Improving Life Chances
The Role of the Virtual School

Looked After
&
Previously Looked After Children

Peter McNamara

Virtual School Headteacher (retired!)

Attainment, progress & social exclusion

- Looked After Children & Young People under-attain and make less progress than their non-LAC peers at all stages in education as do previously looked after children

- Care experienced CYP are disproportionately represented in all measures of social exclusion

LAC Educational Attainment & Progress

Multiplicity of risk and protective factors which impact on attainment & progress including:

- ✓SEN
- ✓Attendance
- ✓Exclusions
- ✓Prior attainment
- ✓Placement type
- ✓Placement quality
- ✓Mainstream or non-mainstream
- ✓Placement moves
- ✓Time in care
- ✓Age on entry to care
- ✓Quality of teaching
- ✓Emotional wellbeing……..

The Rees Report

The Educational Progress of Looked After Children in England: Linking Care and Educational Data

Judy Sebba[1], David Berridge[2], Nikki Luke[1], John Fletcher[1], Karen Bell[2], Steve Strand[1], Sally Thomas[2], Ian Sinclair[1], Aoife O'Higgins[1].

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REES CENTRE
Research in Fostering and Education
University of Oxford Department of Education

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

University of BRISTOL

Educational Progress: Protective/Risk Factors

Placement changes

School changes

Absence

Exclusions

Placement type

School type (mainstream/non-mainstream)

Quantifying Protective/Risk Factors

Placement changes

For every placement change post 11 **one-third of a grade less** at GCSE

School changes

Young people in care who changed school in Years 10 or 11 scored over **five grades less** than those who did not.

Absence

For **every 5%** of possible school sessions missed due to unauthorised school absences, young people in care scored **over two grades less at GCSE**

Quantifying Protective/Risk Factors

Exclusions

For **every additional day** of school missed due to fixed-term exclusions, young people in care scored **one-sixth of a grade less at GCSE**.

Placement type

Young people **not** living in kinship or foster care **scored over six grades less** than those in residential or other placement types

School type (mainstream/non-mainstream)

Young people in **special schools** scored **over 14 grades lower** compared to those with the same characteristics in mainstream schools. Those in **pupil referral units** with the same characteristics scored **almost 14 grades lower.**

Other key factors

- ✓SEN
- ✓Prior attainment
- ✓Placement quality
- ✓Time in care
- ✓Age on entry to care
- ✓Quality of teaching
- ✓Emotional wellbeing……..

RMBC KS4 Highest Achievers

- **all in foster care**
- **all in mainstream**
- **few placement moves**
- **1 with an EHCP**

RMBC Lack of progress KS2-KS4 based on prior attainment

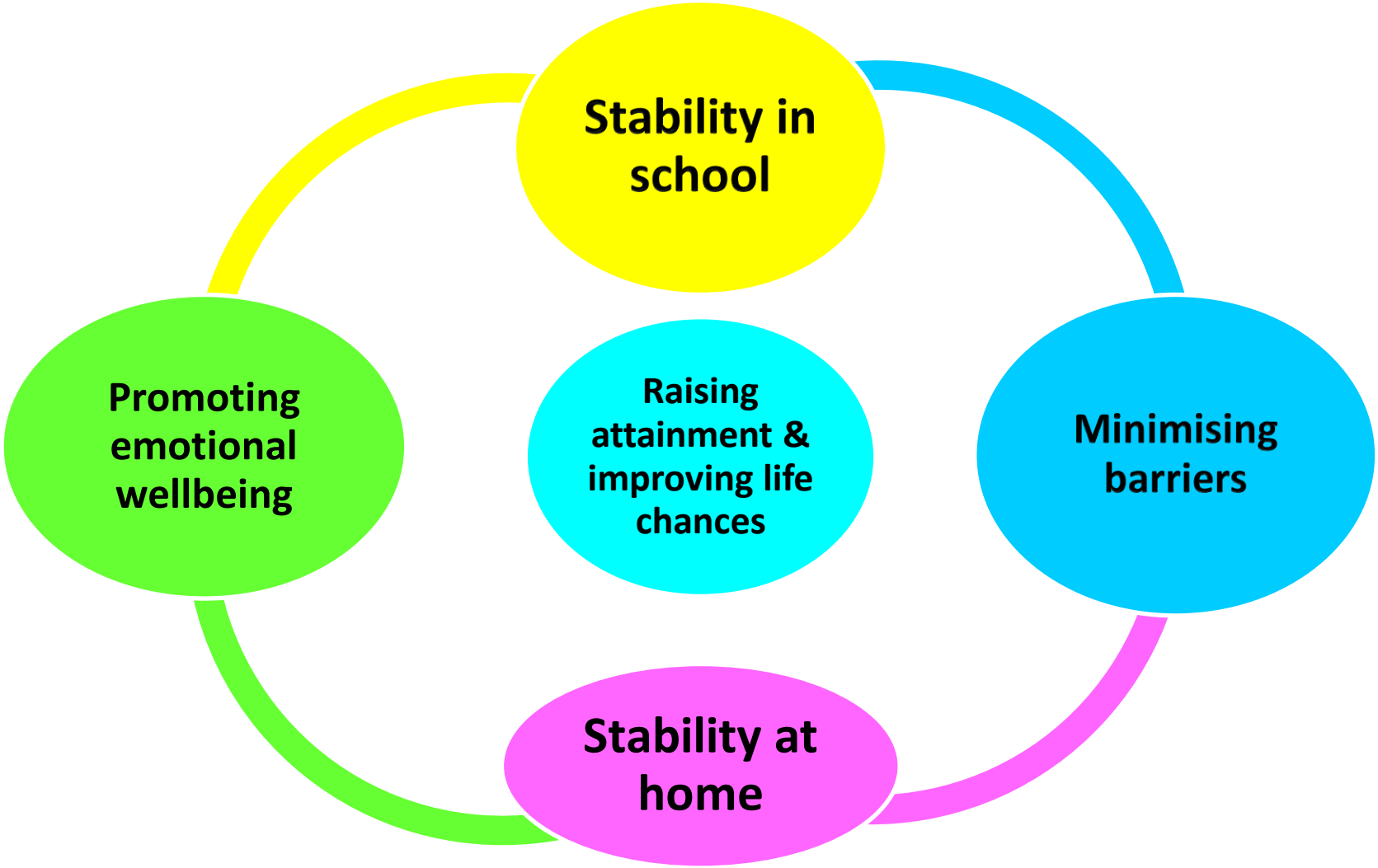
- 5/10 non-mainstream school
- 5/10 EHCPs
- 6/10 with 4+ placement moves
- 2/10 foster care
- 4/10 residential
- 2/10 with parents
- 2/10 living independently

