INCREASING PARTICIPATION OF CARE EXPERIENCED CHILDREN TO ENHANCE ENGAGEMENT WITH SCHOOL

Inverclyde Educational Psychology Service

Aim:

To enhance the engagement of care experienced children and their families within Inverclyde Primary schools by using The Promise (Independent Care Review, 2020), as a guide, for collaborative action research (CAR) (applying the Assess, Plan, Do, Review Model) (Dundee Educational Psychology Service; 2016).
The service has created a multiagency implementation team from across education and social work to work alongside children and their families to take this forward.

National Picture

The Independent Care Review (2020):

Independent Care Review

• An independent, root and branch review of the care system began in February 2017.
• The Care Review listened very carefully to those with experience of living and working in and around the 'care system' to properly understand what needs to change.

the promise scotland

The Promise Scotland (2021)

• It was clear from the review findings that Scotland must not aim to fix a broken system but set a higher collective ambition that enables loving, supportive and nurturing relationships as a basis on which to thrive.

• The Care Review published seven reports:
The Promise – The Money – Follow The Money – The Rules – The Pinky Promise – The Plan – Thank You

• The Promise Scotland narrates a vision for Scotland, built on five foundations and is responsible for driving the work of change demanded by the findings of the Independent Care Review to support shifts in policy, practice and culture to ensure that every child grows up loved, safe and respected, able to realise their full potential.

These are the five foundations that underpin #KeepThePromise

Voice — Family — Care — People — Scaffolding

Some Key aspects of The Promise to consider in relation to Education:

- Improving the educational attainment of care experienced people should not be the sole responsibility of school staff, but Scotland must support the broader workforce and carers to value and engage with the educational progress of the children in their care.
- Scotland must ensure that in being ambitious for achievement and opportunity, there is also recognition that schools provide an important place for care experienced children to enjoy stable, nurturing relationships that prepare them for life beyond school.

Local Picture: How will Inverclyde #Keep the Promise?

- Inverclyde has proposed a plan that ensures Inverclyde puts children, families and the workforce at the centre of its plan from the outset
- A small dedicated team will work in partnership and with children, young people and their families to actively participate in the definition, design and the delivery of our vision of the Promise, I-Promise (Inverclyde, 2020).
- This CAE will feed into this bigger plan.

I-PROMISE INVERCLYDE PROMISE
THE PLAN PROPOSAL

Why is pupil participation important?

It is their right

Under Article 12 of the UNCRC, every child has the right to be heard in matters affecting them and to participate in the life of their family, community and society (UNCRC, 1989)

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act (2014) embeds this right (Article 12) in primary legislation under Part 1

The Seven Golden Rules for Participation (Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland, 2016), are designed to help anyone working with and for children and young people to support them to understand, experience and exercise their participation rights.
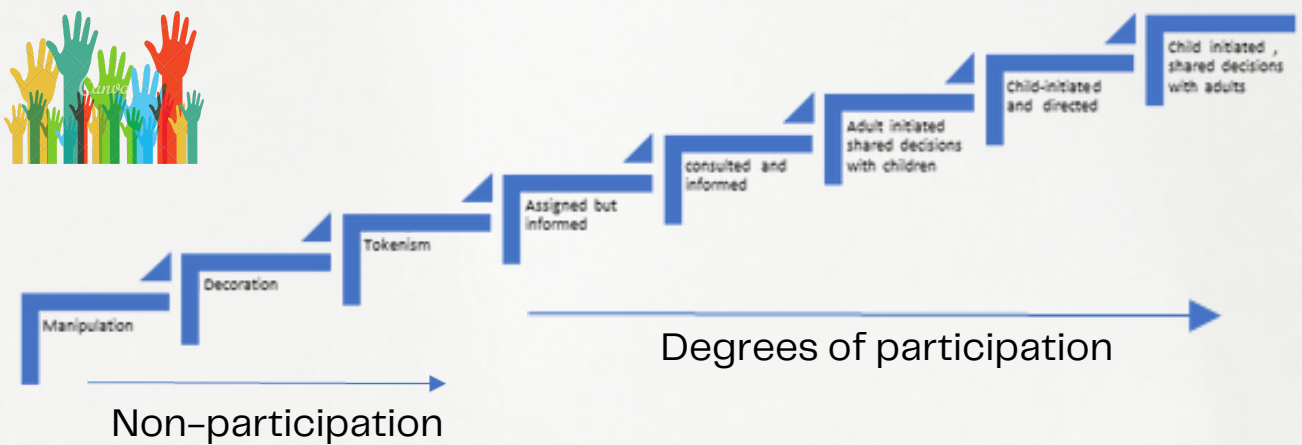
It can have a positive impact

