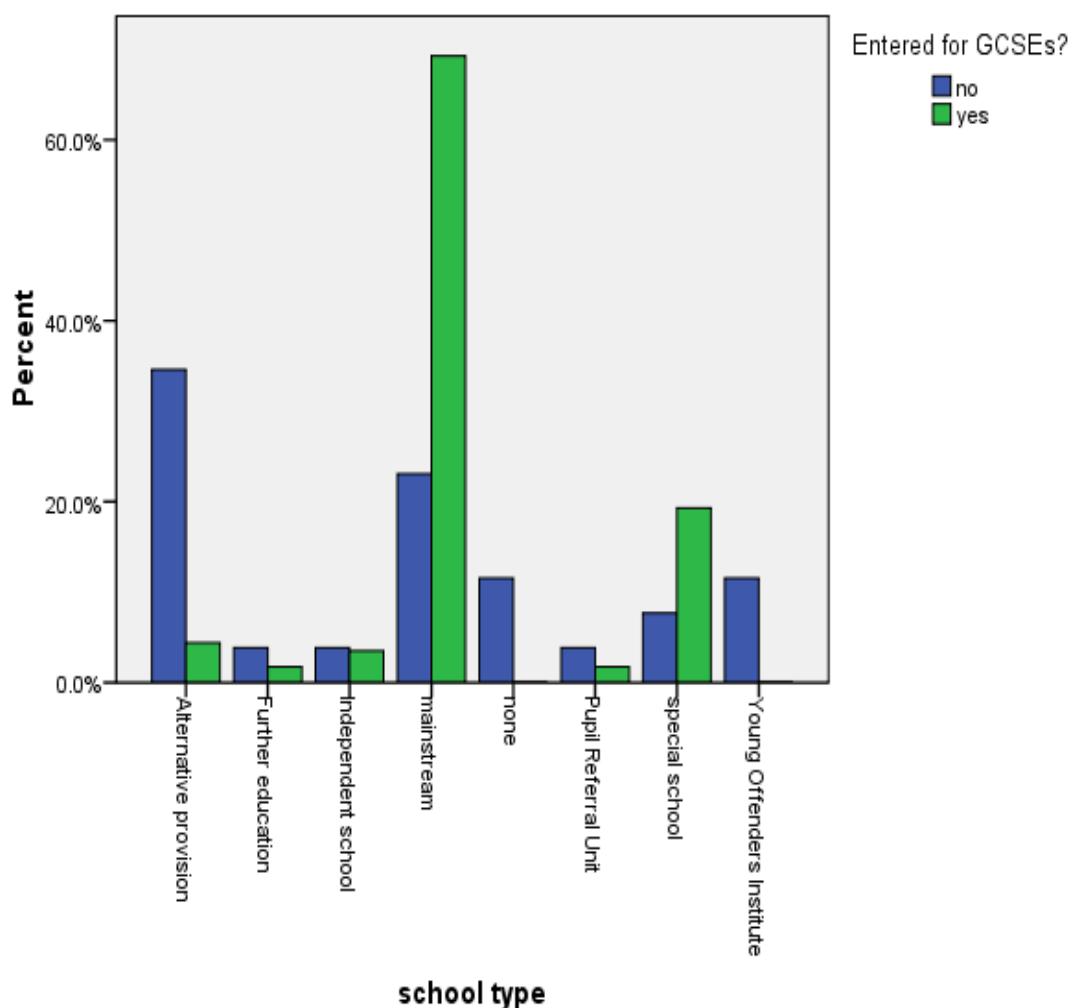


Table 6: Characteristics of the Different Groups (samples) of 2006-07, Year 11 Cohort of LAC Included in the Research

		All LAC-excluding refugees (Sample I)	LAC not entered for GCSEs or alternative qualifications (Sample II)	LAC entered for GCSEs or alternative qualifications	Interviewed LAC taken from Sample II (Sample III)
Gender	Male	48.6% (n=86)	26.9% (n=7)	49.1% (n=56)	_____
	Female	51.4% (n=91)	73.1% (n=19)	50.9% (n=58)	100% (n=4)
3 largest ethnic groups represented in each Sample (see Appendix 18)		White British -53.7% (n=95)	White British-50% (n=13)	White British-57% (n=65)	White British-50% (n=2)
		Black Caribbean -10.7% (n=19)	Black Caribbean -11.5% (n=3)	Black Caribbean -10.5% (n=12)	Bangladeshi-50% (n=2)
		Mixed white and Pakistani-9.0% (n=16)	Mixed white and Pakistani -11.5% (n=3)	Mixed white and Pakistani -6.1% (n=7)	_____
Stages at SEN code of practice	Statement	27.1% (n=48)	23.1% (n=6)	27.2% (n=31)	0%
	School Action+	21.5% (n=38)	19.2% (n=5)	14% (n=16)	25% (n=1)
	Sch Action	15.3% (n=27)	11.5% (n=3)	19.3% (n=22)	25% (n=1)
	none	35.6% (n=63)	46.2% (n=12)	39.5% (n=45)	50% (n=2)
3 main school types		Mainstream -51.4% (n=91)	Alternative prov-34.6% (n=9)	Mainstream-69.3% (n=79)	Mainstream-50% (n=2)
		Special school-18.1% (n=32)	Mainstream 23.1% (n=6)	Special school-19.3% (n=22)	None-50% (n=2)
		Alternative prov-11.9% (n=21)	YOI*-11.5%, (n=3) None-11.5% (n=3)	Alternative prov-4.4% (n=5)	_____
% meeting OC2 criteria		81% (n=143)	73.1% (n=19)	86% (n=98)	100% (n=4)
3 main residential statuses		Not recorded-55.9% (n=99)	Residential unit-53.8%(n=14)	Not recorded-86.8% (n=99)	Residential unit-50% (n=2)
		Residential unit- 22% (n=39)	Foster care-23.1% (n=6)	Foster care 7.9% (n=9)	Placed with parents 25%(n=1)
		Foster care-11.3% (n=20)	Placed with parents -7.7% (n=2), Secure unit-7.7%(n=2)	Residential unit-4.4% (n=5)	Foster care-25% (n=1)

* Young Offenders Institute

Other possible risk factors within the care experience of LAC include the number of placements they have had; however because of the limited data recorded centrally about LAC, this information could only be collected for Sample II by the project manager at LACES conducting a manual search through the separate educational and social services files kept on these young people. Statistical comparisons being Sample II and other LAC could not therefore be carried out. The number of placements for Sample II was recorded in two ways: the number of known placements (mean = 6.9, SD = 3.6) and the number of placements since 31st July 2004 (mean = 5, SD = 2.5).

A measure of length of time in care was calculated for those entered for GCSEs and Sample II from the date of their last admission into care until 31st July 2007, the date when Year 11 would finish. This calculation, although failing to take into account multiple entries into the care system throughout childhood, showed that those entered for their GCSEs or alternative qualifications had been in care longer (mean= 5.51 years, SD=3.84) compared with those in Sample II (mean= 3.88 years, SD= 3.33). A t-test showed this difference to be significant beyond the .05 level: t (df = 138) = -1.99; p = .049. The possible implications of this finding are discussed in Section 5.

4.3 What Risk Factors in Their Educational Experience do LAC Identify as Contributing to Their not Being Entered for GCSE or Alternative Qualifications?

The most frequently identified educational risk factors, by three of the four interviewees, were:

- leaving school before the examinations could be taken,
- negative influence of peers,

- absence from school due to truanting; and
- negative adult expectations or attitude (see Appendix 12).

Two additional risk factors, not identified as frequently, but which two of the young people felt were significant in preventing them accessing GCSE examinations related to the timing of placement/school moves and the limited opportunities offered by alternative educational provisions (see Section 4.7).

Figure 8: Quotes/ Excerpts from Interviewees Relating to the Most Frequently Identified Educational Risk Factors

Leaving school before examinations: ‘Left school in XXXX aged 14- 2 weeks into Year 10, stopped going on a daily basis in Year 9.’ (Interview B)

Truanting: “*a couple of lessons turned into a couple of days- then it was every day*” (Interview B)

‘Stopped going in the end.’ (Interview C)

‘Used to truant and couldn’t learn.’ (Interview D)

Negative peer influence: ‘Got in with the wrong crowd because grew up too quickly- smoke and drunk on the streets.’ (Interview A)

‘*always stayed out because didn’t want to stay in care, so I’d stay out with my mates.*’ ‘fighting’ (Interview B)

‘kicked out of school because being bullied and started to retaliating, but others didn’t get caught, so I got in trouble for being a bully.’ (Interview A)

‘*I didn’t get on with anyone at school, I used to get bullied but the teachers used to blame me*’ (Interview C)

‘*School was really poor, no rules and they didn’t teach us anything.*’ (Interview D)

Adult negative expectations: “*you’ll get excluded, you’ll end up in a dead-end job*” (Interview B)

Timing of school moves: moved to a new area just outside Liverpool so had to leave school because of this. Couple of months before sorted out with a new school in new areas- went just before the end of Year 10’ ‘if social services hadn’t have moved me I’d probably have done my GCSEs.’ (Interview B)

Limited opportunities at alternative educational provisions: ‘Because I wasn’t in school and the place I went to didn’t do GCSEs.’ (Interview C)

‘In care home during GCSE years, and taught in the school attached to the home- they said they were not qualified enough to do GCSEs there.’ (Interview D)

‘We weren’t allowed to do work experience’ ‘*I really wanted to do work experience, now I have no experience of working.*’ (Interview D)

Italics= verbatim quote. non-italics= taken from written notes

4.4 What Risk Factors in Their Care Experience do LAC Identify as Contributing to Their not Being Entered for GCSE or Alternative Qualifications?

The within care risk factors identified by three of the four young people in Sample III were:

- relationships with their carer; and
- social worker degree of interest or involvement in education.

Other factors included placement instability (2/4), which was either due to placement breakdown or school changes, and degree of carer involvement or interest in their education (2/4).

Figure 9: Quotes/ Excerpts From Interviewees Relating to the Most Frequently Identified Within Care Risk Factors

Relationship with carer: ‘One of the residential units we were treated like babies, baby monitors were placed on the landing “*we couldn’t be ourselves*”.’
(Interview D)

‘if they told me to go to school I wouldn’t go to school because they said it- not because I didn’t want to.’ (Interview B)

Social worker interest/ involvement in education: ‘*She only got involved when I was naughty; when things were going ok there were no phone calls or visits.*’
(Interview D)

‘*education was not a priority*’(Interview B)

Placement instability: ‘Changes in placement: 6 in 9 years- but not affected education as stayed in the same school.’ (Interview A)

‘don’t think they should have moved me out so early (of the area) at least wait for me to finish school.’ (Interview B)

Carer interest/ involvement in education: “*they wouldn’t bother with us about our homework, or how’s school- or nothing like that.*” (Interview B)

Italics= verbatim quote, non-italics= taken from written notes

4.5 What Protective Factors in Their Educational Experience do LAC Identify as Helping Them at School?

Having few school moves, particularly within secondary education, was a protective factor identified in three of the four LAC’s interviews, although none of them identified this

specifically as something that helped them at school. However positive adult expectations and peer influence were also recognised as being helpful at school.

Figure 10: Quotes/ Excerpts From Interviewees Relating to the Most Frequently Identified Educational Protective Factors

Few school moves: ‘Just one school during secondary education.’ (Interview C)

Positive adult expectations: ‘Head teacher didn’t want me to be there, but deputy stood up for me.’ “*She thought I could do it, and I knew if I stayed there and got into the work I could do it.*”(Interview B)

Positive peer influence: “*but year 10 was important because that was towards my GCSEs, and all my friends wanted to do it- so I thought I might as well do it.*” (Interview B)

Italics= verbatim quote, non-italics= taken from written notes

4.6 What Protective Factors in Their Care Experience do LAC Identify as Helping Them at School?

Interestingly, responses to this interview question were less well developed than any other, with only three factors identified:

- carer interest/involvement in education (2/4),
- contact with family members (1/4); and
- placement stability (1/4).

Figure 11: Quotes/ Excerpts from Interviewees Relating to the Most Frequently Identified Within Care Protective Factors

Carer interest/ involvement in education: ‘First care home in XXXX helped with my education because they made you go to school every day.’ (D)

Contact with family members: ‘Mum had to back off.... she mainly asked how I was and if I wanted to do things- whereas they told me what to do- so big difference.’ (B)

Placement stability: ‘I was living with my parents anyway’ (C)
Italics= verbatim quote, non-italics= taken from written notes

4.7 What do LAC Feel Could Have Helped Them to Achieve GCSE or Alternative Qualifications?

Few of the interviewees gave a specific answer to the interview questions which addressed this research question. It could be assumed that actions taken to limit the effects of, or prevent educational and within care risk factors from occurring, provide part of the answer. Interviewee C stated strongly that nothing different could have been done to help her education, whilst Interviewee B asserted that not moving school and borough in Year 9 may have helped her (see Figure 8). Interviewee D was less clear, although she reported that the educational provision attached to her placement ‘was not specialist enough’ to offer GCSEs (see Figure 8), thus leaving her in a situation where she had to be reintegrated back into mainstream school from an educational unit attached to her care home. Interviewee A alluded to ‘feeling different’ from her peers as a factor underlying a number of her behaviour problems and choices which influenced her being ‘kicked out’ of school.

4.8 Risk and Protective Factors that do not fall Within the In-care and Educational Domains

A number of risk factors which do not fall neatly into either in-care or educational domains were identified by the young people as being influential on them not being entered for GCSEs or alternative qualifications, including underage use of alcohol and drugs, emotional and behavioural difficulties and criminal activity. Two of the four young people interviewed were pregnant; they did not specifically identify this as a factor which limited their access to formal examinations; however Interviewee D did comment that her pregnancy resulted in her attending an alternative provision with limited GCSE options and caring for her baby made returning to college difficult (see Figure 12).