How can **WE** raise the attainment &improve the life chances of CYP in care?

STABILITY STABILITY STABILITY

The key to improving the life chances of CYP is creating a greater degree of stability at home & school

How can **WE** raise the attainment &improve the life chances of CYP in care?



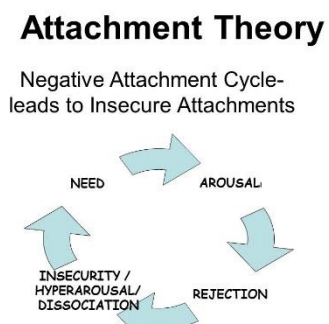
How can Virtual Schools raise the attainment & improve the life chances of CYP in care?

- Close monitoring of attendance, exclusions, attainment and progress
- Ensuring high quality Personal Education Plans
- Working closely with Designated Teachers
- Working more collaboratively with other professionals in the field: EPs, CAMHS, social workers, IROs, NHS….
- **Supporting the professional development of the workforce in terms of understanding how to better support children & young people with complex needs rooted in ATTACHMENT & TRAUMA**

Stuff all teachers need to know, understand, and develop the skill set to support

Attachment Theory

- Insecure attachments have fundamental influence on child's ability to engage with the curriculum
- Highly dysregulated children are unable to settle to learn
- Through training (Solution Focused Staff meetings/ Emotion Coaching) and sharing chronology, staff able to bridge the 'empathy gap' – light bulb moments!

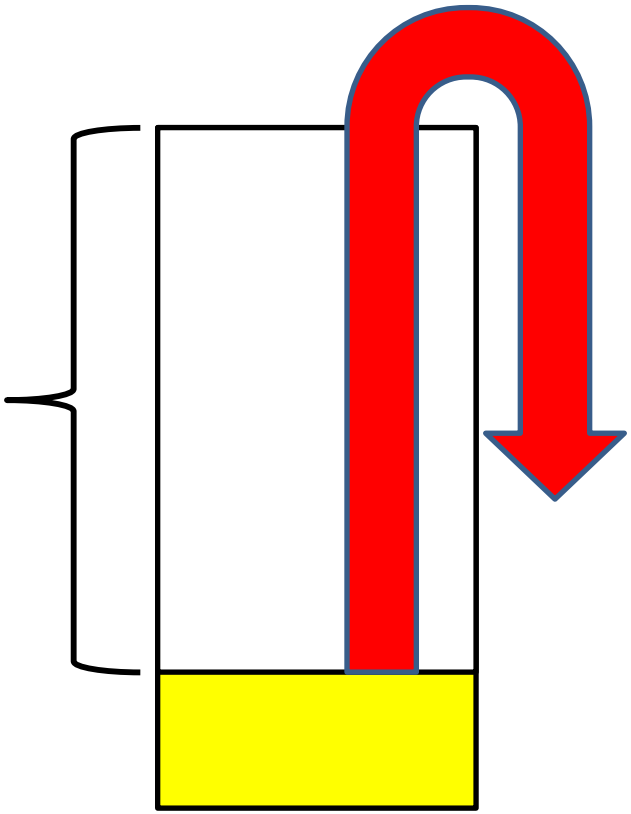


Triggers: Why do some CYP go from 0-90 in a nano second?

