

The Aspirations of Young People in Care and Their Perspectives on Resilience

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OVERVIEW

Young people from a public care background pose the highest risk of economical and social exclusion, are more likely to leave education without any qualifications and many are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) post-education (Harker, 2009; Höjer, Johansson, Hill, Cameron & Jackson, 2008). There have been a number of research studies examining the factors that mediate these outcomes (see Appendix A for a summary in the literature review) and some studies have taken a particular interest in young people who have succeeded “against the odds” or shown resilience to the risk factors in their lives (Jackson, Ajayi & Quigley, 2005). Alongside this, the previous Labour government (Tony Blair 1997-2007; Gordon Brown 2007-2010) made it a high priority to close the gap between the outcomes of Children in Care (CiC) and that of all other children. Part of this agenda was to encourage young people from a care background to enter into further education pathways (for example, the Aim Higher project and recently From Care2Work: National Care Advisory Service (NCAS), 2010), for them to have higher hopes, dreams and aspirations for the future.

The literature review for this study revealed that there have been no studies that specifically look at the aspirations of CiC, as such it was felt that this would be a valuable addition to current knowledge. Furthermore, the literature on resilience tended to focus on risk and resilience factors identified in the lives of CiC and not on the lived experiences of the young people, hence it was felt that a valuable contribution to current knowledge would be to use a phenomenological methodology to seek the perspectives of young people in care on resilience. It was felt that by looking in detail at the aspirations and resilience of a group of young people in care, a more holistic perspective could be gained on why the outcomes of CiC are so poor. Consequently, the aims of the

first paper were to identify what aspirations young people in care hold, the factors that influenced them and the plans they have to achieve them, as well as what they felt was most important for the development of high aspirations. The aims of the second study were to elicit the positive and negative experiences of a group of young people in care, to determine what strategies these young people used to cope with difficult situations and to map out what factors these young people thought led to good educational and vocational outcomes versus poor outcomes for people who have tough lives.

Both studies used data collected from a semi-structured interview with 16 secondary aged and three post 16 young people in the care of one Local Authority. The interview had specific questions related to each of the aims from both studies. All the data collected was qualitative and the analysis used in paper one was thematic analysis, while paper two used Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The reason for using two different analyses was because the focus in paper one was to gather information to form a model that could be generalised to all CiC; as such it took a more reductionist approach. The second paper, on the other hand, was focussed on detailing the experiences and perceptions of resilience that young people in care had; as such it sought to show the rich tapestry of their experiences and not to reduce their experiences to the smallest common denominator.

The results from paper one showed that the young people did have high aspirations, which varied according to gender and age, and plans to achieve these goals. Most of the young people relied on themselves to develop their aspirations and achieve their goals, however, family, school friends and past personal experiences also played key roles. They felt that personal factors were most important in developing high aspirations, followed by social factors, while education and life events had minor roles.

The results of the second study showed that the young people identified supportive networks (peers and adults), education, positive personal qualities, advice and resources, positive experiences (e.g. achievements) and having their basic and emotional needs met as being protective factors that promote resilient outcomes. While poor interactions and relationships, unsupportive adults, experiences of entering care, loss, negative personal qualities, poor education, overwhelming emotions, memories and lack of control over thoughts, life events, and home experiences as being risk factors and promoting poor outcomes.

The results of both studies are relevant both on a theoretical level and a practical level. Theoretically, the first study has contributed to the lack of knowledge of how aspirations are formed in CiC. However, further study is needed before a model can be proposed. On a practical level, the results are useful in highlighting to those who work with CiC the areas that influence them in developing aspirations and the factors that are important in developing high aspirations so that support can be targeted in these areas. The second study has contributed to looking at resilience from the perspective of a young person in care, and while the findings are mostly consistent with current knowledge, the emphasis of the young people on ‘self’ helps us to understand the processes of how young people in care cope with and overcome difficulties – that is that they are relying on themselves and so on a practical level either support should focus on making them better equipped at dealing with their difficulties or it should go into creating a more supportive network across the domains and systems that the young people live in.

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PAPER ONE

The Aspirations of Young People in Care

ABSTRACT

The aims of this study were to identify the aspirations of a small cross-section of young people in care in the Local Authority, what factors contributed to their aspirations, how they aimed to achieve their aspirations and what they felt was most important to the development of high aspirations. Nineteen young people in care were recruited from Key Stages 3 and 4 and Post 16 and took part in individual interviews. The results showed that the participants had high vocational and academic aspirations. They showed that vocational aspirations varied across gender and changed over time. They showed that most of the young people relied on themselves to develop their aspirations and achieve their goals, and that family, school friends and their past personal experiences also played key roles. Finally, the results showed that personal factors played a key role in developing high aspirations, followed by social factors, and that education and life events had minor roles.

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INTRODUCTION

Children in care (CiC) have significantly lower achievement at school than all other children (Fletcher-Cambell & Archer, 2003) and poorer life outcomes than any other group of young people, including those from disadvantaged families (Cheung & Heath, 1994; Evans, 2003; Stein, 1994). Despite the large amount of research that has been carried out since the early 1990's documenting the outcomes of CiC both educationally and vocationally and theorising on the possible causes for these poorer life outcomes (Borland, Pearson, Hill, Tisdall & Bloomfield, 1998; Evans, 2003; Francis, 2000; Harker, Dobel-Ober, Lawrence, Berridge & Sinclair, 2003; Heath, Colton & Aldgate, 1989; Jackson, 1994; O'Sullivan & Westerman, 2007; Stein, 1994), they continue to lag significantly behind their peers (Harker, 2009).

The previous Labour government (Tony Blair 1997-2007; Gordon Brown 2007-2010) made it a high priority to bridge the widening gap between the outcomes of CiC and the outcomes of all children, through the Care Matters agenda (DfES, 2006; DCSF, 2008). The *Care Matters: Time to deliver for children in care implementation plan* document began by declaring "Our aspirations for children in care are no less than those each parent has for their own children. Children in care are often in much greater need than other children but much less likely to get the help they require. We aim to create a care system that provides every child with a safe, happy, healthy, secure and loving childhood nurturing their aspirations and enabling them to fulfil their potential." (DCSF, 2008, p1). However, despite the efforts of programs such as AimHigher, which aim to widen the participation of underrepresented groups in higher education and encourage them to have higher aspirations, very few young people from a care background go onto further studies (Harker, 2009). While this could simply be explained by CiC not

achieving academically therefore leading them not to achieve later in life, there is evidence to suggest that having high occupational aspirations is a better predictor of later success than educational attainment (Schoon & Parsons, 2002). It is therefore necessary to gain a better understanding of what aspirations young people in care hold in order to understand why they are not achieving success in life.

This introduction sets out to explain what aspirations are and the research that exist around the development of aspirations. Finally, it will discuss the evidence that exists in the literature on the aspirations of CiC. This will lead to the formulation of the aims of this research study and the research questions that are being asked.

WHAT ARE ASPIRATIONS?

At Dictionary.com, ‘aspiration’ is defined as a ‘strong desire, longing, or aim’, an ‘ambition’ and ‘a goal or objective desired’ (2010). Furthermore, MacLeod (1987) made the following distinction between aspirations and expectations in his book “*Ain’t no makin’ it: Leveled aspirations in a low-income neighbourhood*”:

“Both involve assessments of one’s desires, abilities, and the character of the opportunity structure. In articulating one’s aspirations, an individual weighs his or her preferences more heavily; expectations are tempered by perceived capabilities and available opportunities. Aspirations are one’s preferences relatively unsullied by anticipated constraints” (p.60).

Sherwood (1989), on the other hand, defined aspirations as: “Any goal an individual is willing to invest in beforehand” (p.62). According to Lewin’s field theory (Lewin, 1951, cited in Sherwood, 1989), a person’s aspirations are directly proportional to the value the person places on the goal and their perception of the likelihood of achieving it.

Therefore, it can be said that the concept of aspiration is linked to self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) in that, if a person does not believe they are capable of achieving a goal then they will not aspire to it. Also, implicit in Lewin's definition of aspirations is that they mediate motivation. As such, aspirations can be seen as being future oriented, as opposed to immediate gratifications, and as motivators, as opposed to dreams and wishes (Sherwood, 1989).

RESEARCH ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF ASPIRATIONS

The research presented here relates only to the development of academic and occupational/vocational aspirations, which is the focus taken by this study. This is because it was in line with government policy at the time (see the Care Matters agenda) and because it was felt to be pertinent to secondary aged young people (the subjects of this study).

Evidence suggests that individuals with higher self-efficacy develop higher career aspirations (O'Brien, Friedman, Tipton & Linn, 2000; Social Exclusion Task Force, 2008). As self-efficacy is defined as a person's belief in his or her ability to succeed in a particular situation (Bandura, 1997), there must be some precedent on which the person bases this belief, for example, having succeeded in the past or being told they can succeed by a significant other. In fact, research suggests that attainment is very much linked with self-efficacy and that parental efficacy, involvement and aspirations play a role in mediating that effect (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara & Pastorelli, 2001; Dandy & Nettleback, 2001; Hill, Castellino, Lansford, Nowlin, Dodge, Bates & Pettit, 2004). Adding the child's aspirations into the equation makes the relationship between these variables even more complex. In an attempt to map out the relationship between family background, individual characteristics, environmental factors and adolescents'

aspirations, Marjoribanks (2002) developed the Moderation-Mediation Model, based on a bio-ecological framework, see Figure 1.

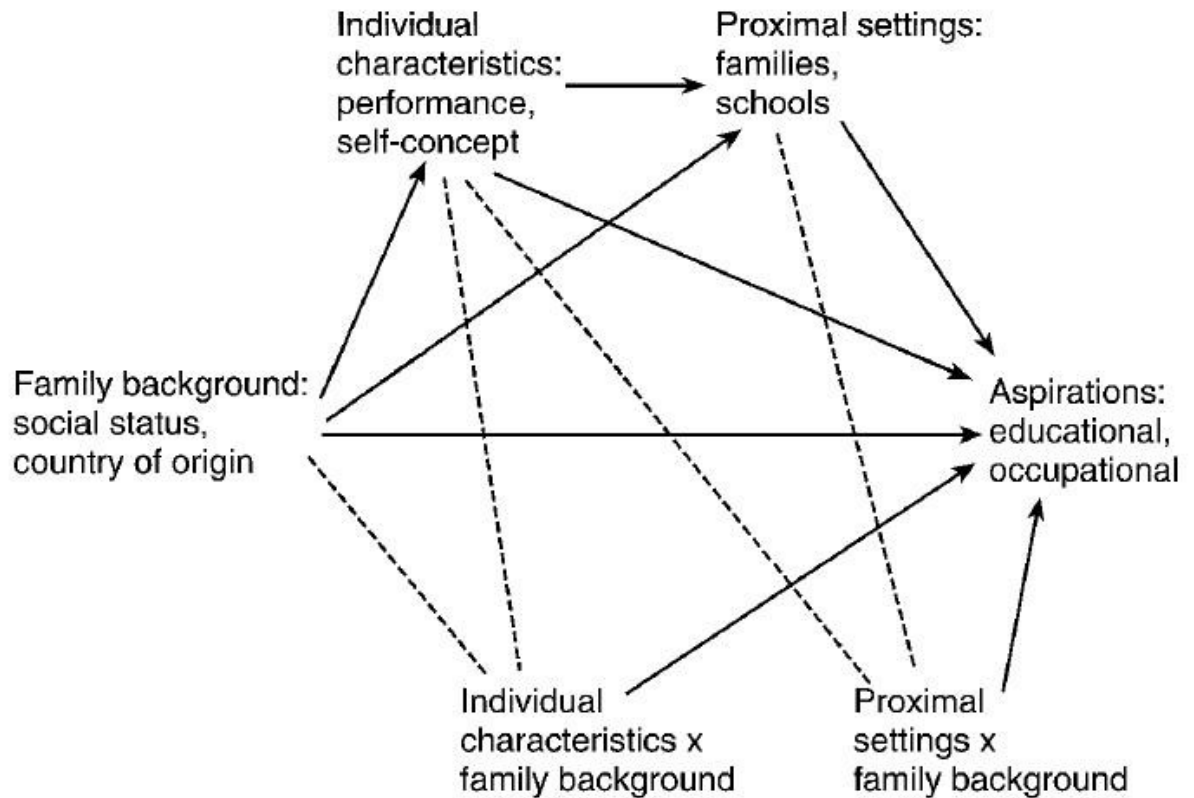


Figure 1. Moderation-Mediation Model for factors mediating adolescents' aspirations.

(Marjoribanks, 2002, p. 34).

This model clearly demonstrates that an individual's development of educational and career aspirations involves complex relationships between individual characteristics, family background and their environment. It also implies that individual characteristics, proximal settings (e.g. families and schools) and aspirations were moderated by family background (e.g. social status and country of origin).

