

Case Study #8

UNI-FI, DERBYSHIRE (UK) - TRANSFORMING ACHIEVEMENT AND LIFE CHANCES OF CHILDREN IN CARE

There are approximately 65,000 children in care in the UK. These young people underachieve compared to their peers and are over-represented in worklessness, criminality and mental ill-health statistics as adults.



APPROACH

The Derbyshire Uni-Fi parenting programme seeks to transform its corporate parenting model in order to raise ambitions for children in care.

Seeking to create a parenting model that replicates normal parenting as accurately as possible, the council has been part of NESTA's ambitious Creative Councils programme. Derbyshire County Council developed a programme underpinned by the social pedagogy approach, which combines education and care. The emphasis is on the child taking charge of his or her own life, and the social pedagogue working alongside the individual rather than dictating to them.

Another key element is an Entitlement Bond of up to £36,000 available for any young person aged between 11 and 21 in residential care. The grant is phased in annual allowances, of which the first starts with £2,000. The units become larger as the adolescents get older. In addition to the fund, each young person is entitled to a 'significant adult', who has a role as broker and advocate in use of the funds, but also as a mentor providing guidance and advice to the young person. The adolescents also receive technology support, both to facilitate social network bonds with other like-minded young people and to share moments of achievement and success in a social context, an area with traditionally fragmented prior histories. Adult and young person relationships are further supported and enriched by a social pedagogy curriculum achieved through ambitious council-wide training plans accredited by the local university.



IMPACT

This programme's aim is to impact positively on the social and professional lives of adults formerly in care, on their career progression, relationships and parenting of their children.

The Uni-Fi programme is already reported to have had an impact, with a significant adult mentor making a difference to the young people, helping them to feel more in control of their emotions. Additionally, the earliest impact data shows that the proportion of children in care attaining five good GCSEs in 2013 doubled from less than 7 per cent to 15 per cent and, on current predictions, this could double again in 2014 to around 30 per cent (twice the national average for children in care). This data shows early signs of targeted impact and potential for further improvements in young people's achievement during and after care.

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Department
for Education

