**Learning Outcomes**

To meet a child’s developmental needs and support strengths.

**Audience**  Groups 1-8 (Working Together 2010)  
**Time**  30 minutes

**Key Reading**


**Links to Common Core**

Common Core 6 Information sharing (skill: information handling). Make good use of available information, for example whether a common assessment has been completed – appraise content and assess what else might be needed.

Common Core 6 Information sharing (skill: information handling). Be able to assess the relevance and status of information (for example, whether it is observation or opinion) and to pass it on when appropriate.
Learning outcomes.

This presentation seeks to offer comparisons in outcomes against pathways for neglected children and young people, and to help support improved decision-making in this area.

This quote is taken from Wade et al. (2010).

Neglect and the impact of separation are under researched and poorly understood (Iwaniec 2006; Horwath 2007). Decisions are difficult even when made in consultation with other agencies. This presentation seeks to offer comparisons in outcomes against pathways for neglected children and young people.

It also seeks to improve decision making in this area.
Howe (2005) and Stevenson (2007) both concluded that it is common for physical, psychological, sexual abuse and neglect to go hand in hand (Rutter et al. 1998 and 2000).

Neglect does not sit comfortably with a ‘forensic model’ of investigation based on discrete incidents and episodes (Stevenson 2007). There is evidence that section 47 enquiries are less likely to be conducted without the presence of an event or injury and where this is lacking, cases are more likely to be closed without provision of services (Buckley 2000; Platt 2006).

The majority of children, who are the subject of care proceedings, are known to children’s social care for over one year and 45% have been known for five or more years (Masson 2008).

Threshold differences across local authorities were identified by Dickens et al. (2007) and Sinclair et al. (2007). The same studies concluded that pathway differences – re-unification, fostering, kinship care, adoption routes – are heavily influenced by which local authority looks after the child, rather than the characteristics of the child or family.

The explanation for children staying longer in the looked after children system is that higher proportions have entered the system in response to abuse or neglect, making it difficult for them to be returned home safely (Gibbs, Sinclair and Stein 2005; Beihal 2006).

Reunification is often heavily dependent upon the social worker’s assessment of the chance of success, and in neglect cases the assessment is often bleak (Farmer and Parker 1991).
Most neglected children do go home at some stage (Wade et al. 2010).

Found in Wade et al.’s study 2010.

The oscillation of children in and out of care was recognised by Bullock (1993), back in the early 1990s. More recently, a study by Farmer (2009) of a sample of 180 children who had been looked after away from home but then reunified with their families found that only 36% of children had not experienced a disruption at home and that 35% had experienced 2 or more disruptions.

Often the outcomes for children include worsening of mental health (Sinclair et al. 2005) and further maltreatment after reunification was also found (Brandon et al. 2005; Sinclair et al. 2005; Farmer et al. 2008).

Discussion point: Explore this further with the participants. Once children have returned home, what measures are put in place to ensure that changes in parenting, which precipitated the return home, are maintained. How long might this process take?

Do those in the room agree with the view that once returned home, the pressures of current workload can mean that these children sometimes stay longer in reunified families than they should?

This can also be linked with the evidence about the impact of neglect upon brain development and some of the possible consequences upon behaviour. Children who have experienced chronic neglect may need additional parenting skill because of the impact of that neglect.
Neglected children ‘do better’ when looked after (Wade et al. 2010).

More services – for example housing services, parenting guidance, financial assistance. In overall terms, provision of services is associated with home placements lasting, although research in this area is patchy (Ward et al. 2004; Sinclair et al. 2005; Farmer 2009).
Conclusions

- Where there are multiple failed attempts of reunification, these children and young people face the worst mental outcomes.
- Children that fall within these groups are denied the opportunity for alternative pathways into permanence.
- Where changes to key parents or families of reunified children are not successful, early action should be taken to prevent difficulty in a child's reunification.
- Placement can be successful for some children and some require what is known as “end stage” recovery from families ruined by violence, addiction, and chaos.

Notes

Working with looked after children