Figure 12: Quotes/ Excerpts from Interviewees Relating to risk factors that do not fall into within care and educational domains

Pregnancy/ being a parent: '*I was waiting to go into mainstream school, but they said the assessments and meeting I was going through were too much with exams as well.*' (Interview D)

'went to college when the baby was 3 months old.... but it was too much when the baby was so young- hoping to restart this September .' (Interview D)

Alcohol/ smoking: 'I got in with the wrong crowd because grew up too quickly-smoke and drunk on the streets.' (Interview A)

'*got caught smoking, didn't like the way I was acting... and they took me off the register.*' (Interview B)

Criminal activity: 'before always in trouble with the police and getting caught- now nothing recent on my criminal record.' (Interview B)

Emotional/ behavioural difficulties: 'went off the rails a bit' (Interview A)

'*I went through a stage where I didn't want to do nothing and I just wanted to rebel against everything my social worker was doing.*' (Interview B)

'my relationship with everyone- I didn't get on with no one- so no one could help me.' (Interview B)

'*I did a runner for 2 weeks, then 3 months because they wouldn't listen to me.*' (Interview D)

Italics= verbatim quote, non-italics= taken from written notes

5. Discussion

5.1 Key Findings

The key finding from the statistical analysis of the quantitative data was the significant relationship between LAC being entered for their GCSE examinations or alternative qualifications and whether their educational placement was within mainstream or alternative provisions.

The relationship between educational placement and being entered for formal examinations at the end of Year 11 differs significantly from what would be expected if educational placement had no influence on whether LAC had the opportunity to take their examinations; with the descriptive data and statistical analysis suggesting that LAC in mainstream school are more likely to be entered GCSEs or alternative qualifications. There could be a number of reasons for this: LAC sent to alternative provisions, PRUs and YOIs may have emotional and behavioural difficulties which impact on their learning, resulting in poor attendance, substance abuse or other anti-social behaviours, and therefore, both directly and indirectly, reduce their chances of being entered for examinations. Conversely, alternative educational placements may have lower expectations of LAC, only be able to offer reduced hours or limited course choices, or as seen by Interviewee D, may not have the staff resource to prepare students for external examinations. The latter interpretation is supported by findings from the research report ‘Vulnerable children’s access to examinations at Key Stage 4’ (DfES, 2005) which recommends greater flexibility in relation to the time needed to complete courses and locations where examinations can be taken. The report also suggests simplification of exam entry and administrative processes, and the need for more staff in educational settings to be trained to carry out relevant assessments.

Missing data in relation to residential placement of LAC prevents any justified conclusions being drawn about how this may affect whether a young person is entered for GCSEs or alternative qualifications. It could be presumed that where a child is placed in a residential unit and is receiving education there, such a unit is subject to the same limitations as alternative provisions, discussed above. However, as stated in Section 1.1.2, there is

conflicting evidence on whether type of care placement constitutes a risk or protective factor in the lives of LAC and as such this is an area which requires further research.

Qualitative findings from interviews with Sample III, although limited in their generalisability because of the very small size of the sample, echoed much of the existing research in the risk and protective factors which were identified. Attendance, whether as a result of truancy or school/ placement moves, is frequently identified as a common risk factor in poor educational outcomes for LAC (Morris and Rutt, 2005; DfES, 2006b), and could be linked with negative peer influence, as two of Sample III report absconding with other pupils. Negative peer influence is not covered in the literature reviewed in Section 1 of this research; however it could be argued that many of the risk factors in LAC's lives act to isolate them from pupils who are doing well and achieving at school. For example negative teacher expectations (Martin & Jackson, 2002; Harker et al, 2004), an increased likelihood of being placed in a 'lower ability' group (Who Cares Trust, 2004), frequent school changes and 'feeling different' from peers, may result in LAC feeling disillusioned with school and push them towards friendships with other vulnerable pupils who feel the same way.

Within care risk factors identified by Sample III through interviews are also present in the research literature. Section 1 documents the importance of adult expectations and interest in education making a significant difference in the lives of LAC (Martin & Jackson, 2002), whilst the effects of placement instability, which is arguably linked with the relationship the young person has with their carer, are also recognised as influencing educational outcomes, often through changes in school (Care Matters, DfES, 2006b). Relationships

with carers and social workers underpinned five of the eight ‘in-care’ risk factors identified by interviewees.

The statistical comparison of the mean time spent in care (since most recent admittance) found a significant difference between those entered for GCSEs (mean = 5.6 years) and those not entered (mean = 3.9 years). The literature reviewed in Section 1 does not consider the consequences of length of time in care; however a number of hypotheses could explain the results reported here. LAC who have been in care longer may have had more time to adjust following the trauma of being admitted and they may be in more stable care placements. Alternatively LAC may be more vulnerable to poor educational outcomes depending on their age and developmental stage when taken into care; it could be argued that those who have been in care for a shorter period may have been admitted as teenagers, and had to endure abuse, neglect or destructive family interactions/relationships for longer.

Two of the three main educational protective factors identified by Sample III (few school moves (Barnardo’s, 2006) and high adult expectations (Martin & Jackson, 2002; Harker et al, 2004)) are present in the reviewed literature (see Section 1). However, the influence of peers, both positive and negative is not as widely reported, unless in the context of bullying, which some research recognises as a risk for LAC (SEU, 2003; DfES, 2006b). The main in-care protective factors have also been recognised within existing literature: carer interest and involvement in education (Martin & Jackson, 2002; Mallon, 2005), placement stability (SEU, 2003; DfES, 2006b; Davey & Pithouse, 2008) and contact with family, a factor alluded to in research relating to out of authority placement (DfES, 2006a). The Caspar project (McGinnity, 2007), which involved interviews and focus groups with LAC and

questionnaires carried out with carers in Northern Ireland, recommended that the importance of contact with parents, siblings and relatives should be recognised more fully and formally integrated into care plans.

The key original findings of this research are the young people's perceptions of the importance of when school moves take place and the difficulties experienced when trying to continue with their education when pregnant or a teenage parent. The negative repercussions of multiple school moves are documented in existing literature (DfES, 2006a); however the significance of when moves take place in the educational career of LAC has not been widely reported in the literature. Similarly, the increased risk of LAC becoming young parents is recognised in research (Berrington et al, 2005), as are the reduced opportunities to access examinations when attending alternative provisions (DfES, 2005); however the current research highlights the relationship between these two risks factors and how they may interact to prevent a young person taking GCSEs or alternative qualifications.

5.2 Implications for Education and Social Care Services

This research was carried out with a specific cohort of LAC within a West Midlands LA; this factor, in addition to the non-probability/ purposive sampling strategy used, means that the findings can not be generalised as there was no attempt to ensure the participants were representative of all LAC within the focus LA or within the UK. However is useful to distinguish between internal and external generalisability (Maxwell, 1996). Internal generalisability refers to the application of findings within the setting studied, which in this case is the LA Year 11, 2006-07 cohort of LAC. External generalisability refers to the

relevance of the findings beyond that setting, which could include implications for future cohorts and the practice of other LA services.

The implications of findings from this research for the West Midlands LA do not differ from the implications of existing research for all LAs, nor indeed the recommendations made in Care Matters (DfES, 2007). Social Services need to focus on developing positive and supportive relationships between social workers and the LAC in their care, which is likely to be facilitated by continuity of allocated workers. Ofsted's (2008) Annual Performance Assessment of services for children and young people within the LA identified 'serious shortages in the social care workforce' (p.8) something which is likely to impact on the workload and stress levels of those currently employed, and highlights problems with retention and recruitment.

LAC should not be disadvantaged by the type of care placement they are allocated; therefore social services must ensure that all carers prioritise and support LAC's education, holding high expectations for them. Success in their current educational placement and the possible consequences of disrupting it should be considered before a LAC's residential placement is changed; interviewee B is an example of a move out of borough in Year 10, even though she felt settled and supported in her school. Finally my research findings emphasise the importance of LAC being listened to when plans and decisions are made in relation to their schooling and care placements, something likely to counteract LAC's reported feelings of not being 'special' nor 'having adults invest in them' (Jackson, 1987 & Mallon, 2005).

Several recommendations can be drawn from the research findings in relation to the practice of LACES. 65% of Sample II were allocated a LACES worker to support them and their school; however the remaining 35% had no recorded LACES involvement. Only one of the four young people in Sample III had an allocated LACES worker, although in response to a question about this she reported that she did not, in fact, have a LACES worker! It could be that these young people were not referred by their schools to LACES, or because few in Sample II had statements or needs recorded within the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001), they were not identified for support by the services themselves. This raises queries about the effectiveness of the system LACES uses to identify which LAC they work with; literature on teacher's low expectations of LAC (Barnardo's, 2006; the Who Cares? Trust, 2004) suggests that where schools are relied upon to raise concerns about a child's progress this may not always be accurate or timely.

To enhance practice, the records kept by LACES, on which this study was dependent, should be used in conjunction with existing research on risk factors, to identify LAC who may be in need of closer monitoring, or whose schools may need training and support. LA Children's Services need to work together to keep reliable and comprehensive records, guidance for which was provided in The Children Act 2004, and systems which ensure records are consulted and used to trigger timely and appropriate preventative action. For example if the number and types of placements LAC have experienced, as opposed to just their current one, are recorded then those in residential units, or with multiple placements could be provided with extra support, as could their schools, to ensure academic success and to reduce any further disruption. LACES currently work with a range of residential placements and schools to raise awareness of the importance of education for LAC;

however results of the current study suggest this may need to be extended further, with more frequent training for teachers and other adults who work with LAC.

Ideas for shaping EPS practice in relation to working with LAC in schools can be drawn from this study and existing literature. EPs are in a position to use data records to support schools in identifying LAC who are at risk of achieving poor educational outcomes, whilst emphasising to teachers the importance of holding high expectations for these young people (Harker et al, 2004; Martin & Jackson, 2002). Educational Psychologists should, where necessary, support schools to accurately assess the educational and emotional needs of LAC. Research has highlighted the tendency of schools to inaccurately assess LAC's educational needs, leading to work being too easy (The Who Cares? Trust, 2004) and therefore demotivating, whilst other research suggests teachers may interpret challenging behaviour as 'normal' for LAC resulting in late assessment and intervention in relation to behavioural and mental health problems (SEU, 2003). Where outcomes for LAC in residential units are poor, EPs may have a role in working at an organisational level to support the units in developing a positive and safe learning environment, where emotional and behavioural needs are managed and met.

The finding that the majority of Sample II were female (73%, just over the level of significance), and that nine of the 19 females were pregnant or became young mothers during Year 11, raises questions about the effectiveness of the LA's sex and relationship education and preventative strategies for reducing conception amongst those under the age of 18 years. Teenage pregnancies are rising in current LA (Ofsted, 2008) and existing research documents the increased risk (over three times) of looked after young women

becoming pregnant (DfES, 2006a, see Section 1.1.3). With nearly 50% of looked after females not entered for their exams being pregnant, this suggests that teenage pregnancy is a risk factor in poor educational outcomes for LAC, and so may need to be addressed specifically through a preventative strategy and joined up working between Health and Children's Services.

5.3 Limitations of the Research

Challenges to the reliability and validity of the research are outlined in Section 3.6, where the limitations of the records and interview data used in the study and the sampling and coding processes are discussed. However this research study can also be critiqued in relation to its design and the methods used. This research uses mixed methodologies, collecting both qualitative and quantitative data; however in attempting to do so it is limited by many of challenges of carrying out research with LAC that are recorded in similar studies (see Section 1.1.4).

The reliability of the qualitative data collected through interviews is reduced by the small size of Sample III ($n=4$), which resulted from difficulties in contacting the looked after young people within the LA 2006-07 Year 11 cohort. Whilst the validity of findings from the statistical analysis of quantitative data can be challenged on two accounts: the small numbers ($n=26$) in Sample II, (30 is recognised as a minimum number for statistical tests, (Field, 2005)) and because some data is missing, evident in records of residential status. Although the statistical tests found significant relationships between type of educational provision attended by LAC and whether they were entered for GCSEs or alternative qualifications (see Section 4), Robson (2002) asserts that this

‘does not enable us to conclude that these variables are causally related. Nor does it, in itself, help in understanding what lies behind this relationship.’ (p.159)

The current research uses an ex post facto approach, where the researcher looks back at variables present in the lives of subjects in order to seek to create hypotheses or causal links with their current condition. The advantages and disadvantages of this approach are discussed in Section 3.2. However, it is important to recognise that where variables are many and causal relationships are complex, such as when investigating risk and protective factors for LAC, we can never be sure that where a relationship is found between two variables, it is not caused by a common third factor (Cohen et al, 2000).

This study has chosen to focus only on risk and protective factors which occur within a child’s care experience and education, and recognises that pre-care experiences, especially during significant developmental periods in a child’s life, will continue to influence their self concept, learning and relationships into adulthood.

This study can also be criticised because of the interview methods used. It was intended that interviews should be carried out face-to-face with the young people; however the practicality of meeting with the young people, whilst also giving them a choice in how the interview was carried out, resulted in three of the four interviews taking place over the telephone. Robson (2002) asserts that telephone interviews ‘share many of the advantages of face-to-face interviewing’ (p.282), with the use of prompts and probes, and the opportunity to clarify points. It has been suggested that there are reduced interviewer effects with telephone interviews, and that respondents may feel less pressure to give

socially desirable answers (Bradburn and Sudman, 1979); however Gillham (2000), argues that without non-verbal communication and cues, interviews can be difficult to maintain for a period of time over 30 minutes, and the information collected may be more difficult to interpret.

The current study can be criticised because of the ‘separate nature’ of its two phases: the quantitative data analysis and the semi-structured interviews. The findings from the analysis of the data file provided by LACES could have been used to inform the questions chosen for the semi-structured interviews. For example because a high number of Sample II were pregnant or teenage parents, asking the two young people in Sample III who were parents how they considered this to have affected their opportunity to take GCSEs or alternative qualifications, may have resulted in some specific data relating to the consequences of teenage pregnancy. This approach was not adopted for two reasons: firstly the nature of the interviews, the majority of which took place by telephone and for a period of between 15 and 25 minutes, meant asking personal questions about becoming a parent was both unethical and inappropriate. Secondly, a naturalistic/ interpretative approach underpinned the choice of a semi-structured interview method, with the aim of eliciting from the LAC what they considered to be risk and protective factors in their in-care and educational experiences. Although prompts were used to elicit information from the young people, these were based on existing literature, rather than being specifically chosen because of their relevance to the interviewee’s experiences.

Most significantly, the findings from this research and the extent to which they can be generalised are limited by the difficulty in identifying and contacting LAC in order to gain

their perspectives. This was due in part to the fact that the majority of the sample were no longer attending schools and were placed in independent living. However, contacting the sample was also hindered by the social workers, who either did not have time to prioritise my research in discussions with the young people, or did not advise me when consent was not given. This research is also limited by the lack of a comprehensive and accurate database, containing both educational and care records, accessible to all professionals working with LAC, something which current researchers, such as Davey and Pithouse (2008), argue reflects the low priority still afforded to effective multi-agency working to safeguard the well-being of LAC, by social services.