The Social Exclusion Task Force (2008) examined the aspirations of young people from deprived communities and found that a number of environmental factors influenced

young peoples' aspirations; these were parents and family, media and society, teachers, community and friends. It concluded that the strongest factors predicting aspirations were:

The value they attach to school;

Their ability beliefs and prior attainment;

Mother's aspirations for their child to go to university; and

A family's socio-economic status (SES)

(Social Exclusion Task Force, 2008)

While this evidence supports the multi-dimensional development of aspirations proposed by the Moderation-Mediation Model, there is also evidence to suggest that aspirations are developmental and change over time as a person matures (Gutman & Akerman, 2008). In Gottfredson's (2002) theory of Circumscription, Compromise and Self-Creation, a person is said to go through four developmental processes in their formulation of career aspirations from child to adolescence (see Table 1).

Table 1. Gottfredson's (2002) developmental theory of the formation of occupational aspirations

Stage 1: Orientation to size and power (ages 3 to 5)	Stage 2: Orientation to sex roles (ages 6 to 8)	Stage 3: Orientation to social valuation (ages 9 to 13)	Stage 4: Orientation to internal, unique self (ages 14+)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress from magical to intuitive thinking • Begin to achieve object constancy • Begin to classify people in simple ways e.g. big (and powerful) versus little (and weak). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think in concrete terms, make simple distinctions and are dichotomous thinkers • Vocational aspirations reflect gender stereotypes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitive to social judgement e.g. peers • Begin to rank occupations in a hierarchy • Recognise concrete symbols of social class • Form perceptions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider occupations that are fulfilling but acceptable in social spheres • YP compromise on their career choices and accept the barriers that exist in achieving

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise occupations as adult roles and stop saying they want to be animals, fantasy characters or inanimate objects when they grow up. 		of general level of ability and rule out occupations ‘out of their reach’	them <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinguish between idealistic aspirations and realistic aspirations (aspirations versus expectations)
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The developmental view of the formation of occupational aspirations seems to be primarily focussed on the self and how thought processes change over time. However, it is possible to accept this developmental approach whilst also recognising that children and young people develop within systems, which with they interact. Therefore, both the Moderation-Mediation theory and Gottfredson’s theory could be viewed jointly to explain the formation of aspirations in children and young people.

ASPIRATIONS AND CHILDREN IN CARE

In relating this research to CiC, already many risk factors are present that might make it difficult for children and young people (CYP) in the care system to develop educational and career aspirations. The relationships between SES and parental aspirations would certainly impact on this group (see Paper 2 for a more detailed account of why CYP may have to enter the care system). Perhaps then, when looking at CiC that show resilience, it is not surprising that a protective factor for educational achievement is having a supportive significant adult with high expectations (for example, a foster carer, teacher or mentor; Jackson & Martin, 1998). Furthermore, in the Leaving Care study (cited in Stein, 1994), young people expressed their regret at not being more motivated and determined at school. Using Lewin’s theory (Sherwood, 1989) to explain this, it could be said that they lacked aspirations for the future that would enable them to be more motivated and determined in their studies. Could this have been related to low

expectations from significant adult figures? Or looking at Gottfredson's theory, could it be socially influenced through peers and the community they live in?

Surprisingly, despite the vast amount of literature detailing the poor academic attainment of CiC (Barnardo's, 1996; Colton, Heath & Jackson, 1994; Evans, 2003; Stein, 1994), there appears to be very few studies looking at how educational aspirations are related to academic achievement, and none at all aimed at identifying the educational and career aspirations of CiC. Instead, studies have tended to focus on factors that protect CYP from or put them at risk of low educational attainment (i.e. their resilience, a topic that will be discussed further in paper 2). It seems clear from the research that having educational and career aspirations helps children to succeed at school and in life by motivating them to take action to achieve their goals. As such, it is important for research to look into the concept of aspirations with relation to CiC and to investigate the processes that may mediate high or low educational and career aspirations in this group. In addition, as aspirations may change over time with development, it may be useful for researchers to either follow longitudinally the developing aspirations of young people or to look at a cross-section of young people to examine how aspirations develop for CiC.

AIMS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Clearly, the Labour government (1997-2010) invested many resources into ensuring that children from under-represented groups such as CiC fulfilled their potential. However, these measures need to be based on evidence that supports the work being done. It is not clear from the review of the literature that CiC hold no or low aspirations for the future, as such, it is the aim of this study to identify the aspirations of a small cross section of young people in care in one Local Authority and identify what has contributed to them

having these aspirations and how they plan to realise these aspirations. In doing so, it will seek to answer the following research questions:

1. What vocational aspirations do these young people hold?
2. To whom or what do these young people attribute their aspirations*?
3. What plans do these young people have for realising their aspirations*?
4. What factors, according to the young people, are most important to the development of high aspirations*?

* Aspirations for the purpose of this study are defined as future educational and vocational hopes and goals.

METHODS

DESIGN

This study used a qualitative research methods design. This approach was favoured over a quantitative approach because this study is exploratory and it was felt that if quantitative data was gathered, certain assumptions would need to be made, which may limit the breadth of the information collected from the participants. Using a qualitative design allowed for the use of open questions, which the participant could expand on and the researcher prompt further information without being confined to dichotomous or predetermined responses.

An individual interviewing approach using a semi-structured interview was used to collect the data for both studies. This more formal method of questioning was used instead of a less formal, free discussion around topic areas because of the age of the participants and the research questions having three topic areas (positive and negative narratives, resilience and aspirations) and thus needing focused questions to keep the discussion on track. The data was analysed using a thematic analysis approach (see Appendix B for a review of the qualitative methods considered for both studies).

PARTICIPANTS

Using a 6x2x3 group design (6 participants each, male and female, and from Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and Post 16 groups), 36 participants were randomly selected from the mainstream secondary schools in the Local Authority and from a list of post 16 young people, all of whom were in the care of the Local Authority (see Appendix C for a definition of the term ‘in care’). Of the original 36 that were selected only ten agreed to participate in the individual interviews after consent had been obtained from their social workers. Due to difficulties in obtaining consent from the young people’s birth parents,

only participants whose social workers had parental responsibility for them (i.e. there was a care order made by the courts under section 31 of the Children Act 1989) were considered for the study. A further 9 participants that agreed to participate in the study were recruited via events hosted by Looked After Children Education Service (LACES) or were young people suggested by social workers approached to gain permission to work with the participants.

The final participants consisted of 19 young people who were in the care of the Local Authority at the time of participation. All but two of the participants were resident in the Local Authority. Table 2 below shows the characteristics of the participants.

Table 2. Characteristics of the participants.

		Male			Female		
		N (Percent) or Range	Mean	SD	N (Percent) or Range	Mean	SD
Key Stage Three	Number	3 (37.5%)	-	-	5 (62.5%)	-	-
	Age	13 – 14	13.67	0.58	12 – 14	12.6	0.89
	Have a learning difficulty	0	-	-	0	-	-
	Have a disability	0	-	-	0	-	-
Key Stage Four	Number	4 (50%)	-	-	4 (50%)	-	-
	Age	15 – 16	15.5	0.58	15 – 16	15.25	0.5
	Have a learning difficulty	1	-	-	1	-	-
	Have a disability	0	-	-	0	-	-
Post Sixtee n	Number	2 (66.6%)	-	-	1 (33.3%)	-	-
	Age	16 – 17	-	-	16	-	-
	Have a learning difficulty	0	-	-	0	-	-
	Have a disability	0	-	-	0	-	-

From the table, it can be seen that of the 19 participants, nine were male (47%) and ten

were female (53%). Two of the participants identified themselves as having learning difficulties and none identified themselves as having a disability. In addition, the ethnic background and living circumstances of the participants was also obtained. Sixteen participants identified themselves as being White British, one identified themselves as being both White British and White Irish, one identified themselves as being Mixed – White and Black African, and one identified themselves as being Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background. Fourteen of the participants lived with foster carers, three lived with grandparents, one lived with their birth parent and one lived in shared accommodation.

MEASURES

Two semi-structured interview schedules were developed to guide the interviews (Appendix D), one for the young people in Key Stages 3 and 4 and one for the Post 16 young people. In developing the interview, a framework was sought to structure the discussion with the young people. As such, the schedules were modelled on a framework developed by Krueger & Casey (2000) who discuss the distinctive purpose of each part:

- Opening – the purpose of an opening question is to make the participant feel comfortable rather than to seek in depth information.
- Introductory – these questions introduce the topic and get the participant to start thinking about their connection to the topic.
- Transition – the purpose of these questions is to move the participant on to the key questions of the study.

- Key – these are based on the research questions that the study seeks to answer.
- Ending – there are three types of ending questions:
 - The all-things-considered question – which establishes the final position of the participant or identifies what they thought was most important in what was discussed.
 - The summary question – after providing a summary of the discussion the participant is asked if they want to add anything.
 - The final question – is an assurance question to ensure that nothing has been left out that the participant feel is relevant to the topic.

Using this framework to structure the interview, the key questions were developed directly from the aims of the study and the other questions were designed to guide the participant and encourage them to reflect further on the topic areas. For the opening question, the participants were given the opportunity to choose the alias that would protect their identity and were asked what their favourite activity was as an ice-breaker.

The introductory question was not directly related to any of the aims, but designed to get the participant to reflect on why it is important to talk about aspirations and goals, and although the responses were not analysed, it also had the purpose of establishing early on whether the young person was motivated by this topic, whether they had thought about the topic before, whether they had an understanding of the topic and whether it was important to them. The first transition question was aimed at making the link between aspirations and goals and the impact of life experiences on them, therefore linking the topics of the two papers. This was followed by key questions and the second

transition question related to resilience, and as such will be discussed in paper 2. The third and final transition question was aimed to guide the participant back to the discussion around goals and ambitions. In developing the key questions for this paper, the wording used was carefully considered based on the literature review. The questions refer to ‘hopes’, ‘aims’, ‘goals’ and ‘plans’ for the future. The format is also less structured than the resilience questions, this is because this study was exploratory and, as such, the responses could not be anticipated and the participants were instead encouraged to expand on their response to the key questions ‘What do you hope to achieve at school?’ and ‘What goals do you have for your future after you finish school?’ by being prompted with questions that were directly related to the aims of the study, for example, ‘why do you have these goals?’ and ‘where do they come from?’ relate to research question 2. Finally, two end questions were used to close the interview. The first was an ‘all-things-considered’ question, which relates directly to research question 4 and was used to focus the participant on the most important factors from the previous questions. The second was an assurance question to ensure that nothing was left out that the participant felt was important to both topics of the two papers.

Once the interview schedule was developed, the questions were examined to ensure that they were relevant to the research questions. Also, ethical implications were taken into consideration (see ethical considerations below) and it was decided that the post 16 schedule would be altered to reflect the stage they were in their life. They were asked instead to comment on where they were, how they got there, what helped them get there and whether it was where they thought they would be when they were at school. In doing so, it was felt that a developmental perspective could be taken to compare if their

responses differed greatly to those in Key Stages 3 and 4.

PROCEDURES

Consent was sought from the social workers who held parental responsibility to approach the randomly selected young people about attending the interviews (Appendix E), then letters were sent to the homes of those selected addressed to the parents or carers (Appendix F) informing them of the study. All the secondary schools were also sent letters (Appendix G) advising them that some of their CiC may be attending interviews and for support to be made available to the students if they needed and requested it.

Contact was then made with the randomly selected participants and their carers by phone to ask whether the young person would be interested in participating in an individual interview in their home or a confidential and convenient location. Of the original 36 participants, 10 young people agreed to the individual interview. A further 9 were recruited at two events hosted by the LACES team and through direct contact with the social services team in the Local Authority to ask for participants who would be willing to participate in the study (including visiting the Post 16 Team to recruit the Post 16 participants).

Most of the participants were interviewed in their home usually one to one with the researcher. One participant was interviewed over the phone as she did not wish to take part when I visited her at school. One participant was interviewed in the offices of the Post 16 Team. Prior to the interview, the participant was asked to give informed consent (Appendix H) and to fill in a demographical data sheet (Appendix I).

The interviews were digitally recorded and professionally transcribed. Prior to the

analysis, I checked the interview transcripts for any transcription errors and to decipher the parts of the recordings that were unclear to the professional transcribers. Once the errors were corrected and the gaps in the transcriptions were filled, I read and listened to the interviews a few times over to get a general impression of each person's interview and coded the initial themes I identified using NVivo. I then divided the transcripts into two parts: questions relating to "aspirations" and questions related to "resilience" (see Appendix J for a full transcript annotated to show the questions from paper 1 and paper 2). Then the sections related to "aspirations" were analysed manually (i.e. not with the aid of a computer program) according to the research questions being asked by this paper. To do this, the quotes taken from the transcripts that related to each research question were tabulated using an Excel spreadsheet. I then read the quotes a number of times to gather the themes from each of the participants. A summary of the themes for each participant was also tabulated. I related these themes back to what the participants had said before developing a final set of themes for each research question. Furthermore, for research question 1, the data was quantified to aid the analysis process; this is discussed in more detail in the results section.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics approval was sought from the University of Exeter and the Certificate is included in Appendix K. As explained above, consent was sought from the social worker that held parental responsibility for the young person and they were to discuss it with the young person and their parents prior to giving the consent. Informed consent was also sought from the young people and no deception was used prior, during or following the participation.

