

Teachers Who Care

Executive Summary, Key Findings, and Recommendations

Full report available at: <http://becomecharity.org.uk/about-us/improving-the-care-system/reports-and-resources/>

Executive Summary

Teachers Who Care reports on our findings from a survey of teachers about their experiences teaching children in care. We asked them about training they've received, their experiences in the classroom, and their perspectives on their colleagues and their school overall. This follows on from our 2017 research report [Perceptions of Care](#), which asked young people how they felt society, including teachers, perceived children in care and care leavers.

In our research, we found many disparities among teachers' experiences. Some received good quality training in this area before they qualified, but the majority did not. They meet their students and feel unprepared to fully support those who are looked after, whether that is through meeting the statutory requirements of the Personal Education Plan and working with the Virtual School, or through understanding the experiences of these students by having a good level of knowledge about the care system and children's services. Without this background, teachers are struggling to meet the needs of some of their most vulnerable students and find themselves rushing to catch up.

We also found that harmful generalisations about children in care are heard far too often in schools. This confirms the fears of the young people we spoke to in *Perceptions of Care*, who were concerned that teachers don't understand what life in care is like, and the impact that can have on their education.

Getting the right support from their teachers can make a big difference to children in care. For teachers to provide this support, they need to be well supported themselves, with the right training, good contact with children's services, and a supportive school environment where everyone understands best practice for meeting the education and pastoral needs of the children in care in their school.

In this report, we recommend that more training, more communication, and more sharing of resources and knowledge can go a long way to giving teachers the tools they need to give all of their students the best possible opportunity to reach their goals in school and beyond.

Key Findings

Lack of Training

- 87% of respondents received no training about looked after children before they qualified as a teacher.
- 75% of teachers who qualified post-2010 received no training pre-qualification.
- 26% of respondents received no training about looked after children before or after they qualified.

Working Together

- 31% of respondents said 'not enough support from children's services' was their biggest challenge in working with children in care.

Knowledge, Attitudes and Stigma

- 87% of respondents had heard at least one colleague express a negative generalisation about children in care, and 31% of respondents had heard such views often.
- Teachers were generally positive about the overall level of knowledge and support for looked after children in their schools, with 60% of respondents rating their school a 7 out of 10 or higher. The median rating was 8 out of 10.

Recommendations

1. All routes into teaching should include information about children in care, including trauma and attachment aware behaviour management, what being in care is like, and key concepts such as the Virtual School, Designated Teacher, and Personal Education Plan. This should apply to university and school-led training and qualifications.
2. All schools should provide whole staff training on supporting children in care, in order to address any gaps in knowledge for new starters as well as refresh and update all staff awareness and improve collaboration between the Designated Teacher and their colleagues.
3. Virtual schools, children's services and schools should have clear, joined-up communication and information services that promote best practice while protecting children's right to privacy. Key professionals in each organisation should keep in touch regularly in order to ensure that children and young people receive consistent support.
4. Each virtual school should have resources available to teachers to inform them of what services are available and how they can get support when needed. This could be as straightforward as promoting the resources created by organisations such as the National Association of Virtual School Heads (NAVSH) or developing something more tailored to local circumstances if appropriate.
5. Schools should invite social workers to meet with staff to explain their work, to create opportunities for closer collaboration and information sharing.
6. School senior leadership should work with the Designated Teacher to identify any stereotypes and prejudice among school staff and deliver training and resources to provide better insight into the care system and the experiences of children in care.
7. Whole school assemblies should be delivered, discussing care in a positive way for the benefit of both staff and students.
8. The care system should be discussed in relevant classes such as PSHE so that all pupils have a better understanding of what some of their peers are experiencing and help to reduce any bullying or isolation that some looked after children experience.
9. Professionals across the sector should consider their use of language and how it influences attitudes and be prepared to constructively challenge colleagues when they come across harmful generalisations.



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