6. Conclusions

This research makes an original contribution to existing knowledge about the educational outcomes of LAC by focussing specifically on Year 11 pupils not entered for GCSEs or alternative qualifications within the 2006-07 cohort of LAC within the LA. Although the generalisability of the current research findings are limited it suggests that the same risk and protective factors are salient in the lives of those LAC not entered for GCSEs or alternative qualifications, as in the lives of the wider population of LAC who attain poor educational outcomes. Findings are fully consistent with existing literature in recognising the significance of positive relationships with adults and the importance of these adults showing interest in, and encouraging LAC in their education. Findings also emphasise the importance of stability in school and care placement, and how different types of both care and educational placement may lead to inequality of access to educational opportunities, such as entry for GCSE examinations.

The current research develops existing theory by highlighting the salient influence that peer relationships can have on the educational outcomes of LAC, particularly when truanting, disengagement with school and the low expectations of teachers act to isolate this vulnerable group from their high achieving peers. This research also identifies that teenage pregnancy, and the risk factors that lead to it, are influential in, or products of LAC not being entered for their GCSEs, and as a result of this looked after teenage girls may need additional support and intervention concerning sex and relationship education.

Future research should focus on the impact of different care placements, including LAC's supported placement with their birth parents, and the detail of the mechanism through which these differing care experiences may act to influence educational outcomes. There is also a need for further research into the positive and negative effects of peer friendships, and to determine if looked after females are at greater risk of becoming teenage mothers compared with their peers.

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Appendix 1

APPLIED EDUCATIONAL AND CHILD PSYCHOLOGY DOCTORATE (AECPD)

RESEARCH PROPOSAL FORM

(TO BE COMPLETED BY TEP)

Anna Kelley

Name.....

Date.....20/05/08.....

This form should be completed once the research area has been agreed with the Local Authority supervisor and university tutor. Completion of all parts of this form should be undertaken in approximately 2,000 words.

1. Preliminary Working Title of Thesis

This will be refined and revised as required as your research progresses.

Which ‘in-care’ and ‘educational’ risk factors may contribute to Looked after Young People not being entered for GCSE exams or alternative qualifications?

2. The Focus of the Research

What are you going to research?

This research will focus on identifying the risk factors that are present in the educational and care experiences of Year 11 looked after young people (LAC) in the care of [REDACTED] Local Authority, and attending [REDACTED] schools who were not entered for any GCSEs or alternative qualifications in the school year 2006-07. A document analysis of Social Services and Educational Psychology records/files will be used to identify ‘in-care’ and ‘educational’ risk factors highlighted by previous research and to determine if there are common factors which appear to contribute to this sample being excluded from the outcomes data collected by the government.

Semi-structured interviews will be carried out with those pupils from the 2006-7 [REDACTED] LAC cohort who were not entered for external examination during KS4, who are still known to Social Services and who can be located. These interviews will explore what this sub-sample consider to have contributed to their lack of qualifications and what could have changed this or helped them to succeed in education.

Justification for the Research

Why do you want to undertake this research? How does it relate to current LA/EPS priorities?

Both government and independent researchers recognise that looked after children are a population, who despite being targeted by education policy, are still failing to achieve educational and wellbeing outcomes equivalent to those of all children. Care Matters; Time for Changes (DfES, 2007) encapsulates the government's intention that children's services prioritise the education of LAC. Educational Psychologists working for [REDACTED] EPS are expected to be aware of all looked after children in their schools and to challenge the school on how they are meeting their needs.

This research area was identified by the [REDACTED] LACES (looked after children in education) team, who were concerned by the high numbers of their students who were not being entered for GCSE exams or equivalent, resulting in their achievements being excluded from official government data, and reflecting poorly on outcomes data for [REDACTED] LA. More commonly this trend was seen in specialist provisions which focussed on behaviour; however this sample is limited in size, so I decided to include pupils in mainstream provisions also.

Data from this research could be used by [REDACTED] EPS to work preventatively at school and cluster levels to reduce the educational risk factors which are likely to compromise LAC's academic success. It will also add to the evidence base of how education and social work practices affect looked after young people, of which all educational psychologists should have knowledge, in order to argue for the best outcomes for LAC in multi-agency and school meetings.

3. Key Research Questions

What do you hope to find out from this research?

- What risk factors can be identified in the educational experience of looked after children which may contribute to their not being entered for GCSE examinations or alternative qualifications?
- What risk factors can be identified in the care experience of looked after children which may contribute to their not being entered for GCSE examinations or alternative qualifications?
- Are there common or dominant themes across the sample?
- Are there consistent risk factors across educational settings (Special Vs. mainstream)?
- What risk factors do individuals within the sample identify as contributing to their not being entered for GCSE examinations or alternative qualifications?
- What do the looked after young people believe would have helped them to achieve qualifications whilst in school?

5. What is Already Known About What You Propose to Research?

Who are the key writers and what are the key texts you have identified so far? Which ideas have you found most helpful? How have they refined your thinking? For this initial exercise, focus on six to eight texts.

(see literature review- where I have reviewed the research evidence on the risk and protective factors salient to LAC's in- school and care experience and discussed these using Cicchetti and Lynch's (1993; 1998) Ecological-Transactional model as a framework, whilst referring to the limitations of carrying out research with this population.)

Social Exclusion Unit Report (2003) identifies risk factors as including high risk of exclusion from school, which can lead to reduced hours of schooling in an alternative provision and breakdown in care placement due to the pupil being at home for during the day. LAC with SEN are often overlooked because initial poor behaviour is seen as 'normal' for children who have been through the experiences they have. Compounding this is the fact that LAC are often delayed in assessment and treatment by professionals because of moves between schools and care placements. A higher number of LAC claim to be victims of bullying in comparison with all other children.

Harker et al (2004) LAC often miss longer than the inevitable periods off school when changes in care placement or exclusion have occurred. Many LAC feel that negative expectations held about themselves by carers, social workers and teachers influenced their educational outcomes.

Jackson and Martin (1998; 2002) compared 'high achieving' LAC with a control group who had not met a success criterion and found that the control group were more likely to be excluded, out of school for a term or more and leave school before the age of 16 years. Many of the 'high achieving' LAC felt that their social worker played no part in supporting their education, however many felt that being supported by a well qualified carer who valued education was important.

Fletcher-Campbell and Archer (2003) found a link between having a high number of educational placements in year 11 and not being entered for GCSE exams. Over 1/3 of LAC have a statement of SEN; learning difficulties (1/3) and emotional and behavioural difficulties (1/3) were identified as the main needs, with 1/5 being entered for one GCSE or more. 2/5^{ths} of Lac attend mainstream schools, whilst a fifth are in special schools, and the next highest allocation is to alternative provisions.

Mallon (2005) used semi-structured interviews to identify risk factors for adults who were in care as children. He found that the most frequently identified risk factors were 'no personal investment', 'lack of love and affection' and 'didn't feel special'.

St. Claire and Osborn (1987) carried out a range of social, behavioural and cognitive measures with a cohort of LAC at age 5 and 10. They found levels of achievement were significantly lower for in-care groups compared with the control group, comprising children who had never been separated from their mothers or spent time in care, and that spending some time in residential care was associated with behaviour problems at age 10. Children who were adopted before the age of 5 years had above average cognitive and behavioural scores at age 5, although their reading was found to be slightly lower than average at age 10. They interpreted these findings as evidence that adoption was preferable to foster and residential care for LAC.

Colton and Heath (1994) carried out a longitudinal study with a group of 49 LAC and found that subgroups who were in relatively stable foster care placements, or who were going through the process of adoption showed no further progress in academic achievement than the LAC groups who were not in stable placements

6. What Approach and Method Will You Hope to Employ?

How will you carry out the research? What methodologies and methods will you seek to use? Why these and not others?

I plan to adopt a case study approach to my research; the case being the group of looked after young people in [REDACTED] who were not entered for any GCSE exam or alternative qualification in the school year 2006-07. The case study will comprise two methods of data collection, including Ex-post Facto approach to the document analysis of the young people's care/ education records and semi-structured interview with a sub-sample of the group.

Ex post facto research allows the study to be carried out retrospectively and so is suitable to the data I have access to in the form of LACES, educational psychology and care records. The independent variable/s are studied in retrospect for their possible relationship with/ effects on the dependent variable- allowing the exploration of possible antecedents/ factors to this sample not being entered for exams. Both an advantage and disadvantage of this approach is the fact that the researcher can not manipulate the independent variables, however it is often used in education because the more 'powerful' experimental methods is not possible or ethical. Of the two designs identified in ex post facto research, I intend to use co-relational, also known as 'causal research', which is concerned with 'identifying the antecedents of a present condition' (Cohen et al, 2000). The method adopted to identify these antecedents will be document analysis.

I then hope to use semi-structured interviews to identify the factors which a sub-group of the sample believe were influential in them not being entered for examinations, and to determine if their perceptions support the hypotheses raised through the document analysis. I have chosen this method because it will provide rich information that represents the actual experience of the young people, in parallel to that documented in official records.

7. What Timetable Will You Hope to Work To?

What do you need to do? How long will this take? What difficulties might you expect to meet? How might you plan for these?

I hope to have identified my sample and carried out document analysis by the end of September 2008. Then I hope to arrange semi-structured interview or focus groups to be carried out in September/ October 2008 in order to be writing up my research over the Christmas period.

**What Ethical Issues Might Your Research Entail? What Can You Do About Them?
Use the ethics form EC2 to help to complete this section**

Issues might include informed consent, access, confidentiality, terms of involvement, withdrawal, status relationships, data ownership, thesis accessibility, etc.

Carrying out this research will raise a number of ethical issues including:

- access to detailed and sensitive information and records about individual children
- uses and ownership of data
- working with a small sample of LAC and ensuring they can not be identified (even though all schools and records will be anonymous) through the risk factors within their care and educational experiences.
- Gaining informed consent from those who will be interviewed
- Gaining access to the sub-sample to be interviewed
- Clarity about terms of involvement with an already vulnerable group who have many professionals in their life.
- Protection of educational establishments and professionals who may be identified in the study
- Specific risks of harm and how these will be addressed

The challenge of protecting the identity of young people, professionals and educational establishments discussed in this research can be responded to by making sure all records and evidence are anonymous. However because the sample will be small and certain case studies may be unique, or certain schools may be able to be identified because of the risk factors associated with them, limiting thesis accessibility within the university library may be necessary. Also how information from the research is used by the EPS and LACES team will need to be agreed.

I intend to be clear from the outset of any direct involvement with young people about how the information they provide for me will be used and where it will be published. I will also explain my role and that my contact with them will be one off, whilst also suggesting opportunities to access further support, should they need this.

9. To Whom and How Will You Report Your Findings?

For what purposes and in what forms? What do you hope will be its impact? (Ensure you take note of the university requirements for the two submitted research reports each accompanied by a short public domain briefing report).

I hope to discuss my findings with the head of the [REDACTED] LACES team and provide her and the EPS with a summary report of the research, as well as access to the public domain briefing and the research paper which will be included in my thesis. I hope my research will have the impact of providing information specific to [REDACTED] LA that can be used to inform and guide preventative practice by professionals working with LAC.

Appendix 2

Outcome Data and Information for LAC Provided by LACES

Data Provided for all LAC in the Birmingham 2006-07, Year 11 cohort	
Information category	Definition/ possible responses
UPN	
Name	
Gender	
DOB	
Care start date	Date first taken into care, LAC may have been returned to their family and taken into care multiple times
Ethnicity	DfES categories used
Special educational needs	N= none, S= statement (with main need if recorded), A= school action, P= school action plus on the Code of Practice (DfES, 2001)
School type (2006-07)	M= mainstream, S=special, A = alternative provision, YOI= young offenders institute, PRU= pupil referral unit, FE= further education, IS= independent special school, N= none, RS= residential school
Local authority	[REDACTED] or out of authority
DFES number	
Name of school (S)	Schools attended during Years 10 & 11
LAC	1= looked after, 0= non-looked after
OC2	1= looked after for 12 months or more on the 30 th September 2007; 0= not looked after for a period of 12 months on the 30th September 2007
Asylum seeker/ refugee	1= asylum seeker/refugee, 0= non-asylum seeker/ refugee , 2= looked after but not because a refugee
Residential status	FC= foster care, SU= secure unit, PWP= placed with parents, IL= independent living, RU= residential unit, REM= remand
Entered for GCSE	1= yes, 0= no
Number of GCSE entries	(n)
Results	listed
Comments	Additional information e.g. poor attendee/ in custody, alternative qualifications
Additional data provided for Sample II (inclusive of Sample III)	
Current whereabouts	Town/ area of residence- may have changed since secondary school\ GCSE years
Social worker, team and contact details	Name, area team and telephone number

Schools attended	Schools listed and length of attendance if available
Placements attended from given date	Number of care placements since being taken into care
Placements since 31/07/2004	Number of placements during GCSE years
Fixed term and permanent exclusions	Number of fixed exclusions and total number of days, number of permanent exclusions
Date of LACES referral	If referral was made to LACES
LACES worker	Name of LACES worker if referred to service
Notes	Extra information e.g. pregnant, formerly in care in another authority

Appendix 3

Introductory Script for interviews

Thank you for agreeing to come and talk to me.

I'm just going to remind you what the research is about and check that you're happy to continue.

In my research I am interviewing a group of looked after young people who were not entered for any GCSEs or other exams in Year 11, and so left school with no GCSE passes or similar qualifications. I want to try to find out what factors at school and in their care placement were unhelpful to these young people, or any thing else that made it hard for them to do well at school and leave with some good exam passes. I want to find out young people's thoughts about things that could have been better, so that they had a better chance of doing well at school, completing their GCSEs, and leaving with some good qualifications.

I am going to record our interview so I can listen to what you tell me again, but when I write up my research I will not use your name, or the names of any adults or places we talk about. Everything you tell me will remain confidential. The only thing that I'm not able to keep confidential would be if you let me know that you or someone else had been harmed, or are in danger of being harmed, or have broken the law- then I will have to share this information with another adult. I'll let you know

I really appreciate your giving up your time to meet me and talk about your experiences. I'm glad that I'm able to offer you a voucher in recognition of the time you have given up to take part in this research.

This interview will not last more than 40 minutes. You can stop the interview at any time and you don't have to answer a question if you do not want to – (you will still receive your voucher).

If you would like to read a summary of my research when I finish it you can give me your address at the end of the interview and I will send a copy to you.
Do you have any questions?

Do you understand everything I have told you?

Are you happy to start the interview?