The young people's identity was protected in a number of ways. The local authority

caring for the young people was not revealed. Their names were changed to alias; most of the young people did not want to choose an alias themselves so names were chosen from a list containing the most common male and female names in English speaking countries. Of those that did choose an alias, there were two females in Key Stage 3 that chose Jim Bob Junior and Petal as their aliases, a male in Key Stage 3 that chose Jim Bob, a female in Key Stage 4 that chose Jeanette and a male in Key Stage 4 that chose The Invincible. The transcripts were also checked for information that could expose the participants' identities and the data was anonymised.

To further protect the participants' data, the digital recordings and word document transcripts are stored on the researcher's computer, which is password protected to prevent unauthorised access, under a folder that has permissions set so that it can only be read when the researcher is logged in.

To reduce the potential for harm, detriment or unreasonable stress to the participants, all the participants were given the opportunity to discuss concerns with what they had discussed in the interview. Only one of the participants required a debrief following the interview and with the participants permission, I discussed my concern with their social worker to ensure that there was a follow up to the concerns the participant had expressed (which had to do with their circumstances and not the content of the interview). Furthermore, the letter to secondary schools asked that support be made available to the students taking part in the study if they wanted to discuss the interview with a member of staff.

Consideration was also given to the content of the interview. As the participants were being asked questions about their hopes and goals for the future, if they were not

currently being successful then they may be stressed by the content. In assessing the questions, it was felt that the group who might be most stressed by the questions would be the post 16 group, as they may not have been successful in getting their GCSEs or be NEET. As such, the key questions asked of the post 16 participants differed to take this into account.

RESULTS

The results have been grouped according to the research question being asked.

WHAT VOCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS DO YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE HOLD?

From the data collected, most of the young people had clear aspirations and goals for the future; their vocational aspirations are presented in Appendix L. To gain a better understanding of the type of professions the young people were aspiring to, I classified their responses using the operational categories of the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC) system (Appendix M). I then used Table 4 of the NS-SEC User Manual (Office for National Statistics, 2005, p16) to convert the operational categories into Social Class based on Occupation groups (Appendix M). The results are presented in Table 3 and are grouped according to Key Stages.

Table 3. Young peoples' vocational aspirations classified according to Social Class based on Occupation groups and grouped by Key Stages

	I*	II*	IIIN*	IIIM*	IV*	V*	None**
Key Stage 3	1	3	2	1	0	0	1
Key Stage 4	1	2	1	2	1	0	1
Post 16	0	1	1	0	1	0	0

**Key: I: Professional occupations; II: Managerial and technical occupations; IIIN: Skilled occupations – non-manual; IIIM: Skilled occupations – manual; IV: Partly skilled occupations; V: Unskilled occupations. **One key stage 3 participant and one key stage 4 participant did not have a vocational aspiration and therefore were not assigned a category.*

Across the Key Stages, most of the young peoples' vocational aspirations were in Social Class II and III. In the Key Stage 3 group, 37.5% of the young people aspired to do Managerial and technical occupations (Class II) and 25% of the young people aspired to do Non-manual Skilled occupations (Class IIIN). In the Key Stage 4 group, 25% of the young people aspired to do Managerial and technical occupations (Class II) and 25% of

the young people aspired to do Manual Skilled occupations (Class IIIM). Of the three young people in the Post 16 group, one aspired to do a Managerial and technical occupation (Class II) and one aspired to do a Non-manual Skilled occupation (Class IIIN). In both Key Stage 3 and 4, only 12.5% (one young person in each group) and no young people in the Post 16 aspired to do a Professional occupation (Class I).

To further analyse the data, I used a graph to compare the Social Class groups of the vocational aspirations according to the gender of the participants; this is shown in Figure 2 (a table representing the data is presented in Appendix N).

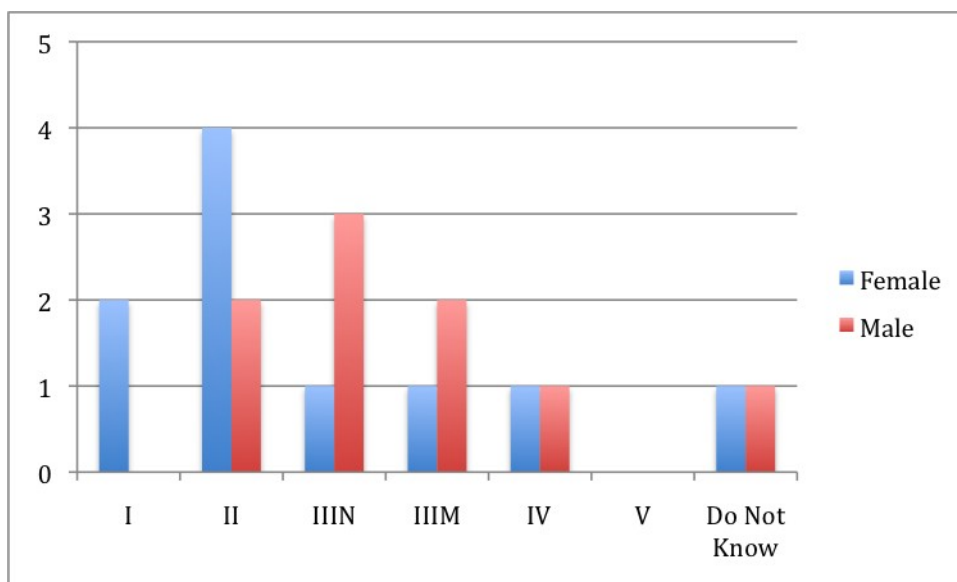


Figure 2. Graph of the Social Class group of the young peoples' vocational aspirations according to gender

From the graph, it appears that the female participant's vocational aspirations were predominantly in Class I and II, while most of the male participants aspired to do vocations within Class II and III.

Finally, I merged all the data to see the percentage of participants with vocational

aspirations within each Social Class group. This is shown in Figure 3.

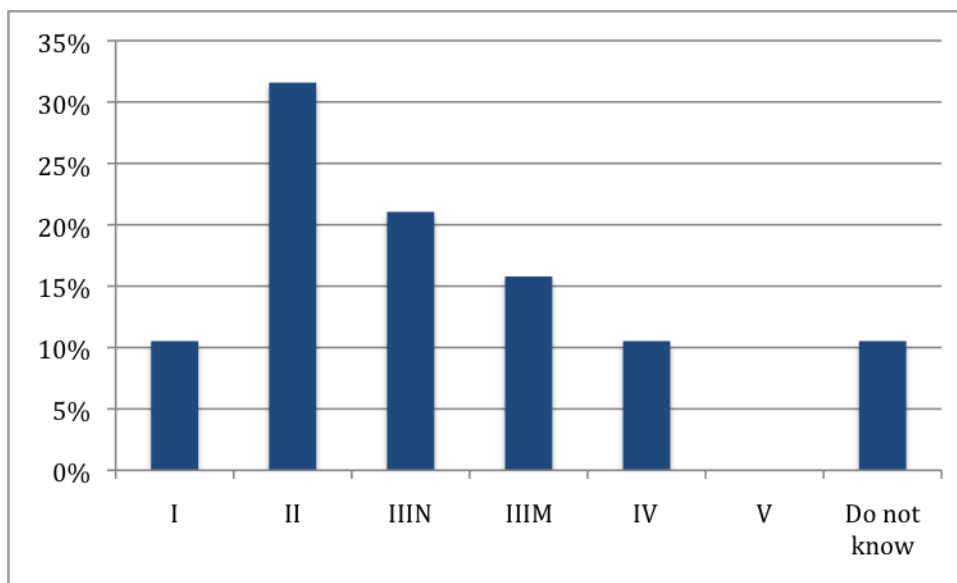


Figure 3. Graph showing the percentage of young people with vocational aspirations in each Social Class group

From the chart it can be seen that 31% of the participants had vocational aspirations in Social Class II, 21% had aspirations in Social Class IIIN, 16% had aspirations in Social Class IIIM, 10.5% had aspirations in Social Class I, IV or had no vocational aspirations, and none of the young people had aspirations in Social Class V.

TO WHOM OR WHAT DO YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE ATTRIBUTE THEIR ASPIRATIONS?

The participants were asked where their aspirations came from and who or what influenced them in making their choices (see Appendix O for excerpts from the interviews relating to what the young people reported had influenced their aspirations).

Following an analysis of their responses, a table of themes was made (Table 4).

Table 4. Table of themes for factors that influenced the participants' aspirations and goals for the future grouped by key stage and individual

Key Stage	Name	Factors that influenced participants' aspirations and goals
Key Stage Three	Grace	School influence (achievable goals), self motivation to do better
	Jim Bob Junior	Personal experience (not going to school), self motivation to be educated, parents encouraging to get good grades (mum), personal interests (doing what you like/enjoy), friends – inspiration (wanting to be like them)
	Olivia	Support from school staff (careers information and advice), future motivation (wanting to get a good job), television
	Petal	Features of the job (helping people), personal features (I'm dramatic), self ('it just came from me', 'it's like what you want to be'), television, friends influence (positive)
	Ruby	Prior positive experiences (doing well at school), personal interests from a young age ("I've been dancing like for years")
	Jack	Parental interests (dad)
	Jim Bob	Motivated by the future ('good job', 'good rank in that job'; finances and self-sufficiency 'food, drink and clothes'), self ('within me'), school, personal interests from a young age (childhood experience of profession)
	Thomas	Family tradition (army - dad and grandad), future employability (good grades), self motivation to continue
Key Stage Four	Emily	Childhood experience (caring for siblings)
	Jeanette	Family, self (it's really important to me'), personal interests from a young age, school support (information)
	Jessica	Teacher – inspiration
	Sophie	Personal experiences (wanting to work with young people like herself), motivated by the future ('good job'), personal features ('I think I'd be good at it', 'I think I could help them'), making a difference/changing the way things are done ('But from my experience in foster care i would want to do more for that child than the foster carers did for me')
	Harry	School experiences, influence from friends, parents (mum and dad), next door neighbours, financial motivation ('you get more money'), personal interests and experiences, self motivation
	The Invincible	Personal interests and experiences, experience of not going to school, self motivated to be educated
	Joshua	School experiences, personal features ('sporty person'), features of the job ('keeping active'), self, friends, childhood experiences (dad, school and friends)

	Oliver	Features of the qualification ('easy', 'don't have to do much'), future motivation ('good job'), personal interests, self motivation
Post 16	Chloe	Personal interests, self motivation
	Charlie	Life experiences, personal interests, making a difference/changing the way things are done, barriers ('I'm not allowed to go into the army'), at school - friends influences (negative), self motivation, family, self-belief, support from others ('people having belief in me')
	Daniel	Reality of job market ('continuously looking for a job but not being able to get hold of one'), support from foster carers, past experiences making him self sufficient/motivated ('if it wasn't for my mum and all of the bad stuff in the past'), help and support

From the responses, some themes emerged of the factors that the participants felt were influential in their decisions about their aspirations and goals for the future. These broad categories were school, self, personal experiences, parents and family, friends, motivated by better future, television, features of the job and other (Table 5).

Table 5. Table of themes of the factors that influenced the participants' aspirations and goals for the future grouped by category and individual

General factor	Participants' influence
School	Grace – setting achievable goals
	Olivia – careers information
	Ruby – positive experience doing well
	Jim Bob – encouraging to do well
	Jeanette - college information
	Jessica - inspired by teacher
	Harry – cooking lessons
	Joshua - playing in sports teams
Self	Grace - self motivated to do better
	Jim Bob Junior - self motivated to be educated, likes and interests
	Petal - personality features, self motivated
	Ruby - likes and interests
	Jim Bob – self motivation
	Thomas – self motivation to not 'give up'
	Jeanette – self motivation, likes and interests

	Sophie – skills for the job
	Harry – likes and interests, self motivation
	The Invincible - likes and interests, self motivated
	Joshua – likes and interests, self motivated
	Oliver - likes and interests, self motivated
	Chloe – likes and interests
	Charlie – likes and interests, self belief and motivation
	Daniel - self motivated
Personal Experiences	Jim Bob Junior - not going to school
	Jim Bob - childhood experience of fire brigade
	Emily – caring for siblings
	Sophie – foster care experiences
	Harry – cooking experience
	The Invincible - looking after father not going to school, cutting grass for others
	Charlie – life in general
	Daniel - bad experiences making him do it himself
Parents and Family	Jim Bob Junior - mother encouraging to get good grades
	Jack - father's interests
	Thomas – army family
	Jeanette – horse riding with family
	Harry – mother and father's advice
	Joshua – playing football with father
	Charlie – family getting him to where he is
	Daniel - support and advice from foster carers
Friends	Jim Bob Junior - role model/inspiration
	Petal – support
	Harry – advice
	Joshua - friends got him into sports
Motivated for better future	Olivia - good job
	Jim Bob – good job, financial security
	Thomas – good grades giving you higher employability
	Sophie – good job
	Harry – getting more money
	Oliver - good job
Television	Olivia - crime programs
	Petal – The Bill
Features of the job	Petal - helping people
	Joshua – keeping active
Other	Harry - next door neighbours advice
	Oliver - choosing something easy
	Charlie - wanting to change things, people

having belief in me

Daniel – reality of not being able to find a job, having help and support
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From the table it can be seen that most of the young people (15 of the 19 participants; 79%) saw themselves as being an influence for deciding what to do for the future. For example, Chloe from the Post 16 group when asked if she could think of any experiences that had helped her to decide on what she wanted to do in the future, she said “No, I just wanted to do hair” and when questioned further about whether the idea had come from family, foster carers or anyone else, she replied “it was from me”. Many of the young people (9 of the 19 participants; 47%) said that their aspirations came from things they were interested in. Others said that it was features about themselves, for example, Petal said “I’m dramatic” and Joshua described himself as a “sporty person”, whereas Sophie felt that her life experiences would make her “be good at it”. Another common theme from the group that identified themselves as influencing their aspiration choices and goals for the future was being self motivated to do well, be better and succeed. For example, when Jim Bob Junior was asked why it was important for her to do well at school she replied “It’s important for me ‘cause I didn’t really go to school when I was having a bad time. I only started going to school when I was about seven but I caught up because I wanted to be educated...”. Similarly, Daniel, a Post 16 participant, said “well, if I ain’t gonna do it for myself and if I ain’t gonna go out there and try and get it then no one else is for me so I’ve got to do it myself”.