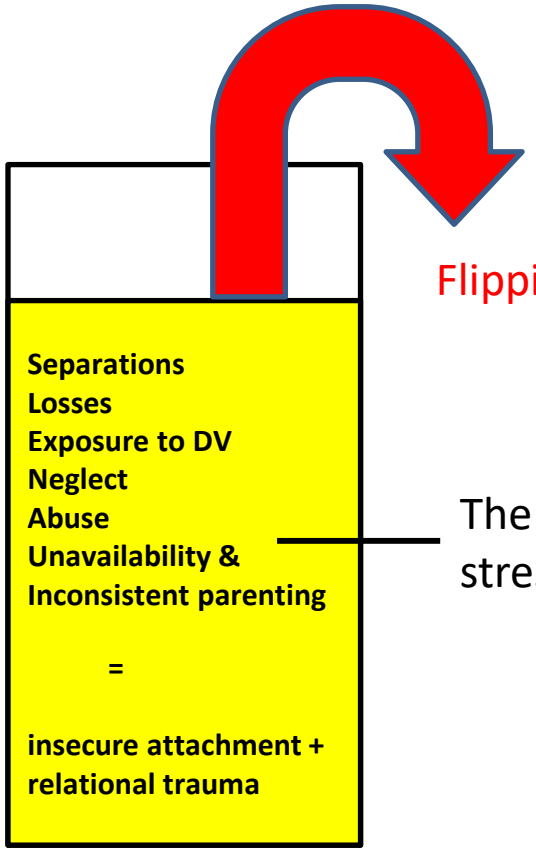
- Change
- The unknown
- Criticism/ perceived criticism
- Comments about family
- When they can’t do something
- Contact with family members
- Being treated disrespectfully, discourteously, aggressively
- Smell, touch, taste
- Memories
- Other reasons

Windows of stress tolerance. Downstairs Brain Engaged: Flipping the Lid!

Big window of stress tolerance before overwhelm is reached and the downstairs brain is engaged