Appendix 4

School of Education Research Ethics Protocol for Staff, Postgraduate and Undergraduate Students

Form EC2 for POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH (PGR) STUDENTS

MPhilA, MPhilB, MPhil/PhD, EdD, PhD IS

This form MUST be completed by ALL students studying for postgraduate research degrees and can be included as part of the thesis even in cases where no formal submission is made to the Ethics Committee. Supervisors are also responsible for checking and conforming to the ethical guidelines and frameworks of other societies, bodies or agencies that may be relevant to the student's work.

Tracking the Form

- I. Part A completed by the student
- II. Part B completed by the supervisor
- III. Supervisor refers proposal to Ethics Committee if necessary
- IV. Supervisor keeps a copy of the form and send the original to the Student Research Office, School of Education
- V. Student Research Office – form signed by Management Team, original kept in student file.

Part A: to be completed by the STUDENT

NAME: Anna Kelley

COURSE OF STUDY: Applied Educational and Child Psychology Doctorate

DATE: 01.08.08

NAME OF SUPERVISOR: Sue Morris

PROPOSED PROJECT TITLE:

Which 'in-care' and 'educational' risk factors may contribute to Looked after Young People not being entered for GCSE exams or alternative qualifications?

BRIEF OUTLINE OF PROJECT: (100-250 words; this may be attached separately)

This research will focus on identifying the risk factors that are present in the educational and care experiences of Year 11 looked after young people (LAC) in the care of [REDACTED] Local Authority, and attending [REDACTED] schools, who were not entered for any GCSEs or alternative qualifications in the school year 2006-07. A document analysis of Social Services and Educational Psychology records/files will be used to identify ‘in-care’ and ‘educational’ risk factors highlighted in existing research and to determine if there are common factors which appear to contribute to this sample being excluded from the outcomes data collected by the government.

Semi-structured interviews will be carried out with a sub-sample of those pupils (estimated n= 10) from the 2006-7 [REDACTED] LAC cohort who were not entered for external examination during KS4, who are still known to Social Services and who can be located. These interviews will explore what this group considers to have contributed to their lack of qualifications and what could have changed this or helped them to succeed in education.

I am using the 2006/07 cohort because the Looked After Children in Education Service (LACES) were able to provide data on their exam results and further information concerning reasons why they were not entered for exams, in order to inform the selection of my sample. Because of the time it takes to collate this information it is not usually ready until the October following the examinations. This meant that the data for the 2006/7 cohort was available in 2007, whilst data from the 2007/8 cohort would not be available until October 2008, which would not leave enough time for the research to be completed within the university time limit. (Spring 2009 is the target date for submission of my thesis in line with requirements for my full-time postgraduate training programme in educational psychology).

MAIN ETHICAL CONSIDERATION(S) OF THE PROJECT (e.g. working with vulnerable adults; children with disabilities; photographs of participants; material that could give offence etc):

The main ethical considerations arise from the age and vulnerability of the young people who comprise the research sample. In particular it is necessary to make sure they understand the research purpose, what will happen to the data they give and how these data will be stored and reported. It will also be essential that the young people are able to give their full consent to participation in the project, that interviews and data collection are carried out sensitively and that they feel comfortable in withdrawing or refusing to answer questions at any time.

Another ethical consideration will be the access to confidential data about those young people that I will have in order to carry out the initial part of the research. The Looked After Children in Education (LACE) team in [REDACTED] Local Authority will provide me with their records on this cohort of LAC, in order to allow me to identify a sample. It may be necessary for me to refer to records kept by Social Services and the Educational

Psychology Service. Throughout the research process I will conform fully to data protection legislation, under which the Local Authority acts, and any additional requirements arising from Local Authority policy.

RESEARCH FUNDING AGENCY (if any): n/a

**DURATION OF PROPOSED PROJECT (please provide dates as month/year):
09/2008- 01/2009**

September 08- October 08	- analysis of data for LAC cohort 2006-07 -select & contact of participants for interviews
October – November 08	-carrying out of interviews - analysis of interview data
November 08- February 09	- writing up of research

DATE YOU WISH TO START DATA COLLECTION: 09/2008

Please provide details on the following aspects of the research:

1. What are your intended methods of recruitment, data collection and analysis? [see note 1]

(Please outline (in 100-250 words) the intended methods for your project and give what detail you can. However, it is not expected that you will be able to answer fully these questions at the proposal stage).

[REDACTED] City Council LACES is providing me with access to their database of records for the 2006-7 Year 11 cohort of looked after young people in [REDACTED]. From these records I intend to identify a sample of pupils who were not entered for GCSE exams or other appropriate end of Key Stage qualifications.

I will adopt an ex post facto approach to the document analysis of the records for this sample held by LACES, Social Services and the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) records in order to identify risk factors which may have contributed to the pupils not being entered for formal qualifications. Ex post facto research allows the study to be carried out retrospectively and so is suitable to the data to which I will have access. Both an advantage and disadvantage of this approach is the fact that the researcher can not manipulate the independent variables; however it is often used in education because the more ‘powerful’ experimental methods are neither possible nor ethical.

I then plan to contact a sub-sample of the participants, through the LACES team, in order to carry out semi-structured interviews with individual young people and / or focus groups to identify the factors which they feel were influential in their educational outcomes. The procedure by which the sub-sample will be identified will depend on which young people the LACES team are still in contact with and whether they will be accessible and available for interview. I assume that ease of access will not be assured, but intend to take reasonable steps to try to reduce risks that young people are given the chance to participate in this study and voice their experiences, irrespective of relative ease of access. For example, it may be difficult to meet with young persons if they are currently in a young offender's unit; however if they are still living in a children's home access may more easily be mediated. To address risks of population bias, and, from an ethical perspective, exclusion of some sectors of the community of young care leavers, I will review assiduously the overall demographic, and the extent to which my sample is broadly representative of this, taking all reasonable steps to ensure that young people living under differing circumstances post-16 are given the opportunity to participate. I intend to offer payment for the young people's time and any travel costs they may have occurred (depending on approval from the LACE team).

Examples of the types of questions I will be asking are:

- ‘Do you think being in care has made a difference to what you have achieved at school?’
- ‘What factors at school/ in your care experience or placement do you think stopped you being entered for your GCSE examinations?’
- ‘What or who did you find helped you with your school work, both at school and in your care placement?’
- ‘What else helped you during your school years to ‘get on’, make a success of school, and gain qualifications that would help you when you left?’
- ‘What else could have helped you to get on well in school / your education, and to be entered for and complete your GCSE examinations?’
- ‘What plans and hopes do you have for your future? Do you have any particular career in mind? Might you go on to college / any further education?’

I intend to carry out a thematic analysis of the interview data looking for risk factors identified in the analysis of the sample's social services records and also themes relating to protective factors, along with risk and protective factors relating to school, family and the young person his/her self.

2. How will you make sure that all participants understand the process in which they are to be engaged and that they provide their voluntary and informed consent? If the study involves working with children or other vulnerable groups, how have you considered their rights and protection? [see note 2]

I hope to initially contact the young people through their social workers or the managers of LACES centres/ children's homes which they may still attend on a regular basis. I will ask these professionals to explain to and give a written letter, in accessible language, to the young people who will form the sub-sample who will be invited to be interviewed (see Appendix 1 for copy of letter). In this letter I will explain what my research is about, that all data included in the research report will be anonymous and that the report itself will only be available to the public in the University of Birmingham Library, which will limit access to it for a set number of years because of the sensitive nature of the information it contains.

I will outline the young person's right to withdraw at any time during the process and will request that they verbally give an indication (on audiotape) of consent at the beginning of the interview/ focus group as evidence that they understand the points outlined above and are still willing to participate. When meeting these pupils in order to carry out interviews I will repeat the information in the letter and give them the opportunity to ask any questions (see Appendix 2 for draft copy of script).

I also hope to be able to interview the young people in an environment that is familiar to them, but also allows privacy so they feel able to speak freely.

A final step in the interview will be to ask each young person if s/he feels the interview went OK from her/his perspective; whether s/he believes the points we have discussed give an accurate representation of her/his views and experiences (which I will summarise as necessary in each case), whether there is anything s/he thinks needs to be changed in order to ensure accuracy, and whether s/he does agree that I can use this information, alongside that gained from other young people, in my research, subject to the measures previously described to safeguard confidentiality.

3. How will you make sure that participants clearly understand their right to withdraw from the study?

As stated above I will provide this information in a written letter, and on meeting the participant before carrying out the interview. I will also be sensitive to any non-verbal communication which may suggest the young person is ill at ease during the interview and take appropriate steps to pause or terminate the interview (in line with standard counselling practices which are integral to my day-to-day professional practice as a Trainee Educational Psychologist).

4. Please describe how you will ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of participants. Where this is not guaranteed, please justify your approach. [see note 3]

I will ensure anonymity of participants by allocating code numbers to all related data, rather than names and by erasing any information that may allow them to be identified from the interview scripts and when analysing the records. Such identifying details include: names of schools, addresses, names of residential homes or young offenders units; names

of friends / peers / teachers / social workers. If a child had been through an experience which was relevant to the research question but would be unique enough, in addition to other information reported about them, to compromise their anonymity I would not report it specifically in the research. In the report I will be discussing common/ distinctive themes and trends across the interviews, rather than reporting each interview as a detailed case study, which will also act to protect anonymity. Information provided to LACES on the completion of the research will relate to general trends amongst the sample group, rather than specific information relating to individual's experiences.

5. Describe any possible detrimental effects of the study and your strategies for dealing with them. [see note 4]

Some of the questions asked in the interview may cause the young person to reflect back on negative educational or care experiences which may evoke strong feelings of anger, sadness or frustration. Before commencing the interview I will remind participants that they can refrain from answering any questions that make them feel uncomfortable, as well as withdrawing from the interview at any time.

At the end of the interview, I will inform participants that if the interview has raised any feelings which they would like to speak to someone about in more depth, people they could talk to may be their social workers, carers or friends. I will also provide them with a list of organisations they may want to contact, such as Connexions and the Samaritans.

My professional role as a Trainee Educational Psychologist means that I have the skills to speak to a young person in greater depth within a counselling / supportive (cf. solely research) role / capacity should they so request. I will use these skills in the immediate post-interview debriefing in cases where there is evidence to suggest that distress has been evoked. However, beyond this, I will keep my roles as interviewer and practitioner / therapist separate. There are Educational Psychologists within the ██████████ EPS who are specifically allocated to work with the LACES team with whom they could be put in touch, or who may already be providing a service to the children's home or LACES centre which the child attends. If this scenario occurred I would speak to the child about my job role and the area/schools within which I work and suggest that they could speak to one of my colleagues if they wished, and that I would take steps to mediate a first meeting.

6. How will you ensure the safe and appropriate storage and handling of data?

Initially data files with names and school details will be kept on data storage devices which can be accessed by password only or on laptops which require passwords to activate. As soon as the sample has been identified and young people's names used to contact them, any information on the files which could lead to them being identified will be deleted or replaced with a coding system.

Only I will have access to the original information provided about the young people. Any data seen by other professionals, such as my university supervisor or research contact at ██████████ Educational Psychology Service, during the process of my research, will be

anonymous. I will also ensure that when working on my research any paper notes or information is locked away if I have to leave the room, and that my computer is shut down.

7. If during the course of the research you are made aware of harmful or illegal behaviour, how do you intend to handle disclosure or nondisclosure of such information? [see note 5]

Before commencing the semi-structured interviews I will advise the young person that the information they give me will remain confidential with the exception of any disclosures about themselves, or others, being harmed or at risk of harm, or where the law has been broken (see Appendix 2). If this occurred I would tell him/her that I needed to share the information with two other professionals: their current social worker and my line manager in the Educational Psychology Service, so that appropriate procedures could be followed.

If I became aware of harmful or illegal behaviour and the young person did not make a disclosure I would give them the opportunity to do so if they wished with an open question, such as, ‘do you want to talk any more about this?’. However I would not ask any direct or leading questions. On ending the interview I would make sure that the young person knows they can contact the agencies whose information I had given them, should they wish to speak further concerning any of the issues discussed.

8. If the research design demands some degree of subterfuge or undisclosed research activity, how have you justified this and how and when will this be discussed with participants?

There will be no subterfuge or undisclosed research activity.

Access to the educational records of the young people involved in the study will have been given to me by the ██████████ LACES team prior to the interviews being carried out. I will explain to the participants what data I have been given access to and how I have used it in order to identify those whom I invited to take part in the interview phase of the study. I will also explain that where this information is reported in my study, it will be done anonymously.

9. How do you intend to disseminate your research findings to participants?

I will produce a public domain briefing for ██████████ LACES team and Educational Psychology Service. I will also provide an accessible summary of my findings which can be sent out to participants, as well as given to their social workers, who may wish to share the information with them if they have literacy difficulties or use it to discuss future education or career steps with them.

I will also provide a work contact number, should any of the participants have queries about the research findings, and wish to discuss these with me.

Part B: to be completed by the SUPERVISOR

1. Have the appropriate guidelines from relevant research bodies / agencies / societies (e.g. BERA, BPS, SRA, Research Governance Framework, Data Protection Act, Freedom of Information Act) been checked and applied to this project?

Yes

Not applicable

If Yes, which:

BERA, BPS, Data Protection Act

2. If relevant, have you ensured that the student holds a current Criminal Records Bureau check for the participants they will be working with during their research project? [see note 6]

Yes

Not applicable

If not applicable, please state why:

3. Have you seen information and consent forms relevant to the present research project? [if not relevant at this time, please review this within 6 months]

Yes

No

4. Is a referral to the Ethics Committee necessary?

Yes

No

5. Do you require a formal letter of approval from the Ethics Committee?

Yes

No

Not applicable

Declaration by Project Supervisor

I have read the University's Code of Conduct for Research and the information contained herein is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, accurate.

I am satisfied that I have attempted to identify all risks related to the research that may arise in conducting this research and acknowledge my obligations as Project Supervisor and the rights of participants. I am satisfied that those working on the project have the

appropriate qualifications, experience and facilities to conduct the research set out in the attached document and that I, as Project Supervisor, take full responsibility for the ethical conduct of the research in accordance with the School of Education Ethical Guidelines, and any other condition laid down by the School of Education Ethics Committee.

SK Morris

Print name: Susan K Morris Signature:

Declaration by the Chair of the School of Education Ethics Committee
(only to be completed if making a formal submission for approval)

The Committee confirms that this project fits within the University's Code of Conduct for Research and I approve the proposal on behalf of the University of Birmingham's School of Education Ethics Committee.