The next most common factors reported by the young people as influencing their aspirations and future goals were school, personal experiences and parents and family,

which were named by 8 participants (42%) each. School had multiple roles in how it influenced the participants, for example, providing information (careers, college), providing relevant experiences (cooking, sports) and encouraging pupils to do well. Similarly, parents and family also had a mixed role. For example, some participants were influenced by past experiences with their families: Jack talked about a memory of his father from when he was younger and said that his aspirations “came from that really”, and Jack similarly reported that “I think it was my dad cos me and him used to go out and have a game of football”, while Emily’s experience was “I used to look after my brother and sister when they was younger and ever since I wanted to work with children”. Others saw their parents and family as giving them support and advice, for example, Jim Bob Junior reported that her mother “taught me that you have to work towards your SATs... mum was like ‘come on, you have to get good grades’...” and Daniel, who was the only participant to name his foster parents as being an influence, reported “Foster care is helping me, pretty much 24/7 giving me advice and stuff like that really”.

The next most common factors were motivated for a better future (31.5%) and friends (21%). Those motivated to have a better future reported things like wanting a “good job”, for example, Sophie reported that “I just don’t want to be working in McDonalds and that, I want a good job...”, and being financially secure, for example, Jim Bob said he wanted a good job “So you can help yourself get food and drink and clothes”. And friends provided support, advice and inspiration, for example, Jim Bob Junior reported “I would like to be like one of my friends...”.

Next, I examined whether these influential factors changed over time or were different according to gender, only the themes reported by two or more participants were

considered (Table 6).

Table 6. Factors that influence aspirations according to key stage and gender.

	Male	Female
Key Stage 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self (2/3; 67%) • Better future (2/3; 67%) • Parents and family (2/3; 67%) • Personal experiences (1/3; 33%) • School (1/3; 33%) • Friends (0/3; 0%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self (4/5; 80%) • School (3/5; 60%) • Friends (2/5; 40%) • Better future (1/5; 20%) • Personal experiences (1/5; 20%) • Parents and family (1/5; 20%)
Key Stage 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self (4/4; 100%) • School (2/4; 50%) • Personal experiences (2/4; 50%) • Parents and family (2/4; 50%) • Friends (2/4; 50%) • Better future (2/4; 20%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self (2/4; 50%) • School (2/4; 50%) • Personal experiences (2/4; 50%) • Parents and family (1/4; 25%) • Better future (1/4; 25%) • Friends (0/4; 0%)
Post 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self (2/2; 100%) • Personal experiences (2/2; 100%) • Parents and family (2/2; 100%) • Friends (0/2; 0%) • Better future (0/2; 0%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self (1/1; 100%) • Personal experiences (0/1; 0%) • Parents and family (0/1; 0%) • Friends (0/1; 0%) • Better future (0/1; 0%)

From the table, it can be seen that across all three groups, for both males and females more participants reported 'self' as their influence than any other factor. There were differences between males and females in key stage three, where more males seemed influenced by a better future and by parents and family, whereas more females reported being influenced by friends and school. Key stage three males did not identify friends as influencing their choices, and only one female reported their parents/family as an influence. In key stage four, males and females had few differences in their reported influences, however, in this group none of the females reported friends as influences

while half of the males reported friends as influences. This indicates that the importance of friends seems to change over time, as in key stage three friends did not influence the males but did influence the females and the opposite was true in key stage four. Furthermore, neither of the males nor the female in the post 16 group reported friends as influences. Another difference is the importance of parents and family, which seemed to influence male aspirations more than female aspirations.

WHAT PLANS DO YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE HAVE FOR REALISING THEIR ASPIRATIONS?

The Key Stage 3 and 4 participants were asked what plans they had for realising their aspirations and goals, while the Post 16 group were asked about their experiences after finishing school and their plans for the future (see Appendix P for excerpts from the interviews relating to what the young people reported their plans were). A summary of their responses is presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Summary of young peoples’ plans for realising their aspirations and goals

Key Stage	Name	Plans for achieving aspirations.
Key Stage Three	Grace	Get a higher level in exams, pass GCSEs, work hard, go to college
	Jim Bob Junior	Achieve good grades, go to college, go to university if needed for subjects
	Olivia	Improve on math, improve on GCSEs, ask for help
	Petal	Concentrate mostly on maths and English, concentrate on other lessons, go to college and university to get the right qualifications
	Ruby	Pass all or most GCSEs, go to a dance school, pass all the exams at dance school, always practice
	Jack	Go really well, get a lot of qualifications, get a good job, start own business
	Jim Bob	Achieve in school work and GCSEs, go to college, go to university, work with others and get help if needed
	Thomas	Keep his mind on the goal, get a well paid job, go to the army, get good grades, take small steps

Key Stage Four	Emily	Get good grades, work hard and concentrate on school, get a job with work experience placement
	Jeanette	Get high grades As and Bs, go to college or do further education to be able to do the job she wants
	Jessica	Get a C or above in GCSE English, go to sixth form, go to university
	Sophie	Tried to get all GCSEs in school but only got one ('got into some trouble, didn't go to school so i couldn't take them'), retake two GCSEs in college, possibly go onto another course once finished, did a college course in school but did not like it
	Harry	Pushed self to get better grades - pass course, good GCSEs, go to college, maybe go to university, or otherwise go into army (not college or university), look straight ahead to the future
	The Invincible	Did work experience in school, doing vocational studies at college, get the qualification for what he wants to do
	Joshua	Achieve five Cs in GCSEs (does not think he will get them), has chosen courses at college, get the GCSE results he wants and then do a high level course at college, wants to go to university
	Oliver	Go to college, get qualifications to get a good job
Post 16	Chloe	Is doing training, keep training
	Charlie	Is doing a course at college, not doing course he wanted because he applied too late and did not have the right grades, can now apply to do the other course but decided to do something else, wants to concentrate on college and family and not put too much pressure on himself
	Daniel	Left college because his classes were changed mid year to ones he did not like and he did not have the motivation to continue after that, now looking for a job and doing odd jobs for people he knows, in a years time will probably be back in college and have achieved two merits

From the table, it can be seen that fourteen of the participants (73.7%) had either attended, were currently attending, or had plans to attend a college to gain qualifications in their area of interest. Six participants (31.6%) were thinking they might go to university; three from Key Stage Three (two females, one male) and three from Key

Stage Four (one female and two males). Of the three participants who did not speak about going onto further education (college, sixth form or university), one aspired to be a police officer, which would require additional training, but had not thought of how she would realise her aspiration, one planned on getting a job once she completed her education and one planned on continuing her training by completing an apprenticeship.

Due to the vast amount of data collected for this study, I felt it necessary to limit the amount of analysis performed on the data. As such, this question will only focus on the academic goals and aspirations the young people expressed in their interviews.

ACCORDING TO YOUNG PEOPLE, WHAT FACTORS LEAD TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF HIGH ASPIRATIONS?

The participants were asked what they felt was most important for developing high aspirations, in particular in those who had tough lives (see Appendix Q for excerpts from the interviews relating to what the young people reported was most important for developing high aspirations). A summary of their responses is presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Summary of what young people thought led to high aspirations

Key Stage	Name	Factors most important for having high aspirations.
Key Stage Three	Grace	Keep motivated, never give up on things that they thought were hard
	Jim Bob Junior	Your background inspires what you want to be, doing something that interests you, having a passion for what you do or want to do
	Olivia	To be proud of yourself
	Petal	Having courage to do what they want to do
	Ruby	Does not know
	Jack	Someone supporting them, no one putting them down - teased for being a nerd or geek, people who are clever and do well at school will end up with the better life
	Jim Bob	People supporting them, getting help
	Thomas	Do not give up

Key Stage Four	Emily	Not letting others bring her down or having bad thoughts, thinking everything is going to be all right
	Jeanette	Wanting to aim high, succeed and get a good job
	Jessica	Do not give them up, restart if you need to
	Sophie	Does not know
	Harry	If they think they are not good enough, focus and think about what you are going to do
	The Invincible	Education
	Joshua	Realising it is for their benefit, being motivated by people who want to succeed
	Oliver	Does not know
Post 16	Chloe	Wanting to prove everyone wrong
	Charlie	Taking time to think about what you want for your future and what would make you happy, you have to want to change things for yourself and believe in yourself
	Daniel	Set yourself some to have something to aim for

From the table, the following themes were identified: self-motivation (not giving up), life events (background), interests and passions, pride in self, courage, support from others (getting help), not being bullied, importance of education, positive thinking (thinking it will be all right), focus on what you want, inspiration (motivated by people who want to succeed), proving others wrong and self-belief. These themes were grouped into broader categories: personal factors (self-motivation, interests and passions, pride in self, courage, positive thinking, focus on what you want, proving others wrong and self belief), life events, education and social factors (not being bullied, support from others and inspiration from people who want to succeed). Similar to their responses for the research question related to their own influences on developing aspirations, the most common theme was self-motivation and not giving up with six participants reporting this as an important factor for developing high aspirations. Most responses focussed on factors relating to the self, which I called ‘personal factors’.

Next, the responses were tabulated according to these major themes by key stage group

and gender (Table 9).

Table 9. Major themes from factors most important for developing high aspirations

	Male	Female
Key Stage Three	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social factors (2/3; 67%) • Personal factors (1/3; 33%) • Education (1/3; 33%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal factors (4/5; 80%) • Life events (1/5; 20%) • Does not know (1/5, %)
Key Stage Four	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal factors (2/4; 50%) • Education (1/4; 25%) • Social factors (1/4; 25%) • Does not know (1/4; 25%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal factors (3/4; 75%) • Does not know (1/4, 25%) • Social factors (1/4; 25%)
Post 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal factors (2/2; 100%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal factors (1/1; 100%)

From the table, it can be seen that personal factors is reported more frequently as most important for developing high aspirations, followed by social factors. It was reported more frequently by females (8 participants) than males (5 participants), equally in key stage three (5 participants) and key stage four (5 participants) and by all the post 16 participants.

DISCUSSION

The broad aim of this research study was to identify the aspirations of a small cross section of young people in care in the Local Authority, identify what had contributed to them having these aspirations and how they planned to realise these aspirations. In doing so, the following research questions were asked:

1. What vocational aspirations do these young people hold?
2. To whom or what do these young people attribute their aspirations to?
3. What plans do these young people have for realising their aspirations?
4. What factors, according to the young people, are most important to the development of high aspirations?

The literature review revealed that despite many resources being put in place to raise the aspirations and future outcomes of CiC (DCSF, 2008; From Care2Work: National Care Advisory Service (NCAS), 2010), little was known about the aspirations of CiC. This study found that the young people interviewed had high vocational aspirations (40% within Social Classes I and II) and high academic aspirations (87.5% of the Key Stage 3 and 4 participants had plans to attend college or university). These results do not correlate with the outcomes reported for young people in care who have left education (Harker, 2009). They are however, similar to a study that looked at the aspirations of disadvantaged youths (some of which came from a care background), where the researchers found that the aspirations of the disadvantaged youth were no different to the control group (The Prince's Trust, 2004). This could suggest that aspirations do not mediate outcomes for CiC, in other words, that having high aspirations does not lead to

success. If so, this goes against research that links high aspirations to achievement and later success (Schoon & Parsons, 2002). For example, Scott (2004) demonstrated the importance of aspirations on educational attainment in her longitudinal study looking at factors that mediate educational attainment in Britain, which replicated findings of American studies that similarly found that educational aspirations influenced outcomes in school (Campbell, 1983).

