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Report of the Director of Children's Services

EXECUTIVE BOARD

9th December 2009

Outcomes for Looked After Children in Leeds

Electoral Wards Affected:	Specific Implications For:
	Equality & Diversity
	Community Cohesion
Ward Members consulted (referred to in report)	Narrowing the Gap √
Eligible for Call-in	Not Eligible for Call-in (Details contained in the Report)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.0 At its meeting in May 2009, Executive Board received a report on the achievement of looked after children (LAC). The Board approved the recommendation that an update be brought in the autumn of 2009. This report provides an update and widens its focus to include a broader overview of outcomes for looked after children. Leeds has very recently received an announced inspection by Ofsted, which included significant attention on services for looked after children. The outcomes of that inspection will be known shortly and will help to guide priorities for future work with looked after children.
- 2.0 Against this background, this report summarises the progress, against the Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes, of Looked after Children in Leeds and identifies strategies for improving those outcomes. Improving the outcomes of Looked After Children and Care Leaves (LAC) has been highlighted as a key issue in recent evaluations and Local Authority inspections. It was identified as a priority in previous Joint Area Review (JAR) and Annual Performance Assessments and this is reflected through its prioritisation in the current Children and Young People's Plan. It is also now subject to the framework for LA inspection by OfSTED.

- 3.0 In 2007 the Leeds Extended School for Looked After Children (LEXS) was created, led by a headteacher to champion their welfare and progress. This has:
 - raised the profile of looked after children across the city
 - built closer working relationship with partners in Education Leeds and Children and Young People's Social Care
 - raise expectations for the outcomes of the children and young people; and developed a more strategic approach to improving outcomes.
- 4.0 There are many Looked After Children in Leeds who make good progress against the ECM outcomes. However, overall progress is below that of their peers, although broadly in line with available national comparative data. Since 2007 there have been significant changes in the way in which partners across Children Leeds collaborate to address the needs of looked after children and care leavers and this has been championed by the elected member Corporate Carer group.
- 5.0 Progress since 2007 measured against the performance indicator set of looked after children and care leavers is indicating clear evidence of improvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to consider the main findings of this report and note its conclusions.

1.0 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

1.1 This report summarises the progress, against the Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes, of Looked after Children in Leeds and identifies strategies for improving those outcomes.

2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- At its meeting in May 2009, Executive Board received a report on the achievement of looked after children (LAC). The Board approved the recommendation that an update be brought in the autumn of 2009. This report provides an update and widens its focus to include a broader overview of outcomes for looked after children. Leeds has very recently received an announced inspection by Ofsted, which included significant attention on services for looked after children. The outcomes of that inspection will be known shortly and will help to guide priorities for future work with looked after children.
- 2.2 Improving the outcomes of Looked After Children and Care Leaves (LAC) has been highlighted as a key issue in recent evaluations and Local Authority inspections. It was identified as a priority in previous Joint Area Review (JAR) and Annual Performance Assessments and this is reflected through its prioritisation in the current Children and Young People's Plan. It is also now subject to the framework for LA inspection by OfSTED.
- 2.3 Since 2007 there has been a concerted effort to integrate and coordinate work with and for looked after children across the Children Leeds Partnership.

These changes have raised the profile of looked after children across the city; built closer working relationship across the partnership; raised expectations for the outcomes of the children and young people; and developed a more strategic approach to improving outcomes.

3.0 STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK TO SUPPORT LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

- 3.1 In 2007 the Leeds Extended School for Looked After Children (LEXS) was created, led by a seconded secondary headteacher, jointly commissioned by Education Leeds (EL) and Children & Young People's Social Care (CYPSC), to champion the welfare and progress of looked after children and provide a strategic focus for improvement. That secondment has been extended to the end of the 2010-2011 academic year.
- 3.2 The Multi-Agency Looked After Partnership Executive (MALAP Exec.) brings strategic leaders from across Children's Services and its partners together with operational leaders from Children & Young People's Social Care (CYPSC); Early Years; Health; Integrated Youth Support; and the Youth Offending Service. It monitors the quality of the services to looked after children and care leavers and their outcomes. It also oversees the implementation of the Care Matters Agenda and related aspects of the new Children & Young People's Act.
- 3.3 Chaired by the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services, the Elected Member Corporate Carer Group acts to support and challenge services working with looked after children and care leavers. The profile of looked after children is raised through the collective and individual advocacy of Members who also attend the Area Committees.