Print name:
(Chair of the Ethics Committee)

Signature:
Date

Supervisor – please keep a copy of this form for your records and send the original to the Student Research Office, School of Education.

Date sent to Student Research Office:

**STUDENT RESEARCH OFFICE – PLEASE OBTAIN SIGNATURE FROM
MANAGEMENT TEAM AND RETAIN ORIGINAL IN STUDENT FILE**

Date Form Received:

Print name: _____ Signature _____

For and on behalf of
Student Research Office

Date

Appendix 5: Letter to Social Workers

Dear XXXXXXXX

My name is Anna Kelley and I work as a Trainee Educational Psychologist for [REDACTED] Educational Psychology Service.

I am currently carrying out some research in conjunction with [REDACTED] LACES team as part of my Doctoral course at the University of [REDACTED]. LACES have provided me with information about the cohort of LAC who were in Year 11 in 2006-2007. From this cohort we have identified 26 pupils who were not entered for GCSE examinations or equivalent.

I am hoping to interview these pupils in order to find out what aspects of their school and/or the care system experience may have acted as risk or protective factors in their education, and what could have been done differently to have helped them achieve qualifications.

I understand that you are the named social worker for the following student:

XXXXXXXXXX

I would be grateful if you could spare the time to let me know the following information:

- The young person's current educational and care placement, and if either of these would be appropriate places to carry out an interview with them?

I hope to contact you by phone in the next few days, or you can contact me at the number below or by e-mail at [REDACTED] I am planning to carry out the interviews in December.

Attached is a letter which can be shared with the young person to explain what the research is about and gain their views on whether they are willing to participate.

Thank you for your time and co-operation with this piece of research, which should provide valuable information for both the Educational Psychology Service and the LACES team.

Please contact me if you have any queries.

Best Wishes

Anna Kelley
Trainee Educational Psychologist

Appendix 6: Letter to Participants

Hello

My name is Anna Kelley and I work as a Trainee Educational Psychologist for [REDACTED] Educational Psychology Service.

I am currently carrying out some research, as part of my course at [REDACTED] University, to find out why some looked after young people are not entered for any GCSEs or other exams. I'm interested to find out what aspects of the school system and/or the care system did not help them, and what could have been done differently to help them do better at school and have some qualifications by the time they leave at the end of Year 11.

If you are a looked after young person who did **not** do your GCSEs in Year 11 (June 2007) then I would like to meet with you to talk about:

- Your own thoughts about what things happened in your life that meant you were not entered for GCSEs?
- What factors at school and in care were unhelpful or made doing well in school, and getting some good exam results more difficult?
- What, at school or in care, do you think would have helped you to do better at school and have some exam qualifications at this stage in your life?
- What plans do you have for your future?

I will make the interviews as informal and relaxed as possible; they will take no more than 40 minutes and will be carried out like a chat. However you will be free to stop the interview at any time and you do not have to answer any questions you don't want to.

I will record the interviews so I can remember exactly what you say and so I can listen to them again if I need to. I will not use your name or the names of any people or places you talk about when I write my research up, and all the notes I make will be anonymous. Everything we talk about will remain confidential unless you tell me that you or someone else have been/ or are at risk in some way, or that a law has been broken. In this case I may need to share the information with someone else.

I very much appreciate young people such as yourself giving up their time to share their experiences. I hope the information you all give can be used to help the care and school systems better for young people in the future.

I would like to thank all the young people who take part in my research for giving up your time to talk to me by offering you a voucher.

Please tell the person who shared this letter with you if you would like to take part in the research, then I will be able to arrange a time and place to meet which suits you. Please feel free to contact me on the number below if you have any questions.

Thank you for your time

Anna Kelley

Appendix 7

Research Interview Schedule

- Introductory paragraph (see separate sheet)
1. Did you attend (go to/were you registered at) just one school during Years 10 & 11?
probe: *if no, how many?*
 2. You were chosen for this interview because you were not entered for any GCSEs or other Year 11 qualifications- Why do you think you were not entered for your exams?
probe: *was this discussed with you? Who talked to you about this? did you have a choice in/ agree with the decision?*
 3. Do you think being in care (a looked after young person) has made a difference (to how you did at school) in you not having the opportunity to do your GCSEs or leave school with other qualifications?
probe: *why?*
 4. What factors (things) at school contributed to you not (stopping you) being entered for your exams or other qualifications?
probe: *How/ why did this stop you doing well at school/ being entered for your exams?*
prompt: *how far back to we need to look (YR-Y11 When did it start to go wrong?)
exclusions
time out of school
changes in school
falling behind on work/ finding work difficult
relationships with staff/ teachers
relationships with other pupils
feeling anxious/ stressed
learning difficulties (were these recognised/ supported/
right type of school?)*
 5. Was there anything that helped you (that you found helpful) at school (do well in your work)?
probe: *why? / how did it help?*
prompt: *high expectations from some staff
relationships with staff/ teachers
relationships with other pupils
extra support with work
extra provision/ time / allowances
other professionals
access to different courses/ activities
support for learning difficulties*

6. Did you have support from a LACES worker? Was this helpful?

probe: *when did this start/what did s/he do/how/ why did this help?
How often did you see them?*

7. What factors (things/ experiences) in care (your care placement) contributed to you not (stopped you) being entered for your GCSEs or other qualifications during KS4?

probe: *What things happened/How/ why did this stop you doing well at school/*
being entered for your exams or other qualifications?

prompt: *relationships with adults- social worker/ foster carer
relationships with other young people at placement
changes/ breakdowns in placement
support for/ interest in education in placement
missing time off school
opportunities to do homework/ access equipment/ books
interest and expectations of carers and their attitudes to schoolwork
/ attitudes to and expectations of my capabilities*

8. Were there any factors (things) in your care placement that helped you in your school work (do well at school)?

probe: *how/why do you think this helped you?*
prompt: *relationships with adults- social worker/ foster carer
relationships with other young people at placement
stability of placement/ placement type
opportunities to do homework/ access equipment/ books*

9. Is there anything else (anything we haven't talked about) that you think could have helped you achieve some qualifications (get some GCSEs)?

probe: *what/why/ how would this have helped you?*
prompt: *anything else social worker/ carer/ teacher/ LACES worker/family member could have done*

10. Do you have plans for a future job (current job) or to go back to education?

probe: *why have you chosen that job/ course. Are you getting support to do it*
prompt: *Are you happy with this?
If school had worked out better, would you be doing the same or something different now? What?
Do you think you can still get there / achieve this, or is it too late now?
What could help you now to have a good future with good qualifications and a good job?*

11. Thank you very much for talking to me today, are there any aspects (parts) of your education or care experience which you think has been important in you not being entered for your exams that we haven't talked about today? (anything else you would like to add/ any more comments you would like to make?)

Appendix 8

Interviewee Contact Record

Interviewee	Pilot
Interview type	Face-to-face
Date of interview	27/11/08
Location	[REDACTED]
Duration	20 minutes
Notes	Interviewee was in year 10 at school attending an alternative education provision for LAC

Interviewee	A
Interview type	telephone
Date of interview	02/02/09
Location	N/A
Duration	15 minutes
Notes	Interviewee was relatively distracted whilst talking, baby son was having a nap, but interviewee was walking around and doing things during interview.

Interviewee	B
Interview type	Face-to-face
Date of interview	03/02/09
Location	Interviewee's mum's house
Duration	30 minutes
Notes	Interviewee was very polite and thoughtful in her responses to questions, lots of information collected.

Interviewee	C
Interview type	Telephone
Date of interview	13/0/09
Location	N/A
Duration	10 minutes
Notes	Interviewee said very little, often no response to questions- social worker advised hard to reach family and that other siblings were also had very poor attendance records.

Interviewee	D
Interview type	Telephone
Date of interview	13/02/09
Location	N/A
Duration	20 minutes
Notes	Interviewee provided lots of information, distracted a couple of times by others in the house and spoke quite fast so difficult to record verbatim.

Appendix 9

Pilot Research Interview

Introductory paragraph (see separate sheet)	Coding
Verbal consent given	
1. Did you attend (go to/were you registered at) just one school during Years 10 & 11? <i>'just one school'</i>	
2. You were chosen for this interview because you were not entered for any GCSEs or other Year 11 qualifications- Why do you think you were not entered for your exams? <i>'don't know'</i> did they discuss this with you at school? <i>'they did but they just kept going on about maths, maths, maths all day' 'no point in it'</i>	WSP-SM WSR-C
School only wanted to enter for maths- no choice given	
3. Do you think being in care (a looked after young person) has made a difference (to how you did at school) in you not having the opportunity to do your GCSEs or leave school with other qualifications? <i>'Yes'</i> Why? 'they helped me improve things better'	
4. What factors (things) at school contributed to you not (stopped you) being entered for you exams or other qualifications? <i>'more than 5 people in school and you can't concentrate'</i> other children's behaviour? 'yes' did you miss a lot of time out of school? 'yes' change in school? 'since year 7 been in one school, but years 5 and 6 went to different schools' affected learning? 'yes' work? 'didn't enjoy it' teachers? 'they didn't like me, treated me like dirt' all of them? 'some of the teachers they were nice to me, but one of them Mr ----- treated me like S***t' had friends at school? 'yes' exclusions? 'didn't get excluded, I just didn't go'	WSR-PNI WSP-SM (sec) WSR-SM (pri) WSR-C WSR-AE WSR-AT
5. Was there anything that helped you (that you found helpful) at school (do well in your work)? <i>'peace and quiet'</i> other pupils? 'wind me up' 'do things just to be foolish' was it a bad school? 'yes' would going to a different school have helped? <i>'I reckon all schools are the same'</i> staff? 'no'	WSR-PNI

<p>extra support? 'no' <i>'I was mixing with the wrong crowd'</i></p> <p>could anything in school helped you not to do that? <i>'it would have happened anyway?'</i></p> <p>Different courses? <i>'done asdan- still doing it'</i></p>	
<p>6. Did you have support from a LACES worker? Was this helpful?</p> <p><i>'No'- 'I'm sure'</i></p> <p>Could this have helped someone coming in to work in school with you? 'no'</p>	
<p>7. What factors (things/ experiences) in care (your care placement) contributed to you not (stopped you) being entered for you GCSEs or other qualifications during KS4?</p> <p><i>'none'</i></p> <p>social workers supported you? <i>'not always, when I was a little kid they were on my mum's back 24/7'</i></p> <p>placement? <i>'I'm in a family foster care'</i></p> <p>carers support? <i>'yes'</i></p> <p>placement moves? <i>'no'</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">WCP-FCI</p> <p style="text-align: center;">WCP-PS</p>
<p>8. Were there any factors (things) in your care placement that helped you in your school work (do well at school)?</p> <p><i>'peace and quiet'</i></p>	
<p>9. Is there anything else (anything we haven't talked about) that you think could have helped you achieve some qualifications (get some GCSEs)?</p> <p>-----</p>	
<p>10. Do you have plans for a future job (current job) or to go back to education?</p> <p><i>'Doing work experience at a farm- where people go to have fun'</i></p> <p>Getting paid? <i>'yes'</i></p> <p>What else would you want to do? <i>'tiling' 'probably because foster brother works as a tillers, and my friend's dad will give me a job'</i></p> <p>Could anyone help you to get the job you want to do? <i>'not really'</i></p>	
<p>11. Thank you very much for talking to me today, are there any aspects (parts) of your education or care experience which you think has been important in you not being entered for your exams that we haven't talked about today? (anything else you would like to add/ any more comments you would like to make?)</p>	
<p><i>'no'</i></p>	

Appendix 10

Results From Quantitative Analysis

Entered for GCSEs Vs Gender

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Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.346 ^a	1	.067	.086	.052
Continuity Correction ^b	2.606	1	.106		
Likelihood Ratio	3.449	1	.063	.086	.052
Fisher's Exact Test				.086	.052
N of Valid Cases	141				

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 12.26.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

gender * Entered for GCSEs? Crosstabulation

			Entered for GCSEs?		
			no	yes	Total
gender	female	Count	19	58	77
		Expected Count	14.7	62.3	77.0
		% within gender	24.7%	75.3%	100.0%
		% within Entered for GCSEs?	70.4%	50.9%	54.6%
		% of Total	13.5%	41.1%	54.6%
	male	Count	8	56	64
		Expected Count	12.3	51.7	64.0
		% within gender	12.5%	87.5%	100.0%
		% within Entered for GCSEs?	29.6%	49.1%	45.4%
		% of Total	5.7%	39.7%	45.4%
	Total	Count	27	114	141
		Expected Count	27.0	114.0	141.0
		% within gender	19.1%	80.9%	100.0%
		% within Entered for GCSEs?	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	19.1%	80.9%	100.0%

Directional Measures

			Value	Asymp. Std. Error ^a	Approx. T	Approx. Sig.	Exact Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Lambda	Symmetric	.000	.000	^b	^b	
		gender Dependent	.000	.000	^b	^b	
		Entered for GCSEs?	.000	.000	^b	^b	
	Goodman and Kruskal tau	Dependent	.000	.000	^b	^b	
		gender Dependent	.024	.024		.068 ^c	.086
		Entered for GCSEs?	.024	.024		.068 ^c	.086
		Dependent					

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Cannot be computed because the asymptotic standard error equals zero.

c. Based on chi-square approximation

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.	Exact Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.154	.067	.086
	Cramer's V	.154	.067	.086
	Contingency Coefficient	.152	.067	.086
	N of Valid Cases	141		

Entered for GCSEs Vs Type of School Attended

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Entered for GCSEs? * school type	140	100.0%	0	.0%	140	100.0%

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Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	18.963 ^a	1	.000		
Continuity Correction ^b	17.075	1	.000		
Likelihood Ratio	18.906	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				.000	.000
N of Valid Cases	140				

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 10.21.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Entered for GCSEs? * school type Crosstabulation

		school type		
		Alternative provision	mainstream	Total
Entered for GCSEs? no	Count	20	6	26
	Expected Count	10.2	15.8	26.0
	% within Entered for GCSEs?	76.9%	23.1%	100.0%
	% within school type	36.4%	7.1%	18.6%
	% of Total	14.3%	4.3%	18.6%
	Count	35	79	114
	Expected Count	44.8	69.2	114.0
	% within Entered for GCSEs?	30.7%	69.3%	100.0%
	% within school type	63.6%	92.9%	81.4%
	% of Total	25.0%	56.4%	81.4%
Total	Count	55	85	140
	Expected Count	55.0	85.0	140.0
	% within Entered for GCSEs?	39.3%	60.7%	100.0%
	% within school type	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	39.3%	60.7%	100.0%