However, the situation was more complex across key stages. The data showed that the older the participants were, the fewer had aspirations within Class I and II. Due to the small number of participants in each group, particularly in the Post 16 group, it is difficult to know whether this is a real difference that would be seen in a larger sample of CiC. Research suggests that around Key Stage 3, young peoples' aspirations change from being idealistic to more realistic and are then more stable over time (Gottfredson, 2002; Rojewski & Kim, 2003). However, The Prince's Trust study (2004) showed that aspirations are lowered over time as the disadvantaged young people became more aware of the barriers that exist in trying to achieve their goals. Comparing these results to the definitions of aspirations presented in the introduction, Macleod's view that aspirations were "unsullied by anticipated constraints" (1987, p60) seems to be true for the younger participants. However, over time it seems that perhaps the awareness of barriers may begin to effect their aspirations, as predicted by Lewin's theory (1951, as cited in Sherwood, 1989), which indicated that aspirations were mediated by a person's perception of being able to achieve them.

Furthermore, the results also showed gender differences in aspirations. They suggested that female participants had higher vocational aspirations than male participants. This is consistent with the literature on gender differences in the aspirations of young people in

general, which also shows that females in general have higher educational and vocational aspirations than males (Mau & Bikos, 2000; Mello, 2008). In terms of their educational aspirations (as determined from their plans for achieving their vocational aspirations), there appeared to be little difference between males and females who were ‘aiming high’, which is not consistent with the research quoted above. In examining these results, it is important to remember that many of the participants chosen for this study participated in programs run by the LACES team in the local authority they were in care in that were aimed at widening their experiences in colleges and universities. This may account for the results not being consistent with the research.

Next, the study focussed on factors the young people attributed to the development of their aspirations. The main factors identified were: school, self, personal experiences, parents and family, friends, television and features of the occupation. In the Moderation-Mediation model, individual characteristics, proximal settings (e.g. families and schools) and aspirations were all moderated by family background (e.g. social status and country of origin). Of the young people I spoke to, only one (Charlie, post 16 group) recognised that coming from a disadvantaged family and/or community could be a barrier to achievement, “I was like being a kid living on estates and learning to kind of think like that like everybody sort of expects you to fail and I’m going to prove them wrong and succeed in what I want...”. The other factors identified by the young people seem to be consistent with the model, for example, the young people identified motivation, likes and interests, personal qualities and self belief as factors that influenced aspirations, which would map onto the model as ‘individual characteristics’. Perhaps what the model lacks, which would be very relevant to CiC, is changes over time, for example, their aspirations before entering care, after entering care and upon

leaving care may change depending on their care experiences.

Taking a developmental perspective, the Gottfredson (2002) model also does not account for all the factors identified by the young people as influencing their aspirations. For example, one of the factors identified by the young people was 'personal experiences'. Sophie, whose aspiration is to work with young people like herself reported "But like from my experience in foster care like I would want to do more for that child than like the foster carers did for me". So for Sophie, her aspirations came from her care experience. Daniel on the other hand reported that his aspirations came from his pre-care experiences. He reported "...if it wasn't for my mum and all of like the bad stuff in the past and that, then it wouldn't have made me think 'well, if I ain't gonna do it for myself and if I ain't gonna go out there and try and get it then no one else is for me so I've got to do it myself'". Clearly, in developing a model for the development of aspirations in CiC, their care experiences need to be considered. Furthermore, unlike the Gottfredson model, which places more importance on the social aspects that mediate youths' aspirations over time, the model needs to take into account the importance of personal factors, which for CiC seem more important than environmental factors.

The results of the next research question showed that the young people had thought about how they planned to achieve their aspirations. Some had specific plans for the future (e.g. the GCSE marks they are aiming for, the further education institute they want to attend), while others had plans that are more general for the future (e.g. achieve good grades, get a good job). Of the young people in Key Stage 3 and 4, eight (50%) mentioned GCSE's in their plans for realising their aspirations and a further four (25%) mentioned achieving good grades. Contrasting this with the actual performance of the

care population (Harker, 2009), only 43% of the young people in care who sat GCSE's achieved 5 GCSE's (or equivalent) at grade A* to G, compared to 92% of all other children. This may indicate a number of things; there may have been a bias in the selection of the young people for the study, which may have resulted in the selection of the young people most likely to achieve good GCSE grades, this hypothesis is probable as those who are not succeeding or are less likely to succeed academically are more likely to be 'disengaged' and would most likely refuse to participate in a study of this nature. It is also possible that these aspirations reflect 'idealistic' aspirations rather than 'realistic' aspirations (as per Stage 4 of Gottfredson's (2002) theory). Alternatively, the participants may be over optimistic of their abilities to achieve these academic aspirations.

Similar findings were found in the number of participants in Key Stage 3 and 4 aspiring to complete further study upon finishing school; 50% wanted to attend college, 37.5% wanted to attend university, one (6.25%) wanted to find a job and one (6.25%) did not have plans beyond finishing school. Harker (2009) reported that in 2008 young people aged 19 years who had been in care at the age of 16, 7% were in higher education (defined as studies beyond A levels), 28% were in education other than higher education and 31% were in training or employment. It seems that if the sample of young people interviewed for this study are representative of the care population, despite having high aspirations and goals for the future, young people in care are not achieving their potential. A possible reason is that they are not showing resilience against the multiple adversities they are facing, which leads them to be unsuccessful at school and later in life. The concept of resilience was also investigated with the young people in this study and the results are presented in Paper 2.

Finally, I asked the young people to reflect on what factors they saw as being most important in the development of high aspirations. The responses were grouped into the following broad categories: personal factors, social factors, life events and education, with personal factors followed by social factors being the most frequent responses. These results suggest that the young people recognise that personal factors, for example, self-efficacy are important in the development of aspirations, which is consistent with other research findings (Bandura et al, 2001; O'Brien et al, 2000; Social Exclusion Task Force, 2008). The factor that is most obviously lacking is family, which both the Moderation-Mediation Model (Marjoribanks, 2002) and the study looking at aspirations of young people from deprived communities held as key to developing aspirations (Social Exclusion Task Force, 2008). For the young people interviewed in this study, it seems that internal factors are most important to developing high aspirations, it is not clear however, how much these personal factors (e.g. motivation, self belief and positive thinking) were mediated by family background and the family context. Further research into the development of aspirations could look at family factors and investigate whether the Moderation-Mediation Model, accurately represents the development of aspirations in young people in care.

Despite the many questions this study has opened up, a basic model is proposed that brings together the results from the study and the eco-systemic and developmental models presented in the introduction (Gottfredson, 2002; Marjoribanks, 2002), which only somewhat account for the findings. The model is presented in Figure 4.

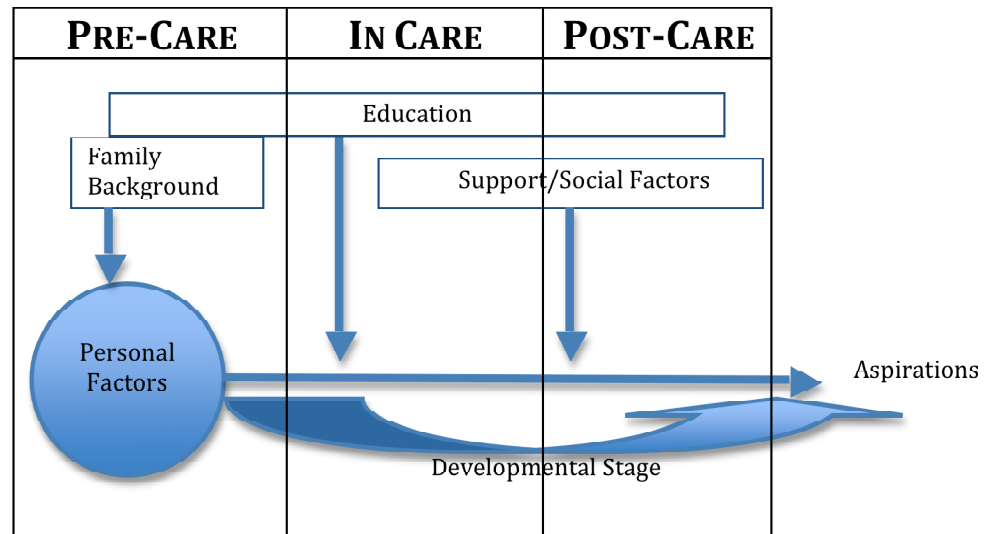


Figure 4. Proposed model of the development of aspirations in CiC

The model emphasises the importance of personal factors, which are mediated by family and background (as per the Moderation-Mediation model). Education and social factors then feed into the development, with the model proposing that the impact of education spans the different care stages, but hypothesising that social factors would be more important in the ‘in care’ and ‘post care’ stages, and overall the involvement of both education and social factors is linked with the personal factors. The model also proposes that ‘pre-care’, ‘in care’ and ‘post-care’ are phases that change aspirations and to a lesser extent, that developmental stages also change aspirations, as presented in the Gottfredson (2002) model. Further research will need to be carried out to investigate whether this model is representative of the development of aspirations in CiC.

So far this discussion has focussed on the theoretical implications of the results of this study and has opened more questions than perhaps it has answered; this was intended as an exploratory study and as such further research into this topic would be highly

beneficial. However, the current information can begin to be applied in the 'real world'. The young people have told us that they do have aspirations and are aiming high, however, from their reports they are predominantly relying on themselves to develop and achieve these aspirations. Whilst they did report some involvement from parents and family, and friends in the development of their own aspirations, in reflecting on what was most important for the development of high aspirations neither were mentioned. The social factors that were mentioned were not being bullied, support from others and inspiration from people who want to succeed. Here there could be a role for schools for mediating these social factors to foster high aspirations in all young people in care. For example, having a supportive teacher (i.e. designated teacher) or teaching assistant may be useful to the young person in the absence of having support from parents and family. To address bullying and create a more supportive peer group network the school could implement a program such as a 'Circle of Friends' (Newton, Taylor & Wilson, 1996). Such an intervention could also provide positive role models for these young people who may inspire them to want to succeed. Training and supervision could also be provided to foster carers of secondary aged CiC, on the importance of having high expectations and ways they could promote high aspirations in the young people in their care, so that the message is reinforced both at home and in school.

Alongside these interventions to increase the support network around young people in care, efforts should also focus on empowering the young people and promoting their resilience (Gillian, 2009), as they themselves identified that they are most important to developing high aspirations. In this area, Educational Psychologists have a role to play in supporting the young people, their families and carers and schools. Using

psychology, they can provide training to adults working with CiC on promoting the child's self-efficacy, which was identified in the literature review as being linked to developing high aspirations (O'Brien, et al., 2000; Social Exclusion Task Force, 2008), self-esteem, confidence and coping strategies (for example, using the resources from the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning; DfES, 2007). Using psychological assessment and consultation (Wagner, 1995), they can support adults and the young person to identify risk factors present in the young person's life that may be a barrier to developing high aspirations, and preventing their success at school and beyond. Educational Psychologists could also be involved in supporting schools and providing training and supervision to adults working with young people in care on the strategies covered earlier on around social factors. At a systemic level, Educational Psychologists could be influencing policies in local authorities and schools related to outcomes for CiC to reflect the findings of this study.

There are a number of limitations to this study, which may have impacted on the validity and generalisation of the results to all CiC. For example, one of the main findings of the study is that CiC consider personal factors as most important for the development of aspirations, while studies into the development of aspirations in young people suggest that environmental factors are equally important as detailed in the Moderation-Mediation model (Marjoribanks, 2002). However, these results may be a consequence of the methods of data collection used in this study (self-report), if, for example, a questionnaire was given to adults working with young people in care asking them the same questions posed to the young people of this study, would the results be the same? Another aspect that may limit how representative the findings are to all CiC is the sample size. As the views of only 19 young people were taken, it is likely that the

findings may be specific to this group. Future research should employ different methods of data collection from a number of sources to compare with the findings of this study.

Furthermore, the methods used to recruit participants could have created a biased sample. Out of the 36 randomly selected participants approached to take part in the study, only 10 agreed to participate (28%); it is possible that only those who were achieving success chose to take part, or those with certain personal characteristics, which are not reflective of the CiC population in general. In addition, the remaining 9 participants who chose to participate were recruited during events held by LACES and are therefore engaging with services, and through social workers, who were selecting young people they thought would most likely want to take part in the study and would provide useful information. Future studies should consider how they recruit participants and how they can motivate participants who are least likely to want to participate.

Another limitation of the study, which also has ethical implications is that due to time constraints, it was not possible to obtain signed consent from the young person's parents. Instead a verbal agreement was made between the parents and the young person's social worker and signed consent was obtained from the social worker that had parental responsibility. Ideally, it would have been best to seek signed consent from both the parents and the social worker; however, this is likely to be a common difficulty encountered by researchers when looking at the care population. Given the importance of studies that are aimed at finding knowledge that will improve the outcomes of CiC, further thought should be given to this dilemma to ensure that researchers are able to access this population in an ethical manner.

In conclusion, due to the lack of research in this area, further research is need to

corroborate the findings of this study, in particular research could examine the validity of the model proposed for how aspirations develop in CiC, studies should use a range of methodologies including quantitative measures that would allow for a much larger sample size, and as this study used a cross-section of participants, it would be beneficial if future studies used a longitudinal approach to investigate the development of aspirations in CiC.