Over the last 12 months the Elected Member Corporate Carer Group has:

- increased the scope of its monitoring beyond those looked after children in residential care to those in other care settings, particularly in foster care;
- supported the changes that enabled the Fostering Service to move from inadequate to satisfactory overall and good in all but one aspect of the inspection.
- 3.4 The Corporate Carer Group also acts as a 'lay Governing Body' for LEXS and as a critical friend for the Head of LEXS. Finally the group's new terms of reference formalise its relationship to the MALAP Exec. and ensure reports come to it not only from CYPSC and EL but other MALAP partners.
- 3.5 In September 2009 the Leeds Promise to Looked After Children was launched and provides a charter for the services that Leeds promises its looked after children, young people and care leavers. The promise was produced by the Children in Care Council who will also provide a way in which the voice of looked after children can be heard directly by the MALAP Exec, the Elected Member Corporate Carer Group and other leaders and service providers across the Children Leeds Partnership.

4.0 MAIN ISSUES

4.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN COHORT

- 4.1.1 There were 1366 children in the care of Leeds in July 2009: 316 (23%) were aged 0-4 years; 325 (24%) were aged 5-10 years; 444 (33%) were aged 11-15 years; and 281 (21%) were aged 16-17 years.
- 4.1.2 13% of primary, and 15% of secondary, children and young people are placed outside Leeds but the large majority of Looked after Children (700) live and go to school in Leeds.

The proportion of children placed outside Leeds has risen in the last 12 months. In part this is a response to OfSTED fostering inspection requirements to avoid placing children in Leeds placements that would take the number of children in placement above that for which the foster carer was registered.

- 4.1.3 45% of the approximately 700 looked after children of school age who live in Leeds are in primary schools, 45% in secondary schools, and 8% in Specialist Inclusive Learning Centres. The remaining 2% is made up of children on mainstream school or SILC rolls who are, at any one time, temporarily educated in either Pupil Referral Units or in secure establishments (Secure Children's Centres, Young Offenders Institutions or Secure Training Establishments).
- 4.1.4 Approximately 70% of looked after children are on a special needs register compared with only 19% for all Leeds pupils. Approximately 50% of looked after children have a statement of SEN or are registered as School Action Plus. The main need is behaviour, emotional and social difficulties (BESD), with moderate learning difficulties (MLD) also being significant.
- 4.1.5 53% of looked after children are in foster placements; 22% with Family Network Carers; 13% Placed with Parents; 10% are in Residential Placements and 2% are in placements awaiting the completion of the adoption process.
- 4.1.6 In addition there are 357 older care leavers aged 18-20, and 33 aged 21-25.

5.0 EVERY CHILD MATTERS OUTCOMES

Not all the outcomes described in this paper have national or statistical neighbour comparators and those that do will not be available for the report's December deadline. A more detailed 'performance' report is available through the Q2 action tracker for the CYPP and the soon to be published OC2 return.

5.1 Being Healthy: Actions and Impact on Outcomes

- 5.1.1 Looked after children and care leavers have access to a comprehensive health needs assessment, which they are encouraged to attend. The NHS investment in the Looked After Children's Health Team has increased the proportion of looked after children with an up-to-date Health Needs Assessment (HNA) from 72% in 2006-2007 to 83 last year. The current figure is 89%. The proportion of looked after children and care leavers with up to date immunisations has also increased dramatically from 51% in 2006-2007 to 57% last year and 84% currently.
- 5.1.2 HNA, and the resulting Health Plan, provides the primary route for referral to targeted health promotion services that are in place for looked after children and care leavers. These include sexual health and substance abuse services. Self-referral or referral by the carer is also encouraged.
- 5.1.3 A joint CYPSC Therapeutic Social Care/NHS Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Prioritisation Panel provides access to service for looked after children and ensures they have timely support for their assessed emotional and mental well-being needs. The panel meets monthly and the priority given to looked after children referrals lead to the majority moving onto a worker's caseload within 8-12 weeks.