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.368	.000
	Cramer's V	.368	.000
	N of Valid Cases	140	

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T-Test**Group Statistics**

Entered for GCS Es?	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
number of years in care since last admittance	N Y	26 114	3.88 5.51	.655 .360

Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
number of years in care since last admittance	1.437	.233	-1.991	138	.049	-1.624	.816	-3.238	-.011
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.174	41.528	.035	-1.624	.747	-3.132

Appendix 11

Interview Codes

	Risk Factor -R	
Within Care- WC	<p>WCR</p> <p>WCR: carer- involvement/interest in education</p> <p>WCR: carer- relationship</p> <p>WCR: placement- homework facilities- desk</p> <p>WCR: placement- homework facilities- books</p> <p>WCR: placement- homework facilities- quiet space</p> <p>WCR: placement instability- changing schools</p> <p>WCR: placement instability- changes</p> <p>WCR: social worker- involvement/interest in education</p> <p>WCR: <i>placement out of borough</i></p>	<p>WCR-CI</p> <p>WCR-CR</p> <p>WCR-PHD</p> <p>WCR-PHB</p> <p>WCR-PHQ</p> <p>WCR-PICS</p> <p>WCR-PIC</p> <p>WCR-SWI</p> <p>WCR- POB</p>
Within School- WS	<p>WSR</p> <p>WSR: adult- expectations/attitudes</p> <p>WSR: peer- negative influence on learning/behaviour</p> <p>WSR: peer-bullying</p> <p>WSR: <i>feeling different from peers</i></p> <p>WSR: absence- truanting</p> <p>WSR: absence- placement changes</p> <p>WSR: absence- school moves</p> <p>WSR: absence- exclusions</p> <p>WSR: learning needs not identified</p>	<p>WSR-AE</p> <p>WSR-PNI</p> <p>WSR-PB</p> <p>WSR-FD</p> <p>WSR-AT</p> <p>WSR-APC</p> <p>WSR-ASM</p> <p>WSR-AE</p> <p>WSR- LN</p>

	<i>WSR: curriculum</i> <i>WSR: school moves</i> <i>WSR: left school before exams</i>	<i>WSR-C</i> <i>WSR-SM (Pri/sec)</i> <i>WSR-LS</i>
	Protective Factor-P	
Within Care-WC	WCP WCP: carer- involvement/interest in education WCP: carer- relationship WCP: placement- homework facilities- desk WCP: placement- homework facilities- books WCP: placement- homework facilities- quiet space WCP: placement stability- WCP: social worker- involvement/interest in education WCP: placement type WCP: contact with family members	WCP-CI WCP-CR WCP-PHD WCP-PHB WCP-PHQ WCP-PS WCP-SWI WCP-PT WCP-CF

Within School-WS	<p>WSP</p> <p>WSP: adult- expectations/attitudes WSP: peer- positive influence on learning/behaviour WSP: peer-friendships WSP: attendance high WSP: no/low placement changes WSP: no/low school moves WSP: no/low exclusions</p>	<p>WSP-AE WSP-PPI WSP-PF WSP-GA WSP-PC WSP-SM (Pri/sec) WSP-E</p>
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	Protective factor- P	
Other-O		
	Risk factor-R	
Other-O	<i>OR: emotional and behavioural difficulties</i> <i>OR: alcohol/ smoking/ drugs</i> <i>OR: criminal activity</i>	<i>OR-EBD</i> <i>OR-ASD</i> <i>OR-CA</i>

Appendix 12

Research Interview -A

Introductory paragraph (see separate sheet)	Coding
Consent given	
1. Did you attend (go to/were you registered at) just one school during Years 10 & 11? One school then attended a college because 'kicked out'- stayed there until 16 years old.	WSP-SM
2. You were chosen for this interview because you were not entered for any GCSEs or other Year 11 qualifications- Why do you think you were not entered for your exams? Wasn't in school at the time. Kicked out of school because being bullied & started retaliating, but others didn't get caught, so got in trouble for being a bully. Excluded but not made official- arranged for me to go to college.	WSR-LS WSR-PB WSR-AE
3. Do you think being in care (a looked after young person) has made a difference (to how you did at school) in you not having the opportunity to do your GCSEs or leave school with other qualifications? Yeah because not allowed to go on trips etc- singled out- social worker wouldn't fund it- felt different.	WSR-FD
4. What factors (things) at school contributed to you not (stopped you) being entered for your exams or other qualifications? Went off the rails a bit Exclusions? Number of exclusions Teachers? Got on with the teachers ok Pregnancy? Was 16 when fell pregnant and had already left college. Little boy 5 months old, helped by sister and dad.	WSR-AE WSP-AE
5. Was there anything that helped you (that you found helpful) at school (do well in your work)? 'not really' Other pupils? I had friends, but not 'true' friends	WSR-PNI
6. Did you have support from a LACES worker? Was this helpful? No	
7. What factors (things/ experiences) in care (your care placement) contributed to you not (stopped you) being entered for your GCSEs or other qualifications during KS4? Placement changes? Changes in placement -6 in 9 years- but not affected education as stayed in the same school. Felt singled out at school- wasn't allowed to go to sleep-overs etc, in a foster care placement.	WCR-PIC WSR-FD

Got in with the wrong crowd because grew up to quickly- smoke and drunk on the streets.	OR-ASD WSR-PNI
8. Were there any factors (things) in your care placement that helped you in your school work (do well at school)?	
Foster carers? Not really supportive of education- foster carer didn't believe me when she said what other pupils were doing (bullying) – same with the social worker.	WCR-FCR WCR-SWI
9. Is there anything else (anything we haven't talked about) that you think could have helped you achieve some qualifications (get some GCSEs)? Not really	
10. Do you have plans for a future job (current job) or to go back to education?	
I want to be a foster carer myself- I believe that every child deserves a second chance.	
11. Thank you very much for talking to me today, are there any aspects (parts) of your education or care experience which you think has been important in you not being entered for your exams that we haven't talked about today? (anything else you would like to add/ any more comments you would like to make?)	

Research Interview-B

Introductory paragraph (see separate sheet)	Coding
Consent given	
1. Did you attend (go to/were you registered at) just one school during Years 10 & 11?	
<p>One school attended during years 10 and 11 Left school in [REDACTED] aged 14- 2 weeks into year 10, stopped going on a daily basis in year 9. Moved to area just outside Liverpool so had to leave school because of this. Couple of months before sorted out with a new school in new area, went just before the end of year 10. Went for 2 weeks- '<i>got caught smoking, didn't like the way I was acting, I stopped going and they took me off the register.</i>' Then had teaching through looked after children service School in new area was a grammar school- mistake made because grammar school in [REDACTED] had the same name as my last school. '<i>I don't want to go to a grammar school, I want to go to a normal school- but that was my only offer, and I didn't take it up because I left it.</i>'</p>	WSP-SM WSR-APC WCR-PICS WSR-ASM WSR-AT OR-ASD
2. You were chosen for this interview because you were not entered for any GCSEs or other Year 11 qualifications- Why do you think you were not entered for your exams?	
<p><i>'if I was still in [REDACTED], I think because I went through a stage where I didn't want to do nothing and I wanted to just rebel against everything my social worker was doing- if I'd stayed a bit longer in [REDACTED] then I probably would have gone back to school, because I loved that school- I'd been there since year 7.'</i></p> <p><i>'All my friends were there-cause I was living in XXXX at the time and they are all people from that area, so I got on with everyone there anyway. And I would have went for my GCSES.</i></p> <p><i>Cause Year 9 I wasn't too bothered about that- to me that wasn't important- but year 10 was important because that was towards my GCSEs, and all my friends wanted to do it- so I thought I might as well do it, but because they moved me that changed it a bit because I went to a new area, didn't know no one and I didn't know how everything works- so I thought forget it, I'm not going to do it.'</i></p> <p>They said [REDACTED] was a bad influence- used to run off and not tell carer where I was going (often to stay at mums) - thought I should be in a new environment.</p> <p>Initially wanted to send her some where else, but then chose area outside of Liverpool.</p> <p><i>'I said I didn't' want to go, I wanted to stay in [REDACTED], but</i></p>	OR-EBD WSP-SM WSP-PF WSP-PPI WSR-SM

<p><i>they said its either XXXX or a secure unit, so I chose XXXX' . not family influence, but friends 'SW wanted to separate her from. 'Always stayed out, because didn't want to stay in care, so I'd stay out with my mates.'</i></p> <p>Went into care when I was 11/12- for about 5-6 months</p> <p>Mum took me out of care, because the police put me in care because I had gone missing for ages- for about 12 days and I was in the papers. Came back to mum who had to call the police- they put me into care. Came out after a while, '<i>mum took me out, because when I was in care I got worse than I was at home, because I'd stay at home and even though my mum was ok about it the police said she had to report it.</i>'</p> <p>When taken into care didn't go to school for the first 3-4 months, didn't have any contact with anyone from my school- head teacher there was quite good- she knew everything that was going on and my deputy, she knew that I was going through a hard time, because of the counselling they were giving me.' 'she wanted me to go back because she knew I could do it- I could do my GCSEs'.</p> <p>When in care misbehaved more- go out and stay away 1-2 weeks. Then my mum took me out of care, but my sister came into the picture (had been in Manchester for ages)- she was a bad influence- started going out more then ever.</p> <p>She was moved to Leicester, made my behaviour worse. Mum didn't know what to do, so went into an assessment unit- 3 months, got worse</p> <p>So decided to send me out of [REDACTED]. Had a placement in Wales I was going to go to.</p>	<p>WSR-PNI</p> <p>WCR-PIC</p> <p>WSR-APC</p> <p>WSP-AE</p> <p>WCR-PIC</p>
<p>3. Do you think being in care (a looked after young person) has made a difference (to how you did at school) in you not having the opportunity to do your GCSEs or leave school with other qualifications?</p>	
<p>See above</p>	
<p>4. What factors (things) at school contributed to you not (stopped you) being entered for you exams or other qualifications?</p>	
<p>'School wasn't a problem- it was the social services I hated them'</p> <p>liked school</p> <p>missed time out of school- '<i>a couple of lessons turned into a couple of days- then it was every day</i>'</p> <p>go in for registration and then go out- then stopped altogether.</p> <p>Care home used to send a taxi to make sure I got into school.</p> <p>Friends? Influence of mates- teachers didn't bother with them- '<i>"you'll get excluded, you'll end up in a dead-end job"</i>'</p> <p>Work was babyish- not our level, 'what's the point?'</p> <p>Teachers?-Some treated me differently because I was looked after- some other girls in care, we never did work out of school,</p>	<p>WCR-CR</p> <p>WSR-AT</p> <p>WSR-PNI</p> <p>WSR-AE</p> <p>WSR-C</p>

<p>because of this some thought they would give us more work during the day to keep us going & so we would catch up, but others wouldn't bother if we missed a lesson.</p> <p><i>'if we didn't understand we'd have to copy from someone else, or whatever, others would keep work back so we could catch up'</i></p> <p><i>'I don't think the work was on my level- it was too easy- that's why I didn't bother with it- I got bored'</i></p>	<p>WSR-AE WSP-AE WSR-C</p>
<p>5. Was there anything that helped you (that you found helpful) at school (do well in your work)?</p> <p>Exclusions? Didn't have exclusions- used to get away with a lot Deputy let her get away with lots- fighting, not going in Used to forge report cards and go out Head teacher didn't want her to be there, but deputy stood up for her. Did year 9 SATS, some girls did GCSEs early to practice- did most of these and got good grades-deputy tried arguing with the social worker not to move me <i>'she thought I could do it, and I knew if I stayed there and got into the work I could do it'</i> <i>'School did a lot for me'</i> 'if social services hadn't have moved me out I probably would have done my GCSES- they don't know that, I don't know that- but it was a possibility I could have done them.'</p>	<p>WSR-PNI WSP-AE WSP-AE</p>
<p>6. Did you have support from a LACES worker? Was this helpful?</p>	
<p>No – had a mentor</p> <p>7. What factors (things/ experiences) in care (your care placement) contributed to you not (stopped you) being entered for you GCSEs or other qualifications during KS4?</p>	
<p>Placements were in residential homes- not with foster carers The homes- just made sure we had eaten and done whatever we need to do & just leave us to it <i>'they wouldn't bother with us about our homework, or how's school- or nothing like that.'</i> If we went out they would just follow the procedures of reporting us missing- not calling us or seeing how we are. When we came back we just got a lecture- they wouldn't ask us how we were- did we eat etc When I went to Southport the staff were part of a team- they cared about us. Carers interest in education? Were they bothered if you missed school?- 'just paperwork to them' <i>'my relationship with everyone- I didn't get on with no one- so no</i></p>	<p>WCR-CR WCP-CI WCR-CI OR-EBD</p>

<p>one could help me'</p> <p>if they told me to go to school – I wouldn't go to school because they said it, not because I didn't want to.'</p> <p>'I just done everything to rebel against what they said'- everyone in the system</p> <p>Is 'they your mum as well? Mum had to back off, SW told her not to have contact with me- because often got the blame when I didn't do as she asked.- she mainly asked how I was and if I wanted to do things- whereas they told me what to do- so big difference.</p>	WCP-CF
<p>Number of placements? In Southport for 3 years, in one placement, from Jan lived in independent place where skills were assessed.</p>	WCR-PIC
<p>Social workers? SW more interested in Behaviour rather than education- more bothered about behaviour and whether I was complying with them or in trouble with the police</p> <p><i>'education was not a priority'</i></p>	WCR-SWI
<p>8. Were there any factors (things) in your care placement that helped you in your school work (do well at school)?</p>	
<p>Could SW/ staff at homes have made a difference?</p> <p>'could have, if they did and I still didn't go then it would have been my fault, I don't know.'</p> <p>If still in [REDACTED] could have made a difference, but in another sense it was a good thing because I've settled and don't get in trouble no more.</p> <p>Before always in trouble with the police, and always getting caught- now nothing recent on criminal record, got a job and everything is going well.</p> <p>Don't think they should have moved me out so early (of the area)- at least wait for me to finish school.</p>	<p>WCR-CI</p> <p>OR-CA</p> <p>WCR- POB</p>
<p>9. Is there anything else (anything we haven't talked about) that you think could have helped you achieve some qualifications (get some GCSEs)?</p>	
<p>no</p>	
<p>10. Do you have plans for a future job (current job) or to go back to education?</p>	
<p>Was going to go into law- GCSES this year, A-levels next year, then the year after a xxxx course in law. Sorted out with connexions worker, but then I got this job, some days I do morning shifts and some days I work till 7.30/ 8.00, and by the time I get back on the bus it takes me an hour and a half two hours- so can't do evening course.</p>	
<p>When I get another job and have weekends free I'll be able to study.</p>	
<p>On register for own flat- currently doing independent living with</p>	

mum's house Done level 1 & 2 OCR qualifications One of the youth offending courses went on she did OCR courses.	
11. Thank you very much for talking to me today, are there any aspects (parts) of your education or care experience which you think has been important in you not being entered for your exams that we haven't talked about today? (anything else you would like to add/ any more comments you would like to make?)	