CONCLUSION

This study was aimed at identifying the aspirations of a small cross-section of young people in care in the Local Authority, identify what factors contributed to their aspirations, identify how they aimed to achieve their aspirations and finally to identify what they felt was most important to the development of high aspirations. The results showed that the group of young people interviewed had high vocational aspirations (40% within Social Classes I and II) and high academic aspirations (87.5% of the Key Stage 3 and 4 participants had plans to attend college or university). The results showed that aspirations varied across gender, with females showing higher vocational aspirations than males, which is consistent with prior research (Mau & Bikos, 2000; Mello, 2008), and indicated that vocational aspirations may change over time, again consistent with theories and research on the development of aspirations (Gottfredson, 2002; Rojewski & Kim, 2003). They showed that most of the young people relied on themselves to develop their aspirations and achieve their goals, however, family, school friends and their past personal experiences also played key roles. Finally, the results showed that Personal factors played a key role in developing high aspirations, followed by social factors, and that education and life events had minor roles. Contrary to research (Marjoribanks, 2002; Social Exclusion Task Force, 2008), the young people did not feel that family played an important role in the development of high aspirations.

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PAPER TWO

Perspectives on Resilience from Young People in Care

ABSTRACT

The aims of this study were to elicit the positive and negative experiences of a group of young people in care, to determine what strategies these young people used to cope with difficult situations and to map out what factors these young people thought led to good educational and vocational outcomes versus poor outcomes for people who have tough lives. Nineteen young people in care were recruited from Key Stages 3 and 4 and Post 16 and took part in individual interviews. The results showed that the young people identified supportive networks (peers and adults), education, positive personal qualities, advice and resources, positive experiences (e.g. achievements) and having their basic and emotional needs met as being protective factors that promote resilient outcomes. They identified poor interactions and relationships, unsupportive adults, experiences of entering care, loss, negative personal qualities, poor education, overwhelming emotions, memories and lack of control over thoughts, life events, and home experiences as being risk factors and promoting poor outcomes.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2008, only 14% of children in care (CiC) in England achieved five GCSEs (or equivalent) at grade A* to C, compared to 65% of all children, and 34% of CiC did not achieve any passes compared to only 1% of all children (Harker, 2009). It is perhaps not surprising then that over 30% of care leavers are not in education, employment or training at age 19 (in 2009 this had decreased to 29%; Harker, 2009) compared to 13% of all young people (DfES, 2006). Studies that have focused on the outcomes of young people leaving care consistently show that care-leavers are many times more likely than their peers to be unemployed, to become young (adolescent) parents, to be homeless, to misuse alcohol or drugs, and to suffer from mental health problems (Stein, 2004).

Recently, the government has made bridging the widening gap in the outcomes of CiC compared to the outcomes of all children a high priority, through the Care Matters agenda (DfES, 2006; DCSF, 2008). The Green Paper highlighted the importance of good placements, a first class education, better access to activities outside of school and improving the transition to independence for care leavers, which research has shown were important when looking at positive outcomes for CiC (DfES, 2006). Furthermore, research that focussed on the small number of CiC who go on to have ‘good outcomes’, has also provided valuable information on the factors that helped these children achieve success and allowed them to show resilience despite having significant risk factors present in their lives (Jackson, Ajayi & Quigley, 2005; Martin & Jackson, 2002).

In the previous paper of this research study, which looked at the aspirations of a small number of young people in care from Key Stage Three to post 16, it was found that the majority of the young people did want to go onto further education and 32% had hopes of going onto university education. However, from the statistics last year (Harker, 2009)

we know that of the 5,800 young people in England, now aged 19, who were in care on 1 April 2004 (then aged 16), only 7% were in higher education (i.e. studies beyond A level). As such, the aim of this introduction is to highlight the issues that may be contributing to poor outcomes for CiC and to examine the concept of resilience and the factors that may contribute to good outcomes for CiC.

EDUCATIONAL AND LIFE OUTCOMES OF CiC

A myriad of factors including those occurring before entering and whilst in care have been said to contribute to the poor outcomes of people who have been in public care (Stein, 2005). The poor attainment in school of CiC has already been highlighted and this limits the options that these children have when they leave school. As such, it is necessary to explore the journey CiC have from before they enter into care, the factors that contribute to their attainment at school and the prospects they have as they leave school.

Children in care often come from families that are the most socially disadvantaged in society (Bebbington & Miles, 1989). Studies have consistently shown that socio-economic factors play a major role in the attainment of children in general (Sammons, 1995; West & Pennell, 2005). However, if this was the sole cause for low achievement in CiC, you would expect that those who had been put into care from an early age and removed from the damaging environment they were in, to 'recover' and go on to achieve success like their peers; this is not the case (Höjer, Johansson, Hill, Cameron & Jackson, 2008). Another hypothesis suggests that it might be the causes that led the child to be placed in care, that contribute to the poor outcomes. Data collected by social services show that 62% of children enter care because of abuse or neglect (see Figure 1). Furthermore, research has found that the family backgrounds of many CiC include

factors such as parental drug or alcohol addiction, mental illness and domestic violence (Narey, 2007).

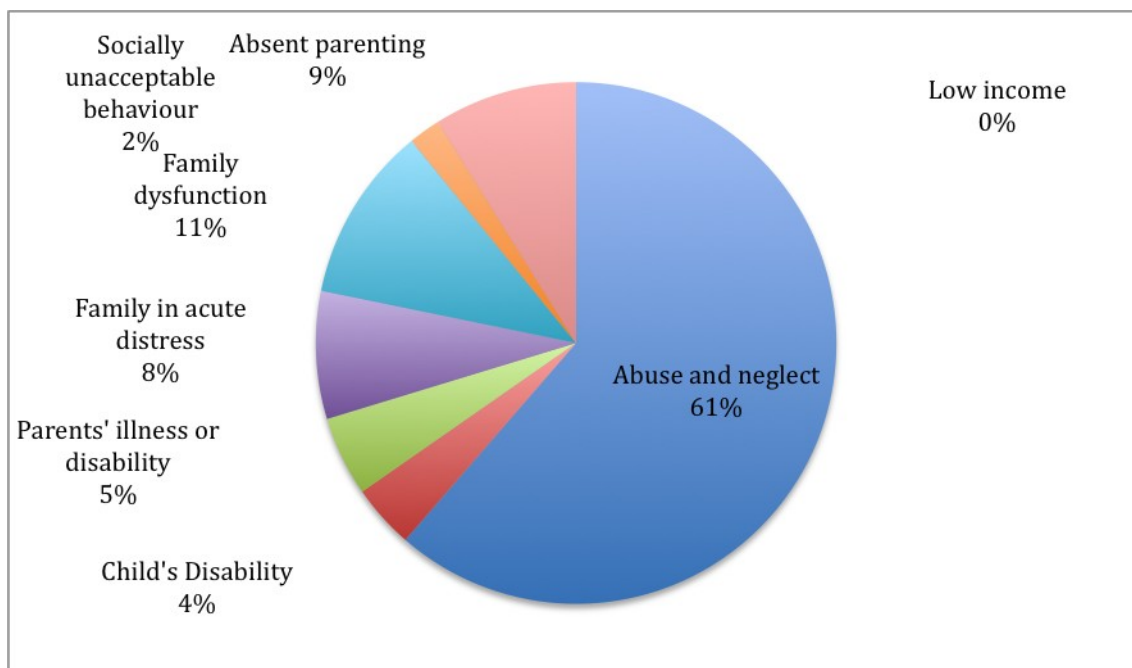


Figure 1. Children in care at 31 March 2008 by category of need (DCSF, 2008).

As such, it can be expected that these children will have experienced rejection, disruption and loss in their lives, which puts them at a disadvantage to their peers. These experiences may have profound effects on their wellbeing; for example, rejection and neglect from parent may lead to attachment problems in the future (Bombèr, 2007; Bretherton, 1992; National Children's Bureau, 2006). A lack of experiences in childhood, for example playing, looking through books or any other form of stimulation may lead these children to commence school with significant developmental delay (DFE/DOH, 1994 as cited in Evans, 2003) and poor social communication and interaction skills, thus alienating them from their peers and further reduce their opportunities to learn (Gilligan, 2009).

In addition, once these children enter care, often their lives continue to be unpredictable and unstable. In becoming looked after by the local authority, often the placements are not permanent and the child may be moved several times, including periods of returning to their birth families. This makes it extremely difficult for these children to maintain secure and stable attachments to their primary care givers (National Children's Bureau, 2006). The history and importance of attachment to child development has been illustrated elsewhere, from this research it can be said that the loss CiC feel due to the inconsistency, neglect or loss of their primary caregiver can have major ramifications on the way they think, feel and behave (Bretherton, 1992), which over time has significant effects on their outcomes in life. The following is from a CiC talking about their experience of being in care:

“If you are in care you don't know what will happen to you. When I was told I was to live with a foster family, I worried too much and couldn't eat. I just went to despair.”

(National Children's Bureau, 2006, p3)

It seems that even after entering care, children continue to face turbulent lives and few benefit from the security of a long-term placement (Stein, 2005). Despite these adverse situations, some children who have been in the care system thrive and succeed in life. The concept of resilience will now be introduced and its relevance to CiC will be discussed.

RESILIENCE

DEFINITION

The generally accepted definition of resilience is that it is a dynamic process involving positive adjustment to significant adversity, trauma or risks (Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000). It is therefore a two-dimensional construct in that the subject must first be exposed to a threat and then adapt positively despite the odds in order to have shown resilience (Quadrant B in Figure 2).

Outcome	Adversity	
	<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Positive</i>	A. Favourable experience of life	B. Resilience: Unexpected positive outcome
<i>Negative</i>	C. Unexpected negative outcome	D. Risk and vulnerability

Figure 2. Identification of Resilience (Bartley, 2006).

The difficulty with this definition is that it does not provide an operational, scientifically measurable definition of resilience. What makes a risk ‘significant’? Is a single risk factor significant or does the subject need to overcome multiple risk factors to be considered showing resilience? What does a positive outcome look like versus a negative one? To fully understand the concept of resilience, it is important to examine where the term originated from and how it has evolved. This will be discussed in the next section.

Finally, whilst research into resilience has looked beyond the resilience of individuals to that of systems, for example, resilient families or resilient communities (Van Breda, 2001), this document will focus on the literature around the resilient child.

HISTORY OF RESILIENCE RESEARCH

Early investigations into the concept of psychological resilience began from research that focussed on maladaptive behaviour in disordered patients but discovered that some patients had ‘atypical’ trajectories, that is, they had developed adaptive behaviour (Luthar et al., 2000). A prominent researcher in these studies, Norman Garmezy, went on to looking at the children of these patients and found that despite their vulnerability, these children thrived in their environment (Garmezy & Streitman, 1974). Simultaneously, Emmy Werner and Ruth Smith were conducting a longitudinal study in Hawaii involving the monitoring of a cohort of children born in 1955. This research was groundbreaking in that it considered the impact of multiple risk factors such as biological and psychosocial factors and stressful life events, as well as looking at the protective factors that mediated their development (Werner & Smith, 1992). In these early studies, the focus was to find the factors that differentiated the children that were resilient to the adversities present in their lives from those who developed maladaptive behaviour. Taking a medical model perspective, these studies were more a shopping list of potential risks and protective factors that mediated development in light of adversity (Masten & Obradovic, 2006). It was however from these beginnings that a major paradigm shift was instigated from a deficit model emphasising dysfunction and unidirectional trajectories to pathological outcomes, to an assets-based model emphasising strengths and capabilities within individuals and considering developmental processes that lead to well-being (Schoon & Bartley, 2008).

In the 1990’s the research shifted towards a developmental-systems approach (Yellin, June, 2007). This approach recognised the interplay between three features in the development of resilience: individual, family and social environment (Werner & Smith, 1992). Using Bronfenbrenner’s Ecosystemic Model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) as well as

looking at the interactions between nature and nurture (Plomin, Reiss, Hetherington & Howe, 1994; Rutter, 2006), the complexity of resilience could begin to be understood. “Human development is continually produced, sustained and changed by interactions between individual and context, and human functioning has to be understood as a dynamic process which is shaped by the opportunities available to individuals and the choices they can exercise.” (Schoon & Bartley, 2008, p.25). Furthermore, Michael Rutter, who has written extensively on resilience (Rutter, 1987; Rutter, 1999; Rutter, 2003; Rutter, 2006), challenges the existence of a single resilience trait (ego-resiliency; Block, 1980, cited in Luthar et al., 2000) by looking at the findings of the Dunedin study (cited in Rutter, 2006), which demonstrated that “the influence of the genes was only shown through demonstration of the interaction with the environmental hazard.” (p. 6).

Clearly, resilience is more than just a sum of protective factors that outweigh risk factors. Returning to the definition introduced in the previous section, the *dynamic process*, thus refers to a complex interplay between a child’s innate factors, the family environment within which he or she grows up, the social context that family lives within and the adversities that exist within these systems. However, in coming up with a clear operational definition of ‘high adversity’ or ‘significant risk’ the literature is not so clear (Luthar et al., 2000; Schoon & Bartley, 2008), although, the consensus is that both risk and protective factors are multi-factorial when referring to resilience. For example, the Christchurch longitudinal study (Fergusson & Lynskey, 1996) highlighted that multiple risks greatly increased the number of problems the adolescent would be faced with as opposed to just looking at single factors. As such, they felt that to look at resilience researchers need to examine the effects of a combination of factors on children from

high risk environments.