The service is provided by CYPSC Therapeutic Social Worker (TSW) team as well as higher tier CAMHS. The TSW team also provides support for foster and residential carers so they are better able to identify well-being concerns and create an environment that fosters positive well-being. Of the 84 cases brought to the 'fostering surgeries' over the last two years, by carers concerned about a child's mental health and wellbeing, only 8 (9.5%) suffered a subsequent placement breakdown. This suggests that this early support for carers is effective in sustaining placements over which carers have some concerns.

- 5.1.4 The Looked After Children's Health Team now has access to CYPSC electronic records and can directly input into them. This is ensuring much improved information sharing and greater consistency in meeting the health needs of looked after children and care leavers.
- 5.1.5 Health services target those member of the Looked After Children's cohort with specific needs:
 - unaccompanied asylum seeker children (UASC) have specific needs met by the recently established 'Boys group for UASC' which puts holistic health promotion in an appropriate context that encompasses cultural beliefs, values and sexual health practices;
 - sexual health support for young people is provided by a specialist nurse attached to the Pathway Planning Team and this is providing an impact not just on the teenage pregnancy strategy but also leading to identification of risks related to sexual exploitation.
- 5.1.6 Looked after children in placements outside Leeds have access to health provision in

their locality through reciprocal arrangements between the Leeds Looked After Children's Health team and their opposite numbers in other areas. Access to the team in Leeds is provided whatever the care setting of the child or young person or the authority in whose care they are placed.

5.1.7 The recent OfSTED inspection of the Fostering Service judged provision to help looked after children and young people be healthy as good.

5.2 Being Healthy: Focus for Development

- 5.2.1 While there has been significant progress in Being Healthy Outcomes there has not previously been a direct reporting route to the Elected Member Corporate Carer Group. This will be addressed in the new year when they will receive the first of what will become regular updates on actions and impact.
- 5.2.2 Though the NHS has commissioned additional dental service capacity for looked after children the take-up of appointments remains low. The Q2 measure (67%) is up 0.3% from the previous quarter but is running well behind the whole year figure for 2007-2008 (78%). The social care performance team is identifying patterns in that non-attendance so that groups identified as at risk of non-attendance can be targeted for support to access the service.
- 5.2.3 The Performance Team is investigating the HNA and Immunisation figures to identify whether there are patterns in non-compliance/completion so that services can be whether modified or targeted more effectively.
- 5.2.4 The requirement to complete an annual Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire for every looked after children as the first step in identifying emotional well-being has revealed a need for additional training and support for social care professionals and carers. This will address the inconsistencies in questionnaire completion and provide a sounder basis for earlier identification of mental health and well-being needs. The first measure will be available at the end of Q4.
- 5.2.5 The Review of CAMHS services to looked after children will consider the balance of resource allocation between increased screening of looked after children for emotional well-being needs and addressing needs that become apparent later in their time in care. Such screening would allow earlier intervention to meet identified needs.

5.3 Being Safe: Actions and Impact on Outcomes

- 5.3.1 Placement stability has been consistently above that of statistical neighbours over recent years and has increased marginally from 71.3% to 72.5% over the last year. This is a result of effective matching of carers and children and subsequent support for placements.
- 5.3.2 If a young person is concerned about their safety in placement then they have easy access to the commissioned Children's Rights service which reports monthly to the Elected Member Corporate Carer Group.

5.4 Being Safe: Focus for Development

- Though many looked after children have comprehensive and up-to-date care plans which are reviewed regularly, the timeliness of those reviews and the quality of some plans is less good. This is being addressed through the work of Heads of Fieldwork Services as they address the action plan arising from the recent Unannounced Inspection.
- 5.4.2 The creation of Advanced Practitioner posts in social care and the aspiration to

create dedicated looked after children's teams within the service will both provide effective local modelling of multi-agency care planning and also allow for much more targeted professional development for workers in those teams with an entirely looked after children caseload.

5.4.3 Though there are effective strategies in place that are implemented by agencies when a child is found to be missing from care the new National Indicator (NI71) is prompting a review of how those approaches can be improved.