Ayesha



Flipping the lid

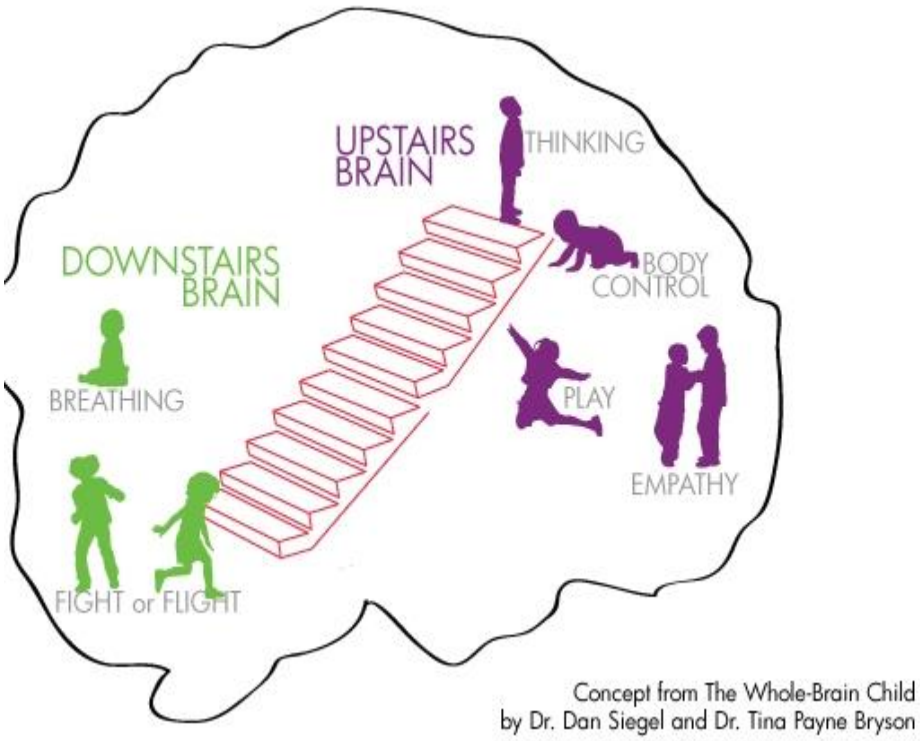
The accumulated stress we carry

Callum

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gm9CIJ74Oxw

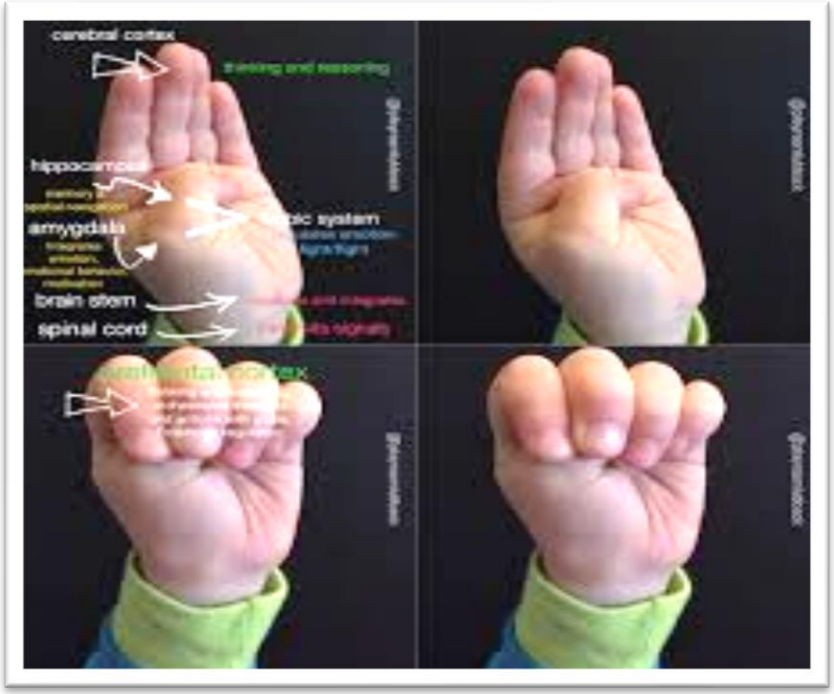
Adapted from Louise Bomber

Neuroscience of attachment



- Dan Siegel – 'Downstairs Brain' – 'Upstairs Brain'
- Amygdala - Emotional radar
  - Alerts us to danger
- Orbitofrontal cortex (part of prefrontal cortex)
  - Role in managing emotional behaviours
  - Reflective function
  - Very experience dependent
- Stressful early relationships make it more difficult to establish neural pathways between the primitive and social parts of our brain

Flipping the Lid



Virtual School Rotherham:
the approach of 1 Local Authority

Attachment Friendly & Trauma Informed Schools

VSR is investing a significant proportion of its Pupil Premium Plus in developing a more congenial and sensitive climate in schools through a multi-faceted approach.

PPP is £2300 per pupil

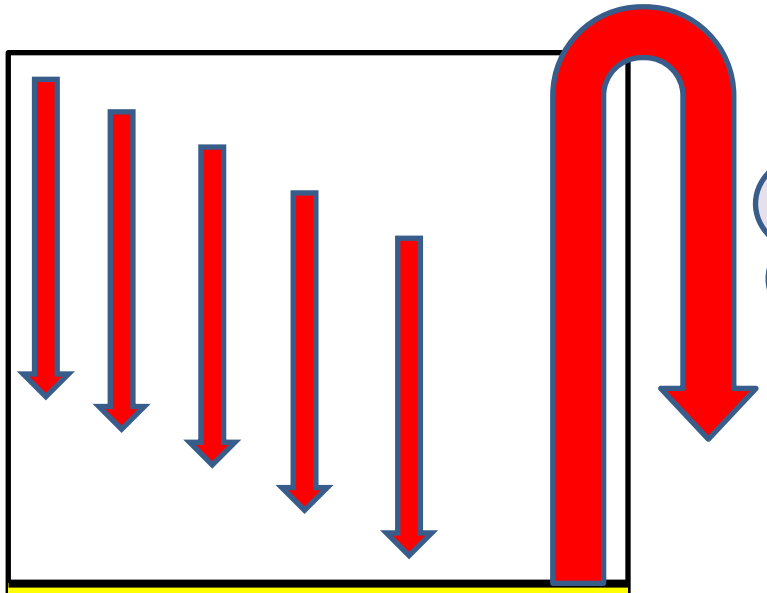
RMBC Anxiety Reduction & Self Regulation

Knowing 'triggers' and 'soothers'

Emotion Coaching

Solution Focused Staff Meeting

Speech & Language Barriers



- Separations
- Losses
- Exposure to DV
- Neglect
- Abuse
- Unavailability & inconsistent parenting

=

insecure attachment + relational trauma

Attachment Friendly & Trauma Informed Schools

Emotional Literacy Support Assistants

Supporting the Mockingbird Hubs

Creative Mentoring

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