From the previous section, it is undeniable that CiC are often exposed to highly adverse environments, as such, it is not surprising, when taking the literature on resilience into account, that the outcomes for the majority of CiC are quite poor. The next section will look at resilience research in the field of CiC to look at what may mediate the often poor outcomes of CiC and what research has found out about what mediates good outcomes.

RESILIENCE AND CHILDREN IN CARE

The previous section highlighted the difficulties resilience research has had in operationalising its meaning. In relation to CiC this becomes simpler to define. In terms of high adversity, all CiC can be said to have experienced family risk factors, for example, poor or absent parenting, plus an additional risk factor that is linked to the family factor, for example, parental mental health, substance abuse or death. As such, the lives of CiC expose them to multiple risk factors and the poor outcomes (educational and vocational) already described previously shows that the majority do not have the resources available to them to develop resilience against these risks. Therefore, it is important to identify the processes that allow some of these children to thrive and succeed in life.

One of the key findings to come out of the literature on CYP in care ‘overcoming the odds’ is the importance of stable placements (Berridge, 1985). Many studies have provided estimates on how many placements children typically have whilst in care; however these vary a great deal (Stein, 2005). A summary of these studies is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Variations in number of placements in the UK (cited in Stein, 2005)

Study	Sample size	Placements		
		Number of placements	Percentage of YP	Average per YP
<i>Stein and Carey, 1986</i>	76	3 or more	~75%	4.2
		5 or more	40%	
		10 or more	6%	
<i>Stein, 1990</i>	18	7 – 12	50%	6
<i>Biehal, Clayden, Stein and Wade, 1992</i>	183	1	<10%	Unknown
		4 or more	40%	
		10 or more	10%	
<i>Dixon and Stein, 2002</i>	107	4 or more	30%	Unknown
		1	7%	

From the Table, it appears that in these studies only a minority of the young people are being provided with one stable placement while the rest vary to upwards of 10 placements. While these studies are important to illustrate the discord in the stability of the lives of CiC, the results must be taken with caution as they rely on very small samples and half were based on survey data.

In trying to explain why CYP in care have so many placements, it is easier to just view it as a failing of the care system to provide secure and stable placements (Evans, 2003; Jackson & Martin, 1998). However, like all factors in the lives of these children, there is a complex interplay between the individuals and their environments, as was discussed in the previous section. Placements may breakdown for a number of reasons, but the impact the child has on his or her environment cannot be discounted. Stein (2005) highlighted a relationship between children with more risks and problems present in their lives and the number of placements they have whilst in care. So in keeping with resilience research, what are the processes involved in the number of placements CiC are subjected to and what can be done to reduce the number or enable the CYP to adapt positively to the changes? Whilst this is an important question, for the purpose of this

paper the lessons that will be taken from these findings is that stability is important for the lives of these CYP and the risk and protection afforded by placements is a complex relationship between child and environment.

The next factor that will be considered is education. It has already been highlighted that education is important for life chances: 'The single most important indicator of children's life chances is educational attainment.' (Department of Health, 2000, p.50, paragraph 5.5). The poor educational outcomes of CiC have also already been illustrated, as well as highlighting that some care leavers do well in school and go on to university (Jackson et al., 2005). Several themes come out of the studies that look at resilience in educational outcomes as to what really matters (Howard & Johnson, 2000; Jackson & Martin, 1998; Stein, 2005):

- Protective factors
 - Early reading
 - Friendships with people who are doing well in school
 - A mentor to provide support and encouragement
 - Hobbies and interests outside of school
- Relationship between motivation of the child to succeed and the importance attributed to education by birth parents
- Attitude of carer/social worker towards education and commitment of school to providing a stable and consistent education (e.g. exclusions, Personal Education Plan)

- Number of placements, and in particular whether the placements impacted on number of school placements

In Jackson and Martin's study, what was apparent was that the care leavers who succeeded had shown "extraordinary determination and persistence to succeed" and most felt that they could have achieved more with better support and fewer obstacles to deal with. Whilst the limitations of the sample (concerns about how subjects were recruited and whether this skewed the sample) precludes the generalisation of the results to all care leavers, the message seems clear that CiC feel that the support that exists is not enough to enable them to achieve their full potential.

Picking up again the ecological perspective, it can be seen that the studies are showing a relationship between individual, family and community (e.g. school) as well as the impact of outside systems (care system) and success in school. What has not been discussed is the impact of socio-cultural factors on educational attainment. Research into the educational attainment of children in general (Scott, 2004), reveals some interesting findings that can be applied to CiC:

- Socio-economic status plays a crucial role in educational attainment
- YP's attitudes to school and aspirations for the future are significantly linked with members in their family environment (the concept of 'linked lives', Elder, 2001)
- Parental involvement in their child's education plays a role in succeeding in school
- Youth aspirations to continue their education significantly impacts educational

attainment

These findings clearly relate to the findings from CiC studies. Berridge (2007) highlighted the socio-economic risk factors present in the lives of CiC and the difficulties this creates in terms of 'social mobility'. Furthermore, the impact of birth parent beliefs and attitudes was highlighted by the Jackson & Martin study. Gilligan (2007, 2009) also discusses the importance of having someone the young person looks up to encouraging their educational progress (e.g. a teacher or foster carer) as a method of counteracting the non-involvement of their parents and family.

Finally, another important aspect in looking at resilience in children and young people in care is their own capacity to overcome adversity. Gilligan has spoken about the importance of recognising young peoples' agency to make positive changes to their lives; in his book *Promoting Resilience*, Gilligan (2009) talks of promoting young peoples' self-esteem and self-efficacy to enable them and give them the tools to succeed in life.

This review represents a small section of a very large field of study. However, despite all the knowledge gained from the research that has been carried out and the initiatives implemented by the government, young people in care continue to face poor prospects upon leaving education. The first paper in this study looked at how gaining a better perspective on the aspirations of young people in care could be used to promote better outcomes. This paper identified the need to gain the perspective of young people themselves on what promotes good and poor outcomes. Of all the research that I looked at in doing the literature review, none of the studies used Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis as a methodology for gaining the voice of young people in care. IPA is a

powerful tool that seeks to understand “lived experiences” and the person’s perspective and account of that experience (Smith, 2008). As such, it was felt that using this tool might reveal new light on young people in care’s perspectives on resilience.

AIMS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aims of this study are to elicit the positive and negative experiences of a group of young people in care, to determine what strategies these young people use to cope with difficult situations and to map out what factors these young people think lead to good educational and vocational outcomes versus poor outcomes for people who have tough lives. In doing so, I hope to add to the current theories relating to resilience in CiC by seeking the individual perspective of young people who are in care and are currently in education or just finished rather than focussing on individuals who had already shown success and resilience post secondary education (i.e. university students from a care background, Jackson, Ajayi & Quigley, 2005).

The study will seek to answer the following research questions:

1. What positive and negative stories are told by young people in care?
2. How do young people in care cope with difficulties experienced in their lives?
3. What factors do young people in care think lead to good educational and vocational outcomes for people with “tough lives”?
4. What factors do young people in care think lead to poor educational and vocational outcomes for people with “tough lives”?

METHOD

DESIGN

This study has used a qualitative methodological approach. Previous studies that most resembled this study (Dearden, 2004; Howard & Johnson, 2000) lacked a qualitative framework to guide their data collection and analysis. As such, it was felt important that to add to the literature, this study needed a clear methodological approach. In looking at the different types of qualitative approaches, above all, I sought to find an approach that would bring to life the experiences of the participants and focus on their voice, rather than be driven by theory.

A semi-structured individual interview technique was used to obtain the data from the participants, see Paper 1 for more details. In looking at the data analysis approaches available, a number of the prevailing methodological approaches were considered (see Appendix B). It was decided that a phenomenological approach would work best in seeking the answers to the research questions. This was because I wished to have an insider's perspective around what young people in care felt was important in showing resilience and having positive educational and vocational outcomes. As such, the methodological approach of this study was Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA seeks to 'explore in detail individual personal and lived experience and to examine how participants are making sense of their personal and social world' (pp. 35-36, Smith & Eatough, 2007).

PARTICIPANTS

The initial focus group design consisted of a 6x2x3 group design (6 participants, male and female, and from Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and Post 16 groups). The participants were randomly selected from the mainstream secondary schools in the Local Authority.

Of the original 36 that were selected only ten agreed to participate in the individual interviews after consent had been obtained from their social workers (see paper 1 for a detailed account of recruitment methods used).

The final participants consisted of 19 young people who were in the care of the Local Authority at the time of participation. All but two of the participants were resident in the Local Authority. Table 2 below shows the characteristics of the participants.

Table 2. Characteristics of the participants.

		Male			Female		
		N (Percent) or Range	Mean	SD	N (Percent) or Range	Mean	SD
Key Stage Three	Number	3 (37.5%)	-	-	5 (62.5%)	-	-
	Age	13 – 14	13.67	0.58	12 – 14	12.6	0.89
	Have a learning difficulty	0	-	-	0	-	-
	Have a disability	0	-	-	0	-	-
Key Stage Four	Number	4 (50%)	-	-	4 (50%)	-	-
	Age	15 – 16	15.5	0.58	15 – 16	15.25	0.5
	Have a learning difficulty	1	-	-	1	-	-
	Have a disability	0	-	-	0	-	-
Post Sixteen	Number	2 (66.6%)	-	-	1 (33.3%)	-	-
	Age	16 – 17	-	-	16	-	-
	Have a learning difficulty	0	-	-	0	-	-
	Have a disability	0	-	-	0	-	-

From the table, it can be seen that of the 19 participants, nine were male (47%) and ten were female (53%). Two of the participants identified themselves as having learning

difficulties and none identified themselves as having a disability. In addition, the ethnic background and living circumstances of the participants was also obtained. Sixteen participants identified themselves as being White British, one identified themselves as being both White British and White Irish, one identified themselves as being Mixed – White and Black African, and one identified themselves as being Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background. Fourteen of the participants lived with foster carers, three lived with grandparents, one lived with their birth parent and one lived in shared accommodation.

MEASURES

Two semi-structured interview schedules were developed to guide the interviews (Appendix D), one for the young people in Key Stages 3 and 4 and one for the Post 16 young people. The schedules were modelled on a framework, which uses five categories of questions: Opening, Introductory, Transition, Key and Ending questions that was developed by Krueger & Casey (2000). Using this framework to structure the interview, the key questions were developed directly from the aims of the study and the other questions were designed to guide the participant and encourage them to reflect further on the topic areas. The questions relating to paper 1 are discussed in detail in the method section of that paper.

In developing the questions on resilience, consideration was given to the stress these questions may cause to the participant. As such, no direct questions were asked about what had happened to them (the assumption was made that they had faced ‘significant adversity’) and instead in the first two key questions, the participants were asked generally to describe a positive and a negative experience. It was felt that by asking these general questions, the participant might reveal ‘protective’ and ‘risk’ factors in

their lives but not feel pressured to talk about things that distressed them.

Next the conversation was guided to the topic of resilience, and the transition question ‘Do you know what the word ‘resilience’ means?’ was asked to determine if the young people were familiar with that term and if not a standard definition was given. The next key question was developed to ask more specifically about how the young people were dealing with difficulties. The question had a number of aims, including to get a first hand account of how a CiC copes with adversity, to determine if the young person was showing resilience (i.e. coping with the adversity) and, if the child was not coping, it was phrased so that it directs the young person to think about the positives (i.e. what they are doing that is right). The next question again directs the young person to think about their successes, ‘despite the odds’. Both these questions were deliberately worded to focus the young person on what was going right for them, in doing so it was felt that this would cause them less distress, while still looking at resilience from the lived experiences of CiC. The final two questions allowed the participants to step back and talk more freely about ‘success’ as well as ‘failure’ without having the focus on them. In wording the questions to ask about ‘young people with tough lives’ in general, it allowed the participant to talk about things that they felt were too personal under the guise of it being a third party. Next the interview was guided onto the topic of aspirations, which is discussed in paper 1.

PROCEDURES

Consent was sought from the social workers who held parental responsibility to approach the randomly selected young people about attending the interviews (Appendix E), then letters were sent to the homes of those selected addressed to the parents or carers (Appendix F) informing them of the study. All the secondary schools were also

sent letters (Appendix G) advising them that some of their CiC may be attending interviews and for support to be made available to the students if they needed and requested it.

Contact was then made with the randomly selected participants and their carers by phone to ask whether the young person would be interested in participating in an individual interview in their home or a confidential and convenient location. Of the original 36 participants, 10 young people agreed to the individual interview. A further 9 were recruited at two events hosted by the LACES team and through direct contact with the social services team in the Local Authority to ask for participants who would be willing to participate in the study (including visiting the Post 16 Team to recruit the Post 16 participants).