5.5 Enjoying and Achieving: Actions and Impact on Outcomes

- 5.5.1 The Extended School has worked with schools and partner services, including AimHigher/Stepping Stones, to improve the educational outcomes of looked after children. The funding provided to the school by the Innovations Grant, and subsequently sustained by CYPSC, has allowed the school to ensure there is a wide and extending range of additional educational provision, support and guidance in place which includes:
 - 1-to-1 tuition by a trained teacher outside the school day;
 - Saturday activities for carers and looked after children;
 - homework clubs/study support supervised by undergraduates;
 - · individual mentoring;
 - funding to schools to support children at risk of exclusion.

In addition:

- extended services clusters are piloting access grants to lower barriers to participation in out of hours activities;
- the 'Find Your Talent' project is offering a range of broader educational/cultural opportunities to LAC.

The recent OfSTED inspection of the Fostering Service judged provision to help looked after children and young people enjoy and achieve as good.

- 5.5.2 By the end of the Foundation Stage the percentage of looked after children who had been in care for at least 1 year and reached a good level of achievement almost doubled (from 11% in 2008 to 21% in 2009). Though it remains significantly lower than the Leeds average (51%) the rate of improvement is markedly greater.
- 5.5.3 By the end of Key Stage 1 the percentage of looked after children who had been in care for at least 1 year and achieved level 2 or above in the core subjects (54-63%) remains lower than all children (78-86%). However, Reading and Writing have increased by 2% and 11%, respectively, since 2008. Though the percentage achieving level 2 in Maths has fallen by 3% since 2008 there is in an upward trend that has seen Maths rise from 49% in 2007 to 63% in 2009. Across that longer period the percentages for Reading and Writing have risen from 49% to 57% and from 51% to 54%, respectively. This is compared to broadly steady attainment over recent years by all children in Key Stage 1.
- 5.5.4 By the end of Key Stage 2 the percentage of looked after children who had been in care for at least 1 year and achieved level 4 or above in the core subjects (53-58%) remains lower than all children (77-86%). However English and Maths have risen by 11% and 12% respectively since 2008 with the percentage achieving Level 4+ in both subjects rising by 11%. The percentage achieving level 4 in Science has risen by 1% since 2008 and there is an upward trend that has seen Science rise from 48% in 2007 to 58% in 2009. Across that longer period the percentages for English and Maths have risen from 40% to 54% and from 30% to 53%, respectively. This is compared to broadly steady attainment over recent years by all children in Key

Stage 2.

5.5.5 By the end of Key Stage 4 the percentage of looked after children who had been in care for at least 1 year and sat at least one qualification rose from 70% in 2008 to 91% in 2009. Those achieving 1+A*-G rose from 64% in 2008 to 84.4% in 2009 and those achieving 5A*-G from 44% to 58%. Those achieving 5A*-C increased from 16% to 17% and those achieving 5A*-C, including English and Maths rose from 4% to 5%.

Of the Key Stage 4 pupils achieving these outcomes only 11% were not on the SEN Register, 21% were at the School Action level of intervention; 43% at School Action Plus and the remaining 24% had Statements. A Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4 Contextual Value Added calculation for this group of young people is pending.

- Primary school attendance by looked after children (95.3%) has fallen back slightly since 2008 (96.1%) but remains 1.2% higher than that of all children (94.1%). Persistent Absence among looked after children in primary school is 1.3% compared to 3.1% among all children (all attendance data currently available for half-terms 1 4 of the last academic year only).
- 5.5.3 Secondary school attendance by looked after children (89.5%) remains lower than that of all children (91.5%) but has improved by 0.9% against a 0.2% fall among all children since 2008. Persistent absence among looked after children in secondary school remains high at 13.6% but this is a significant decrease from 16.2% in 2008 (data currently available for terms 1 4 of the 2008-2009 academic year only).
- 5.5.4 The number of looked after children permanently excluded from Leeds schools has been reduced from eight in 2006 to two in 2009 (both from the David Young Academy).
- 5.5.5 Rates of fixed term exclusion remain significantly higher for looked after children however the total number of days that looked after children lost to exclusion continued to fall, from 1094 in 2007 to 665.5 in 2009.