Learner Participation in Education Settings (3-18) (Education Scotland and the University of Stirling, 2018). Identified key principles for successful participation by looking at a number of establishments in Scotland. In establishments where it found the key principles in action impact was seen in terms of relationships between pupils and staff, pupil wellbeing, teaching and learning, ethos, teamwork, citizenship and achievement and attainment. It also suggested that where participation was maximised along the principles outlined above that there was a considerable closing of the poverty related attainment gap

How Young People's Participation in School Supports Achievement and Attainment (Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People, 2015) references the work of Biesta (2008) in stating that there are two starting points for establishments to make participation purposeful and more meaningful (a) agreement that younger and older pupils are in fact equal, and (b) that pupils should not always be seen as dependent on adults as somehow their 'masters.' This should lead to a sharing of power at an intergenerational level. This is termed as intergenerational emancipation as children, young people and adults are seen to benefit in contexts where participation is genuine, democratic and empowering.

·In Hart's (1992) seminal paper on participation he highlights the dangers in seeing participation as being driven in a top-down manner, seeing this as being tokenistic. He sees the aims of participation being to empower stakeholders to take greater levels of control of their own situation. This he envisages being an evolutionary process comprising eight steps –

Manipulation
Decoration
Tokenism
Assigned but informed
consulted and informed
Adult initiated shared decisions with children
Child-initiated and directed
Child initiated, shared decisions with adults

Degrees of participation

Non-participation

Why is Pupil Participation important for care experienced young people?

Some key findings from the latest Scottish Government (2021) education statistics for care experienced children and young people in education.

Care Experienced children and young people leave school earlier than their non-Care Experienced peers.

School leavers who experience placement moves during the school year, are less likely to attain qualifications of all levels. With a direct correlation between poorer results and more placement moves.

The rate of exclusions among pupils looked after within the year is much higher than in the general school population.

Care Experienced school leavers continue to have lower attainment than other school leavers. In 2019/20 64% of all school leavers had 1 or more qualification at SCQF level 6 or better, whereas only 14% of school leavers looked after within the last year had qualifications of that level.

Care Experienced school leavers are also more likely to leave school with no passes at SCQF 3 or better, with 13% of school leavers looked after within the last year being recorded with no passes, compared to 2% of all school leavers.