Research Interview -C

Introductory paragraph (see separate sheet)	Coding
Consent given	
1. Did you attend (go to/were you registered at) just one school during Years 10 & 11?	
I wasn't in school during years 10 & 11, left in year 9 to attend an alternative provision where you work in a garden centre. Just one school during secondary education	WSR-LS WSP-SM
2. You were chosen for this interview because you were not entered for any GCSEs or other Year 11 qualifications- Why do you think you were not entered for you exams?	
Because I wasn't in school, and the place I went to didn't do GCSEs	WSR-LS
3. Do you think being in care (a looked after young person) has made a difference (to how you did at school) in you not having the opportunity to do your GCSEs or leave school with other qualifications?	
Not really, I was living with my parents anyway	
4. What factors (things) at school contributed to you not (stopped you) being entered for you exams or other qualifications?	
'I didn't get on with anyone at school, I used to get bullied but the teachers used to blame me.' Being in care didn't make any difference. Stopped going in the end.	WSR-PB WSR-AE WSR-AT
5. Was there anything that helped you (that you found helpful) at school (do well in your work)?	
No	
6. Did you have support from a LACES worker? Was this helpful?	
No	
7. What factors (things/ experiences) in care (your care placement) contributed to you not (stopped you) being entered for you GCSEs or other qualifications during KS4?	

I was at home for most of the time with my family/ parents. ' <i>I was in foster care for about 11months when I was 9 years old, with a carer and her daughter</i> '- too short a time to know if that made any difference, and I was in primary school at the time	WCP-PS
8. Were there any factors (things) in your care placement that helped you in your school work (do well at school)?	
No	
9. Is there anything else (anything we haven't talked about) that you think could have helped you achieve some qualifications (get some GCSEs)?	
No	
10. Do you have plans for a future job (current job) or to go back to education?	
' <i>I was thinking about getting a job, but then I thought a Dj-ing course would be fun.</i> ' Not on one yet but going to ring connexions to find out if there are any.	
11. Thank you very much for talking to me today, are there any aspects (parts) of your education or care experience which you think has been important in you not being entered for your exams that we haven't talked about today? (anything else you would like to add/ any more comments you would like to make?)	
No	

Research Interview-D

Introductory paragraph (see separate sheet)	Coding
Consent given	
1. Did you attend (go to/were you registered at) just one school during Years 10 & 11?	
In care home during GCSE years, and taught in the school attached to the home- they said they were not qualified enough to do GCSEs there. ' <i>I was waiting to go into mainstream school, but they said the assessment s and meeting I was going through were too much with exams as well.</i> ' Went to two different secondary schools and 2 specialist/ alternative provisions lined to two residential units. Had baby in June when 15 years old- so could have done GCSEs Went to college when baby was 3 months old from September to February to do maths and English, but it was too much when the baby was so young- hoping to restart this September.	WSR-LS WSR-SM WCR-PICS OR-PP

2. You were chosen for this interview because you were not entered for any GCSEs or other Year 11 qualifications- Why do you think you were not entered for your exams?	
See above	
3. Do you think being in care (a looked after young person) has made a difference (to how you did at school) in you not having the opportunity to do your GCSEs or leave school with other qualifications?	
First care home in Leicester helped with my education because they made you go to school everyday. There were 4 children to one teacher, so it was almost one to one. I learnt more because the work was at the correct level for me. ' <i>When I went there I was 3 years behind, but by the time I had been there a year I had caught up.</i> ' If other children were angry or causing trouble they were put in a chill out room so they couldn't disrupt the lessons. Used to abscond, but had to go there every day.	WSP-AE WSP-GA WSP-AS WSP-C WSP-PPI WSP-AE
4. What factors (things) at school contributed to you not (stopped you) being entered for you exams or other qualifications?	
Missed lots of school during primary years because lived with my dad who wouldn't let me go to school. ' <i>We would be up all night, sometimes tried to go to school in the afternoon, but had to take ourselves and often sent home because we were too tired.</i> ' When I went to live with mum in the holidays she was always trying to help us catch up by giving us workbooks etc. eventually court sent us back to live with mum full time, but then I struggled to catch up. One of the residential units the school gave us work for 8 years olds- the same as a girl there who had learning difficulties. It was too easy and I got frustrated. ' <i>school was really poor, no rules and they didn't teach us anything</i> ' eventually I was allowed to work separately with my sister to do SATs exam papers. Used to truant and couldn't learn	WSR-C WSR-AT
5. Was there anything that helped you (that you found helpful) at school (do well in your work)?	
See answer to question 3	
6. Did you have support from a LACES worker? Was this helpful?	
No	
7. What factors (things/ experiences) in care (your care placement) contributed to you not (stopped you) being entered for you GCSEs or other qualifications during KS4?	
I think I have been to 10 or more schools altogether, about 8 in primary (when not in care), 2 secondary schools and 2 provisions attached to residential units. Number of moves- [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED]	WSR-SM WCR-PIC

<p>One of the residential units we were treated like babies, baby monitors were placed on the landing '<i>we couldn't be ourselves</i>' Carers didn't give us any advice and we weren't allowed to do work experience- '<i>I really wanted to do my work experience, now I have no experience of working</i>'.</p> <p>I had 3 different social workers, I was only meant to be in care 6 months but it ended up being two years (because things were going well and I was attending school they just left me) '<i>She only got involved when I was naughty; when things were going ok there were no phone calls or visits.</i>'</p> <p>If I absconded I was threatened with a secure unit- that's why I couldn't go back to my mum even though she wanted me- if I absconded once they said they would put me on a full care order and my mum would never see me again- she couldn't risk that.</p> <p>Because in care longer than I should have been '<i>I did a runner for 2 weeks, then 3 months because they wouldn't listen to me.</i>'</p> <p>Peers bad influence</p>	WCR-CR WCR-CI WCR-SWC WCR-SWI WCR-SWR WSR-PNI
8. Were there any factors (things) in your care placement that helped you in your school work (do well at school)?	
Being forced to go to school	WCP-CI/ WSP-GA
9. Is there anything else (anything we haven't talked about) that you think could have helped you achieve some qualifications (get some GCSEs)?	
No but have done first part of ASDAN course, and had to do a parenting, cookery and first aid course as part of my assessment to keep my baby.	
10. Do you have plans for a future job (current job) or to go back to education?	
I want to go back to college and get GCSEs then do interpreting- can speak Bengali well. College course will be part time- 3 hours a week so will get a job for the rest of the time and put the baby in nursery. Care should cover college fees as still only 17 years old	
11. Thank you very much for talking to me today, are there any aspects (parts) of your education or care experience which you think has been important in you not being entered for your exams that we haven't talked about today? (anything else you would like to add/ any more comments you would like to make?)	
No	

Appendix 13

Research Interview –A: Intercoder Reliability

Introductory paragraph (see separate sheet)	Coding
Consent given	
1. Did you attend (go to/were you registered at) just one school during Years 10 & 11? One school then attended a college because 'kicked out'- stayed there until 16 years old.	WSR-AE (D)
2. You were chosen for this interview because you were not entered for any GCSEs or other Year 11 qualifications- Why do you think you were not entered for your exams? Wasn't in school at the time. Kicked out of school because being bullied & started retaliating, but others didn't get caught, so got in trouble for being a bully. Excluded but not made official- arranged for me to go to college.	WSR-LS (A) WSR-PB (A) WSR-AE (A)
3. Do you think being in care (a looked after young person) has made a difference (to how you did at school) in you not having the opportunity to do your GCSEs or leave school with other qualifications? Yeah because not allowed to go on trips etc- singled out- social worker wouldn't fund it- felt different.	WSR-FD (A)
4. What factors (things) at school contributed to you not (stopped you) being entered for your exams or other qualifications? Went off the rails a bit Exclusions? Number of exclusions Teachers? Got on with the teachers ok Pregnancy? Was 16 when fell pregnant and had already left college. Little boy 5 months old, helped by sister and dad.	WSR-AE (A) WSP-AE (A)
5. Was there anything that helped you (that you found helpful) at school (do well in your work)? 'not really' Other pupils? I had friends, but not 'true' friends	(D)
6. Did you have support from a LACES worker? Was this helpful? No	
7. What factors (things/ experiences) in care (your care placement) contributed to you not (stopped you) being entered for your GCSEs or other qualifications during KS4? Placement changes? Changes in placement -6 in 9 years- but not affected education as stayed in the same school. Felt singled out at school- wasn't allowed to go to sleep-overs etc, in a foster care placement.	WCR-PIC (A) WSR-FD (A)

Got in with the wrong crowd because grew up to quickly- smoke and drunk on the streets.	OR-ASD (A) (D)
8. Were there any factors (things) in your care placement that helped you in your school work (do well at school)?	
Foster carers? Not really supportive of education- foster carer didn't believe me when she said what other pupils were doing (bullying) – same with the social worker.	WCR-CI (D) WCR-CR (A) WCR-SWI (A)
9. Is there anything else (anything we haven't talked about) that you think could have helped you achieve some qualifications (get some GCSEs)?	
Not really	
10. Do you have plans for a future job (current job) or to go back to education?	
I want to be a foster carer myself- I believe that every child deserves a second chance.	
11. Thank you very much for talking to me today, are there any aspects (parts) of your education or care experience which you think has been important in you not being entered for your exams that we haven't talked about today? (anything else you would like to add/ any more comments you would like to make?)	

(D)= disagreement- either coding is different or not present

(A)- agreement- same code used

Number of agreements

$$\text{Intercoder reliability} = \frac{\text{Number of agreements}}{\text{Total number of agreements + disagreements}} \times 100$$

11

$$\text{Intercoder reliability} = \frac{11}{11 + 4} \times 100$$

Intercoder reliability = 73.3 % on first coding

Appendix 14

200

Definitions of Codes

Code and label	Definition
Within care risk factors	
WCR-CI carer involvement/ interest in education	Carer's lack of involvement in or interest in the LAC's education is identified as being a negative influence by the young person
WCR-CR Carer relationship	Reference to relationship with carer being negative/ difficult
WCR-PHD Placement- homework facilities- desk	No desk to complete homework at in placement
WCR-PHB Placement- homework facilities- books	No books to facilitate completion of homework in placement
WCR-PHQ Placement-homework facilities- quiet space	No quiet space to facilitate the completing of homework in placement
WCR-PICS Placement instability- changing school	Care placement instability leading to changes in school
WCR-PIC Placement instability-changing placement	Care placement instability leading to changes in care placement
WCR-SWI	Social worker's lack of involvement in or interest in the LAC's education is identified as being

<p>Social worker-involvement/interest in education WCR-SWC Social worker-changes WCR-SWR Social worker-relationship WCR- POB Placement out of borough</p>	<p>a negative influence by the young person Changes in LAC's named Social worker is identified is referred to as being a negative experience Relationship between LAC and social worker is described negatively LAC identifies having a care placement out of borough as negative</p>
<p>Within school risk factors</p> <p>WSR-AE adult- expectations/attitudes WSR-PNI peer- negative influence on learning/behaviour WSR-PB peer-bullying WSR-FD <i>feeling different from peers</i> WSR-AT absence- truanting WSR-APC absence- placement changes</p>	<p>Reference to adults within the school having negative expectations/perceptions of the LAC LAC identifies peer influence as affecting learning, behaviour and attendance at school LAC identifies bullying by peers as having a negative influence on their school experience/outcomes LAC identifies 'feeling different' from peers because of being in care, or being restricted by care rules regulations as having a negative influence on their school experience/outcomes LAC refers to truanting from school as having a negative influence on their school experience/outcomes LAC reports that they missed time from school because of changes in their care placement</p>

<p>WSR-ASM absence- school moves</p> <p>WSR-AEx absence- exclusions</p> <p>WSR- LN learning needs not identified</p> <p>WSR-C <i>curriculum level/interest</i></p> <p>WSR-SM (Pri/sec) <i>school moves</i></p> <p>WSR-LS <i>left school before exams</i></p>	<p>LAC reports that they missed time from school because of changes in the school they were attending</p> <p>LAC reports that they missed time from school because of internal or external exclusions</p> <p>LAC reports that they did not have their Special educational needs identified in school/ did not get enough help or support with their learning</p> <p>LAC reports that the curriculum was not engaging/ interesting, or at too high/low level for them to access/find motivating</p> <p>Lac reports that moving school multiple times had a negative influence on their education and learning</p> <p>LAC reports leaving school before their GCSE exams</p>
	<p>Within care protective factors</p> <p>WCP-CI carer- involvement/interest in education</p> <p>WCP-CR carer- relationship</p> <p>WCP-PHD placement- homework facilities- desk</p> <p>WCP-PHB placement- homework facilities- books</p>

WCP-PHQ placement- homework facilities- quiet space WCP-PS placement stability WCP-SWI social worker- involvement/interest in education WCP-PT placement type WCP-CF contact with family members	Quiet space available to support completion of homework in placement LAC identifies placement as being stable with few changes LAC reports positive involvement/ interest of Social worker in their education LAC reports positive influence of maintaining contact with their biological family
Within school protective factors WSP-AE adult- expectations/attitudes WSP-PPI peer- positive influence on learning/behaviour WSP-PF peer-friendships WSP-GA Good attendance WSP-PC	LAC reports positive attitude and high expectations of adults in their school Lac report positive influence of peers on learning, attendance and behaviour in school Lac reports having friends at school LAC reports having good attendance at school