5.6 Enjoying and Achieving: Focus for Development

- The quality of Personal Education Plans (PEP) remains inconsistent but the growing capacity of the Extended School to develop relationships with individual designated teachers, linked to the new statutory guidance relating to PEPs, will have a positive effect on their consistency and impact.
- 5.6.2 We must ensure that the support offered to looked after children placed outside the area is extended, beyond that required to meet our statutory duties, to mirror the support offered to those placed in Leeds.

5.7 Making a Positive Contribution: Actions and Impact on Outcomes

- 5.7.1 As well as a full entitlement to universal services, looked after children with particular needs are targeted to receive support through:
 - the Leeds 'Find Your Talent' pilot which ensures links to libraries, arts and heritage and has supported the provision of bundles of books to primary age looked after children as part of the 'Letterbox Scheme';
 - the 'Creations Project' in libraries which involves groups of children and their carers in a range of activities centred on a library;
 - IYSS work with UASC young people at the 5 Rivers residential placement and young people were on target to achieve the Duke of Edinburgh Bronze award when the placement contract came to an end, have engaged with a motor bike programme leading to an Open College Network qualification, made use of a

- 'drop in' at Archway, Gym sessions; and an event to mark Refugee Week;
- Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP) workers provide 1-to-1 support for 5 looked after children;
- Youth Service work with 7 young people in Rothwell, including one who is disabled, has led a foster carer to request that the 4 young people linked to the mobile provision at Homersley Field Lane be filmed as part of a report to show how positive the involvement in the session has been.
- 5.7.2 There is very good multi-agency support for looked after children at risk of offending, or if they offend. This gives them priority access to activities that divert them from further offending. The impact of these strategies and activities has led to a decline in the number of LAC offences from 842 (in 2007) to 564 (in 2009). A particular achievement is reducing those going to Community Order/Custody from 402 to 275 across that same period.
- 5.7.3 All looked after children and care leavers have good access to independent, proactive, advocacy services commissioned from Barnados.
- 5.7.3 Looked after children and care leavers are involved with every senior appointment in CYPSC. They have also contributed to the development of services through:
 - involvement in the development of the 'Leeds Promise to Looked After Children' as part of the response to Care Matters;
 - their positive views on the sexual health service to care leavers, which led to the permanent appointment of a sexual health specialist attached to the CYPSC Pathway Planning team;
 - the creation of an information booklet by BME looked after children which is now given to any BME child coming into care;
 - consultation on what additional training might be provided for carers, which led to training for carers in reading support and the delivery of the literacy skills course 'Hip Hop Full Stop' in a way that responded to the young people's desire to be treated in a 'more adult' manner;
 - the delivery of 'Total Respect' by care leavers, which helps mixed groups of professionals and elected members to appreciate a young person's view of being in care;
 - their contribution to the research project that captured young people's views on engagement with education and barriers to it, and the resulting risk of exclusion.
 - their contribution to the research project that captured young people's views of the arts and any barriers to engaging with them, as part of 'Find Your Talent';
 - 40 LAC, recruited through homes and foster carers, participate in ROAR;
 - Corporate Carers met in November with the Children in Care Council to discuss their key concerns.

5.8 Making a Positive Contribution: Focus for Development

- 5.8.1 Corporate carers have discussed with the Looked After Children's Care Council, 'Have a Say', how they can be more closely involved with the monitoring of the promise and are considering how a budget for the Council's activities can be defined.
- Use the monitoring of looked after children attendance at Breeze events from Autumn 2009 as baseline for future development.

5.9 Achieving Economic Well-being: Actions and Impact on Outcomes

5.9.1 There are 5 Personal Advisers who either work directly with the Pathway Planning Team or in partnership through secondment. 1 Personal Adviser is focussed on young people with a disability, 1 Personal Adviser employed within the Pathway

Planning Team, supporting improved outcomes, and there are an additional 3 Personal Advisers working for the main Connexions provider who work with the Pathway Planning Team.

5.9.2 Looked after children are prioritised by Connexions PAs working in schools and colleges. Every looked after child was offered appointments with a Connexions PA in Year 11 and 95.3% accessed the service.