Care experience and wellbeing needs

• Even when taking into account poverty and disadvantage, care experienced children appear to have poorer mental health than their non-looked after peers.
• Both pre-care and in-care experiences may contribute to poor mental health among looked after children.
• Looked after children can face multiple barriers when it comes to addressing mental health issues, including complexity of problems, late identification, long waiting times for appointments, service inflexibility in mode of delivery and problems addressed, and stigma surrounding mental health issues (Priestly & Kennedy 2015).
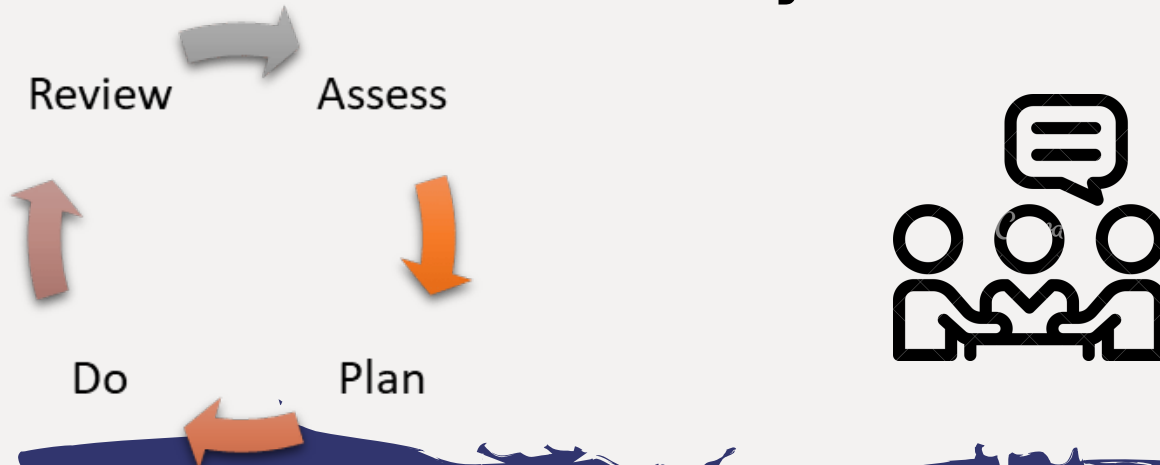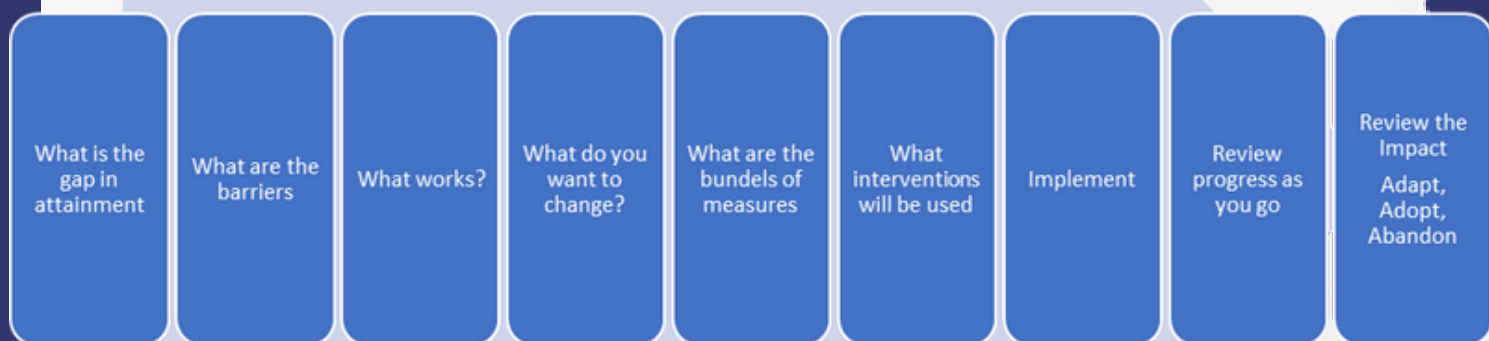
NEXT STEPS

- Two pilot Primary Schools have been identified
- Schools will be supported by the implementation team (Educational Psychologist, Children's Rights Officer, School Social Worker and Youth worker) to establish a participation group for children.
- This will primarily be consultative support but will also include support to measure impact and direct involvement with the group (as and when required).
- This will be a partnership approach with pastoral care, the school nurture team and school Barnardo's worker. They will be responsible for the operationalising of the groups, as they already have direct links with the children and established relationships. This will also support the sustainability of the group and an exist strategy for the implementation team.
- The overall purpose of setting up the groups is to improve pupil and family participation and engagement with their education establishments.
- This will be achieved by –
  - Creating a space to have their voices heard on topics that affect them, in a safe, engaging environment.
  - Supporting children to develop and shape the content of the group themselves.
  - Developing social skills and work on social interactions and will help to build confidence and self-esteem.
  - Increasing awareness of children's rights.
  - Developing new skills and take part in various activities.

CAE will be used to carry out this work

Review → Assess → Plan → Do → Review

Some things to consider as part of this CAE

| What is the gap in attainment | What are the barriers | What works? | What do you want to change? | What are the bundels of measures | What interventions will be used | Implement | Review progress as you go | Review the Impact Adapt, Adopt, Abandon |

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