	<p>no/low placement changes</p> <p>WSP-SM (Pri/sec) no/low school moves</p> <p>WSP-E no/low exclusions</p> <p>WSP-AS <i>additional adult support</i></p> <p>WSP-C <i>curriculum interest/level</i></p>	<p>LAC reports few care placement changes</p> <p>LAC reports few moves between schools</p> <p>LAC reports few external/ internal exclusions</p> <p>LAC reports additional adult support for learning as a positive influence on school outcomes</p> <p>LAC reports curriculum was engaging/interesting and/or at the correct level for them to access/ find motivating</p>
	<p>Other risk factors</p> <p>OR-EBD <i>emotional and behavioural difficulties</i></p> <p>OR-ASD <i>alcohol/ smoking/ drugs</i></p> <p>OR-CA <i>criminal activity</i></p> <p>OR-PP <i>pregnancy/ parenthood</i></p>	<p>LAC reports emotional and behavioural difficulties as having a negative impact on their care/school experiences</p> <p>LAC reports use of alcohol/drugs/smoking</p> <p>LAC reports involvement with police/ criminal activity</p> <p>Lac reports becoming a pregnant/ being a parent whilst of school age</p>

Appendix 15

Individually Displayed Interview Result Matrix

Interviewee	Within care factors		Within school factors		Other factors
	Risk	Protective	Risk	Protective	Risk
A	WCR-PIC WCR-CR WCR-SWI		WSR-LS WSR-PB WSR-AE WSR-AEx WSR-FD WSR-PNI	WSP-SM WSP-AE	OR-ASD
B	WCR-PIC WCR-CR WCR-CI WCR-SWI WCR- POB	WCP-CI WCP-CF	WSR-APC WSR-ASM WSR-AT WSR-SM WSR-PNI WSR-AE WSR-C	WSP-SM WSP-PF WSP-PPI WSP-AE	OR-ASD OR-EBD OR-CA
C		WCP-PS	WSR-LS WSR-PB WSR-AE WSR-AT	WSP-SM	
D	WCR-PIC WCR-CR WCR-CI WCR-SWC WCR-SWI WCR-SWR	WCP-CI	WSR-LS WSR-SM WSR-AT WSR-C WSR-PNI	WSP-AE WSP-GA WSP-AS WSP-C WSP-PPI	OR-PP

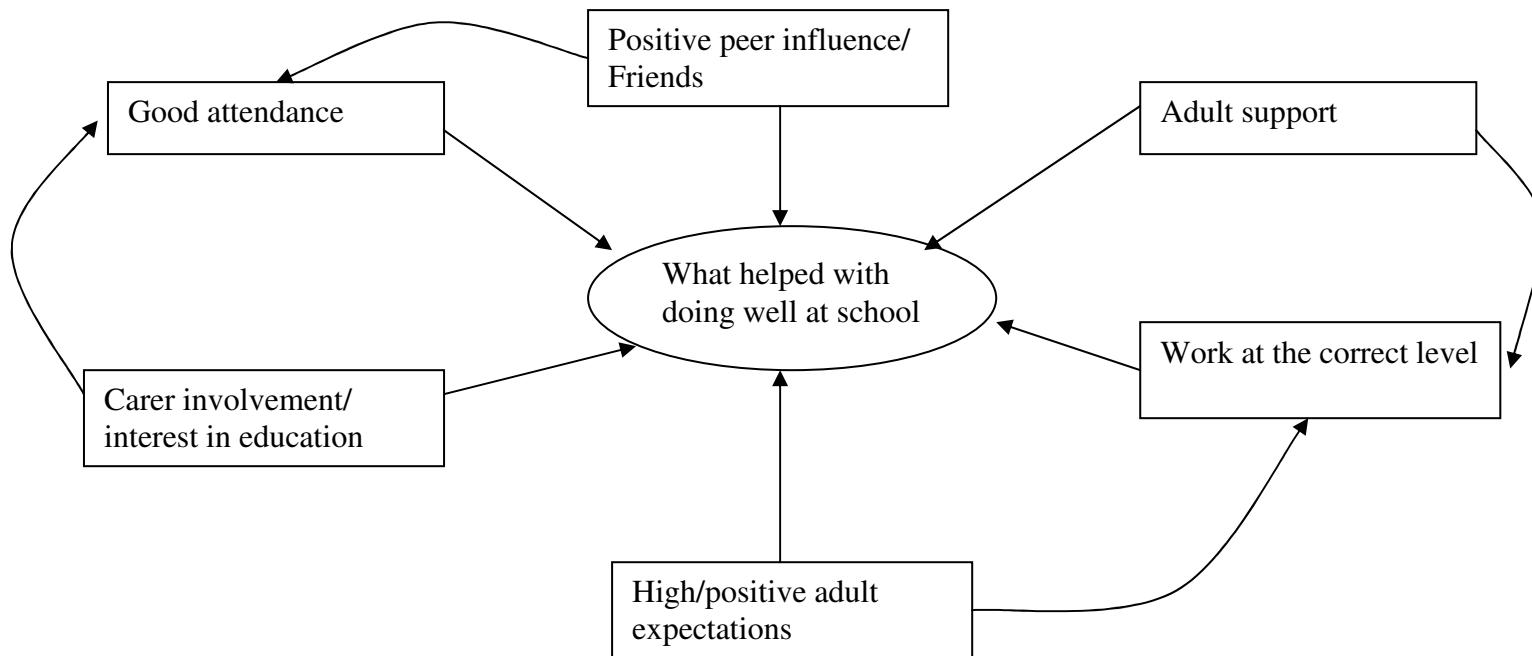
Appendix 16

Combined Interview Results Matrix

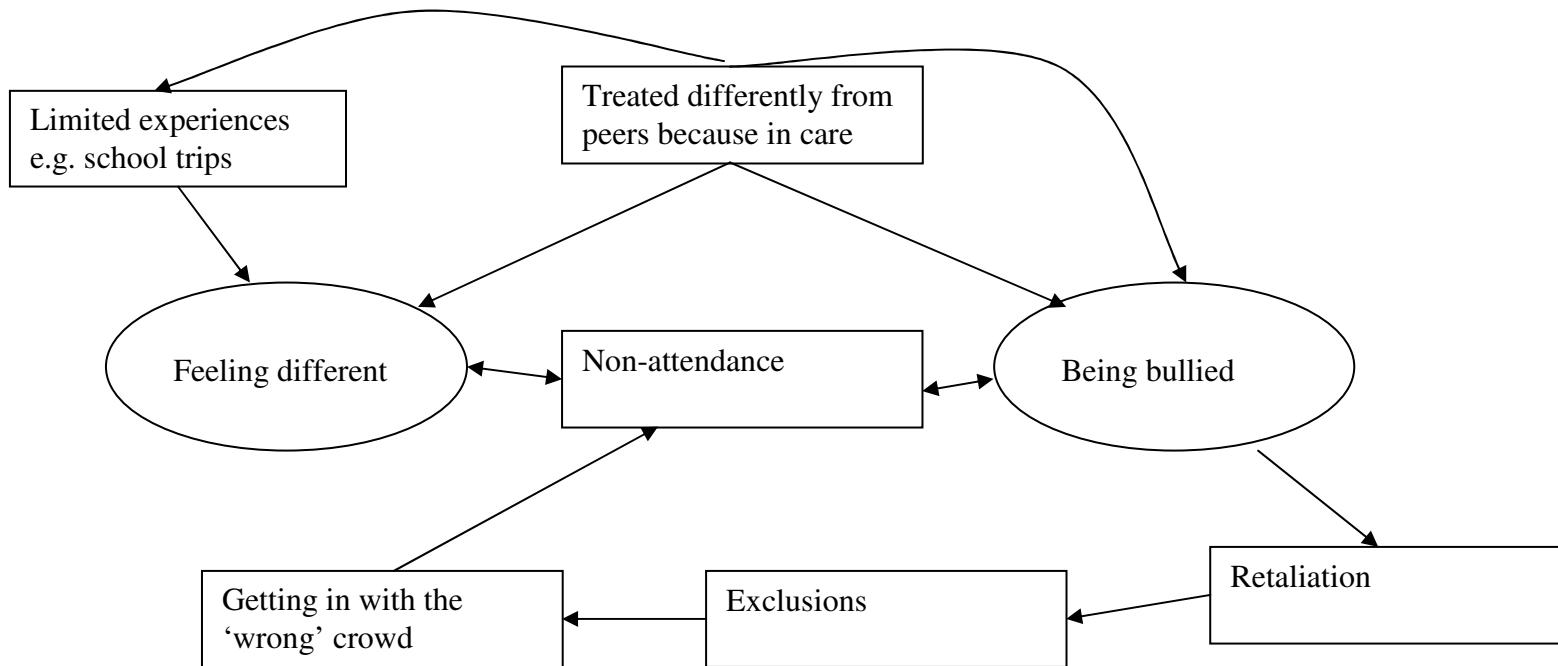
<u>Within School Risk Factors</u>	<u>Other Risk Factors</u>	<u>Within Care Risk Factors</u>
<p>left school before exams (3/4)</p> <p>peer negative influence (3/4)</p> <p>absence due to truanting (3/4)</p> <p>negative adult expectations/attitudes (3/4)</p> <p>bullying (2/4)</p> <p>school moves (2/4)</p> <p>curriculum interest/ level (2/4)</p> <p>absence due to exclusions (1/4)</p> <p>absence due to placement changes (1/4)</p> <p>absence due to school moves (1/4)</p> <p>felt different (1/4)</p>	<p>Alcohol, smoking and drugs (2/4)</p> <p>Emotional and behavioural difficulties (1/4)</p> <p>Criminal activity (1/4)</p> <p>Pregnant/parent before leaving school age (1/4)</p>	<p>Relationship with carer (3/4)</p> <p>Social worker interest/involvement in education (3/4)</p> <p>Placement instability- changing placements (2/4)</p> <p>Carer involvement interest in education (2/4)</p> <p>Placement instability-changing schools (2/4)</p> <p>Placement out of borough (1/4)</p> <p>Changes in named social worker (1/4)</p> <p>Social worker relationship (1/4)</p>
<u>Within School Protective Factors</u>		<u>Within Care Protective Factors</u>
<p>Few school moves (3/4)</p> <p>Positive adult expectations/attitudes (3/4)</p> <p>Positive peer influence (2/4)</p> <p>Peer friendships (1/4)</p> <p>Good attendance (1/4)</p> <p>Additional adult support (1/4)</p> <p>Curriculum interest/level (1/4)</p>		<p>Carer interest/involvement in education (2/4)</p> <p>Contact with family members (1/4)</p> <p>Placement stability (1/4)</p>

Appendix 17

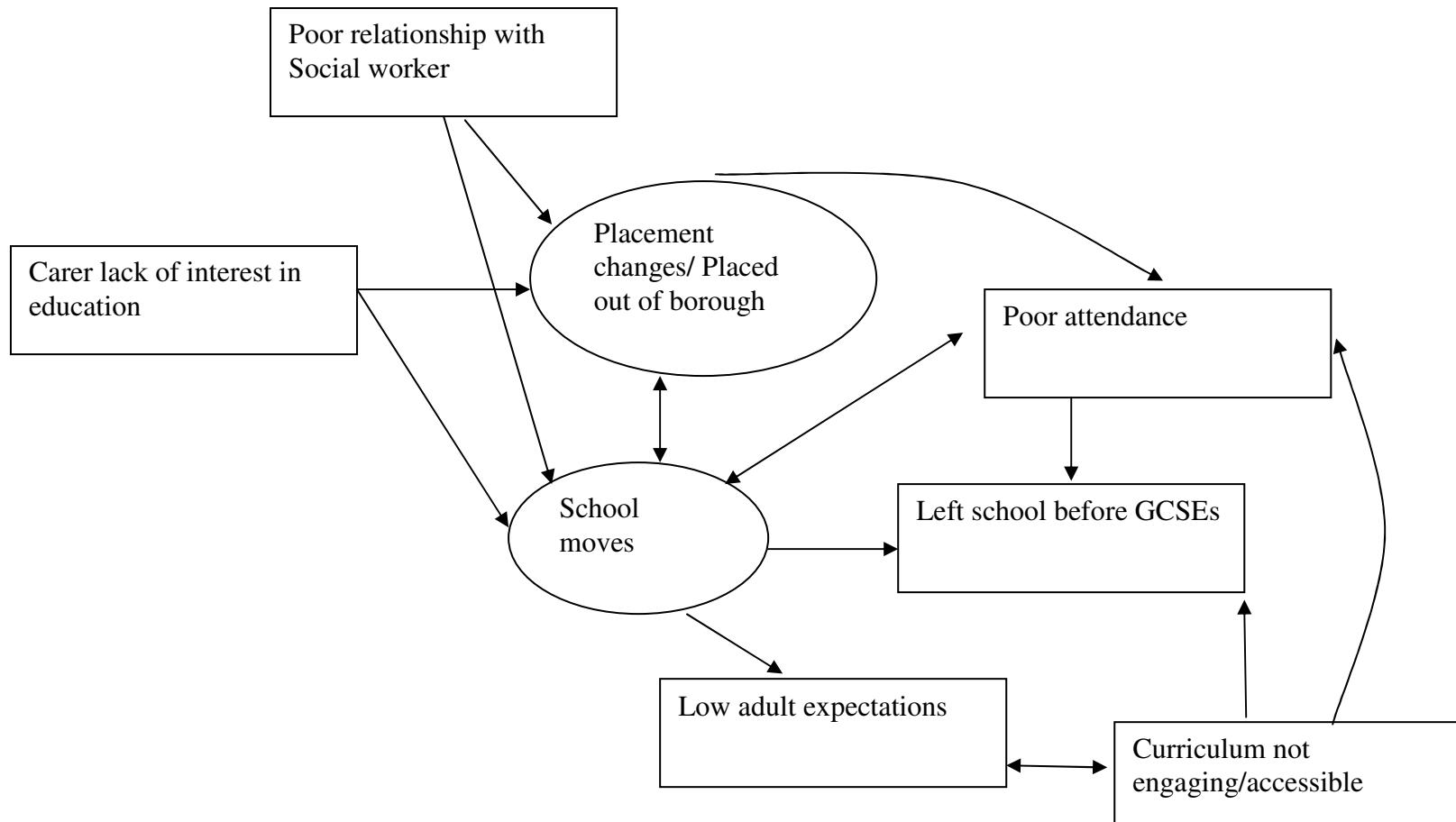
Relationships between Dominant Protective Factors Identified in Interviews



Relationships between Dominant Risk Factors Identified in Interviews I



Relationships between Dominant Risk Factors Identified in Interviews II



Appendix 18

DfES 2003 Ethnicity Codes for Sample II

Code	Ethnicity	Number of pupils in sample
BCRB	Caribbean	3
MWAP	Mixed White and Pakistani	3
WBRI	White British	13
MABL	Asian and Black	1
MWBC	White and Black Caribbean	1
WOTW	Other White	1
MOTM	Other mixed background	2
ABAN	Bangladeshi	2
		Total= 26