78 looked after children in Year 11 were seen 3 times or more during the year.

- 5.9.3 The full range of academic and vocational options are available to all young people in Leeds, age 16-19 as detailed in the area prospectus (www.leedspathways.co.uk) and the prioritising of LAC and care leavers for support from the Connexions service ensures they receive appropriate information on their options.
- 5.9.4 Training is being delivered to foster carers by the main Connexions provider to ensure that they understand the options available to young people post-16 and how to support young people to enter EET.
- 5.9.5 The percentage of looked after children who had been in care for at least 1 year and were in Year 11 until the end of July 2009 and are now in education, training or employment (ETE) is 84% (97 young people). This is a rise of 5% from the to 79% ETE at this point in both 2008 and 2007. While this is still well below the ETE figure for all children (90.5%) it is a significant narrowing of the gap between looked after young people and their age equivalent cohort.
- 5.9.6 The percentage of 19 year old care leavers in education, training or employment in Leeds has risen from 31% in March 2008 to 41% in March 2009 compared to an increase of only 1% (from 50% to 51%) across England and of only 3% (from 40 to 43%) across statistical neighbours during the same period.
- 5.9.7 There is significant support through AimHigher/Stepping Stones that has resulted in 38 care leavers being in higher education or embarked on higher degrees.
- 5.9.8 The needs of all young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are assessed in the young person's final year in education and identifies their ongoing support needs.
- 5.9.9 The agreed protocol between the Leeds Colleges and CYPSC has been in place for 18 months and has led to better partnership working. There is now specific training offered to the Colleges by the Extended School and a 'Designated Tutor' has been identified in each college to act as a focus for support to looked after children and as an advocate for them.
- 5.9.10 Specific commissioning has ensured accommodation for care leavers has improved; the collaboration of the Pathway Planning team with GIPSIL is offering a small number of care leavers trial periods of supported independent living before they make the final step to accepting a tenancy.

5.10 Achieving Economic Well-being: Focus for Development

- 5.10.1 While every care leaver has a Care Plan their contributions to it are inconsistent and the Care Plan does not always meet the requirements of the Pathway Planning process. The current review of the Pathway Planning Team and its place in a dedicated looked after children's service is intended to ensure this improves.
- 5.10.2 Transition planning for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receiving services will become more consistent and support their transition into adult services or further education, employment or training through work to develop an integrated disability service.

While significant efforts are made to support all LAC into education, training or employment (ETE) the outcomes in Leeds remain behind those of statistical neighbours (OC2 returns in recent years have shown 21-25% NEET) and only 80.8% of those in Year 11 received an offer of a place in learning, under the September Guarantee.

While the improving outcomes pre-16 should begin to erode this difference the current commissioning of wedge and specialist Connexions services will be vital to improving the transition from school to ETE for looked after children.

5.11 Summary

5.11.1 It is clear that large numbers of looked after children and care leavers have significant social and emotional issues as a result of early abuse or neglect and that these issues are often most challenging when the child comes into care later.

For too many of these young people early experience leads to low self esteem and attachment issues that make it difficult for them to develop the trusting relationships with adults and peers that they need for later success. It is an early, and often unfounded, sense of failure that can result in a lack of engagement, poor attendance at school and behavioural issues leading to relatively high exclusions and poor outcomes.

- 5.11.2 However this report contains clear evidence of improvement resulting from a more strategic approach to looked after children and care leavers and their needs which is, in turn, generating more coordinated, multi-service, responses.
- 5.11.3 The predictable needs of looked after children and young people should be met early in their time in care if they are not to militate against their achievement across the every child matters spectrum. The early identification of needs will be more cost effective than responding to them only when they begin to manifest in poor behaviour, disrupted placement and education, or risk taking behaviours.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNCIL POLICY AND GOVERNANCE

The high level of need and comparatively low outcomes of looked after children and care leavers compared with other children mean that tackling this inequality remains a very high priority for Leeds.

7.0 LEGAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The need to ensure that improvements described in this report continue means that looked after children and care leavers must remain a high priority when allocating resources.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 The Board is asked to consider the main findings of this report and note its conclusions.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Report to Executive Board 13.05.09 – The Achievement of looked after children