Most of the participants were interviewed in their home usually one to one with the researcher. One participant was interviewed over the phone as she did not wish to take part when I visited her at school. One participant was interviewed in the offices of the Post 16 Team. Prior to the interview, the participant was asked to give informed consent (Appendix H) and to fill in a demographical data sheet (Appendix I).

The interviews were digitally recorded, professionally transcribed, checked for errors and read and listened to a few times over to get a general impression of each person's interview with the initial themes I identified being coded using NVivo. I then divided the transcripts into two parts: questions relating to "aspirations" and questions related to "resilience" (see Appendix J for a full transcript annotated to show the questions from paper 1 and paper 2). Next the sections related to "resilience" were analysed manually, as it was difficult to work with NVivo and keep to the methodology of IPA.

The following procedure based on IPA guidelines (Smith & Osborn, 2008) was used to guide the analysis of the data:

1. The transcripts were read in detail several times with comments made outlining what is interesting or significant, this was performed with the use of NVivo.
2. The emergent themes were identified from the notes made and listed chronologically as they appear in the transcript (Appendix R).
3. The interviews were divided according to the research questions being asked to assist the analysis. The participants quoted responses for each research question were tabulated (Appendices S to W).
4. Tables summarising the themes from each participant were made (e.g. Table 3).
5. The emergent themes were then examined for connections and clustered together, similarities and differences were discussed with reference to the participants' words from the interview.
6. A final 'master table of themes' was made for each research question (e.g. Table 4).

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics approval was sought from the University of Exeter and the Certificate is included in Appendix K. As explained above, consent was sought from the social worker that held parental responsibility for the young person and they were to discuss it with the young person and their parents prior to giving the consent. Informed consent was also sought from the young people and no deception was used prior, during or following the participation.

The young people's identity was protected in a number of ways. The local authority caring for the young people was not revealed. Their names were changed to alias; most of the young people did not want to choose an alias themselves so names were chosen from a list containing the most common male and female names in English speaking countries. Of those that did choose an alias, there were two females in Key Stage 3 that chose Jim Bob Junior and Petal as their aliases, a male in Key Stage 3 that chose Jim Bob, a female in Key Stage 4 that chose Jeanette and a male in Key Stage 4 that chose The Invincible. The transcripts were also checked for information that could expose the participants' identities and the data was anonymised.

To further protect the participants' data, the digital recordings and word document transcripts are stored on the researcher's computer, which is password protected to prevent unauthorised access, under a folder that has permissions set so that it can only be read when the researcher is logged in.

To reduce the potential for harm, detriment or unreasonable stress to the participants, all the participants were given the opportunity to discuss concerns with what they had discussed in the interview. Only one of the participants required a debrief following the interview and with the participants permission, I discussed my concern with their social worker to ensure that there was a follow up to the concerns the participant had expressed (which had to do with their circumstances and not the content of the interview). Furthermore, the letter to secondary schools asked that support be made available to the students taking part in the study if they wanted to discuss the interview with a member of staff.

Consideration was also given to the content of the interview. As the participants were

being asked questions about negative experiences and how they coped in difficult situations, it might have brought back distressing memories for them. As such, the questions were worded to focus the young person on positives and their successes and the questions asked about failing were asked about young people with tough lives and not about themselves specifically. It was felt that these questions would not cause undue stress to the participants and that appropriate measures (e.g. debriefing, making the carers aware of the interviews and seeking support from schools) were in place if they were distressed by the content.

RESULTS

The results are grouped according to the research question being asked.

WHAT POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE STORIES ARE TOLD BY YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE?

Positive Stories

The participants were asked to describe a positive experience in their lives, a summary of their responses are presented in Table 3. The excerpts from their interviews relating to their positive experiences are given in Appendix S.

Table 3. Summary of the positive stories told by the young people.

Key Stage	Name	Experience
Key Stage Three	Grace	Beginning secondary school
	Jim Bob Junior	Going into foster care
	Olivia	Improving and achieving good levels in all her subjects
	Petal	Funny memory of a family outing
	Ruby	Could not think of one
	Jack	Did not want to answer
	Jim Bob	Participating in an out of school project
	Thomas	Riding a bike for the first time
Key Stage Four	Emily	Participating in an out of school project and receiving an award
	Jeanette	Getting a dog for the first time
	Jessica	Getting her Girls Brigade Badge
	Sophie	Could not think of one
	Harry	Cooking something
	The Invincible	Work experience in an area of interest
	Joshua	Going on a school trip related to an interest
	Oliver	Going to school
Post 16	Chloe	Working in a job she likes
	Charlie	Going into foster care
	Daniel	Going to a new foster placement

From the table, everyone responded to the question “Can you describe a positive experience that you have had in your life?”, except for three participants (Ruby, Jack

and Sophie). In my first attempt to make sense of these experiences, I grouped the responses into the following broad categories:

- Experiences that were outside of but organised through school (Jim Bob, Emily, The Invincible and Joshua)
- Going to school or starting work (Grace, Oliver and Chloe)
- Going into care or a care related experience (Jim Bob Junior, Charlie and Daniel)
- Hobbies or interest related experiences (Thomas, Jeanette and Harry)
- A self achievement (Olivia and Jessica)
- Family memory (Petal)

Next, I wanted to ensure that these categories accurately described the essence of the young person's experience, so I looked again at their accounts in their own words. I was looking for similarities as well as differences between each of the young persons' accounts within each category.

The out of school experiences told by Jim Bob and Emily are regarding two projects that work with young people in the Local Authority who are isolated or are at risk of exclusion or have been excluded from school. However, they each served a different purpose for the participants. While Emily spoke about the experience as a self improvement exercise, "[it] boosted my confidence and then I got a parascending award", Jim Bob expressed that he found his experience positive "because I want to be a fireman when I am older to help me learn a little bit". In addition, the experiences of

The Invincible and Joshua also relate to their aspirations for the future. As such, I made a new category “Experience related to vocational aspirations” and decided that Emily’s experience could come under the category “A self achievement”.

The going to school experiences as described by Grace and Oliver appeared to be similar in that they spoke about education as helping them in the future. Oliver said “getting education and getting furtherer” and Grace said that going to secondary school “it made me think positive about what I am going to grow up to be like”. Chloe on the other hand, said that going to work was positive “because I had something to do that I liked”, which is more about her enjoyment of work rather than what it will do for her. It seemed to me that “Going to school and starting work”, does not really describe why the experience was positive for the young person. The following categories seemed to describe the experiences more accurately “Education and positive future outcomes” and “Doing something you like”.

The stories told by Charlie and Daniel are similar in that they both used their care experiences as positive and negative experiences. Similarly, in their positive stories both speak of the positive changes that being in care has given them. Charlie said “it changed the way my life was and changed who I am, I don’t know what I would have been like if I stayed here but I like who I am now and I wouldn’t have been this way if I didn’t go into foster care”. Daniel told me that before he moved to his current foster placement “me and my mum just weren’t like talking properly, arguing... I wasn’t sleeping properly and wasn’t eating properly and then moved here and they pretty much just turned everything around, helped me out and that. I don’t talk to my mum now but I mean I’m eating properly, I’m healthy, I’m sleeping and everything, got myself back on track and it’s because of those two.” While the experiences described by Charlie and

Daniel are different in what they attribute the changes to; Daniel is very specific in identifying his foster carers as being the drivers of change in his life, while Charlie attributes the changes as being driven by entering the care system. Charlie also describes his experiences as two parallel paths of what his life would have been like if he did not go into care and how it is like because he went into care. The main theme that Charlie seems to be communicating is care as a life-changing event and as a journey of positive self-growth. As such, it can be categorised as “Positive change through being in care”.

Daniel’s descriptions also indicate self-change and positive growth. Interestingly, his story speaks of unmet basic needs “I wasn’t sleeping properly and wasn’t eating properly” and how changing foster carers changed that. This could be understood looking at Maslow’s Hierarchy of Human Needs, which claims that these basic needs must be met for a person to achieve self-actualisation. This will be discussed further in the discussion. In contrast to these stories, Jim Bob Junior, who also indicated that going into care was a positive experience, expressed that being in care gave her “an almost proper family [and] was something to feel happy about, it just like made me feel normal”. This is different to Charlie and Daniel’s stories and could be categorised as “Care providing a family”. Although, it could be said also that Jim Bob Junior’s positive story is about unmet belongingness and love needs (according to Maslow’s Hierarchy), which going into care allowed to be met. Therefore, it could be said that Charlie, Daniel and Jim Bob Junior’s stories are all about meeting unmet needs or fulfilling their potential by going into care.

The hobbies and interest related experiences described by Jeanette and Harry are related to future vocational goals (becoming a vet and doing catering, respectively). As such,

these stories could come under “Experience related to vocational aspirations”. Thomas’ story on the other hand is more of a childhood memory and of learning from your mistakes (in the story Thomas is hit by a car when he first learns to ride a bike, but he ends by saying “I’m fine now, I know how to ride a bike”) and so it does not fit with any of the new categories.

Earlier I grouped Emily’s story with Olivia’s and Jessica’s under “A self achievement”. Looking at the stories there are similarities and differences. Both Emily and Jessica talked about receiving awards for the work they had done, whilst Olivia was personally rewarded from the hard work she put in with her school subjects “it made me feel proud because I knew I was improving”. So while each of them spoke about completely different experiences, they seemed to have the common element of having worked to achieve something.

Finally, Petal’s story, like Thomas’, does not really fit with the rest. Her story is of a memory of a family outing before her father passed away and could be categorised as “Memory of a family outing prior to a bereavement”.

From these new themes, a master table of themes can be made (see Table 4).

Table 4. Master table of themes for positive stories told by the young people.

Theme	Participant
Experience related to vocational aspirations	Jim Bob, The Invincible, Joshua, Jeanette and Harry
A self achievement	Emily, Jessica and Olivia
Meeting unmet needs or fulfilling their potential by going into care	Charlie, Daniel and Jim Bob Junior
Education and positive future outcomes	Grace and Oliver
Doing something you like	Chloe
A childhood memory	Thomas
Memory of a family outing prior to a	Petal

bereavement	
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Negative Stories

The participants were also asked to describe a negative experience, a summary of their negative stories are presented in Table 5. The excerpts from their interviews relating to their negative experiences are given in Appendix T.

Table 5. Summary of the negative stories told by the young people.

Key Stage	Name	Experience
Key Stage Three	Grace	Not getting on with peers in school
	Jim Bob Junior	Not being understood and being bullied by schoolmates
	Olivia	Did not know
	Petal	Being told her father had died
	Ruby	Going into care and leaving her mum
	Jack	Experience of being taken away from parents
	Jim Bob	No negative experience (apart from broken finger)
	Thomas	Too many – brother going into prison, nearly getting beaten up and getting into fights
Key Stage Four	Emily	Siblings being adopted
	Jeanette	Classmates not coming to her birthday party
	Jessica	Being away from parents
	Sophie	Lots of negative experiences – being in secure units and being in trouble with the police
	Harry	Things going wrong at school
	The Invincible	Could not think of one
	Joshua	Being accidentally hit by a golf club
	Oliver	No negative experience
Post 16	Chloe	Falling out with people
	Charlie	Going into foster care
	Daniel	Feeling hurt by parent from incident that led to going into care

From the table, everyone responded to the question “Can you describe a negative experience that you have had in your life?”, except for three participants (Olivia, The Invincible and Oliver). In my first attempt to make sense of these experiences, I grouped

the responses into the following broad categories:

- Care experiences and being taken from their parents (Ruby, Jack, Jessica, Charlie and Daniel)
- Poor interactions with peers (Grace, Jim Bob Junior, Jeanette and Chloe)
- Behaviour related difficulties (Thomas and Sophie)
- Accidents resulting in being physically hurt (Jim Bob and Joshua)
- A parents death (Petal)
- Siblings being adopted (Emily)
- Things going wrong at school (Harry)
- Imprisonment of sibling (Thomas)

Next, I wanted to ensure that these categories accurately described the essence of the young person's experience, so I looked again at their accounts in their own words. I was looking for similarities as well as differences between each of the young persons accounts within each category.

Of the five stories that were related to care experiences, three of the stories spoke about being away from a parent or parents. Jack described it as "when we first got taken away from our parents", Jessica said "being away from my parents" and Ruby described it as "moving away from my mum". In Jack's story the central focus is the trauma of being taken away by the police at such a young age ("about five or six") and not

understanding why. Ruby's story similarly talks about not understanding why she had been taken away "I knew what she'd done but I was like why take us away just because she'd done that to one person". She then reflects further about how she feels about it now "I feel alright with it, I don't mind being without my mum, I know what she did was bad, so I don't really care". Ruby seems to have accepted that she cannot be with her mother and also seems to blame her for this by saying "what she did was bad". This is similar to Jack's story, because later in the interview when responding to another question Jack said "it sounds horrible but I would rather stay here than with our parents now, it would probably be a bit more different if they were different themselves, but really you just forget about it because it's better here than it was there". Again, Jack reflects that it is something within his parents rather than within himself and so like Ruby appears to blame his parents and accept his current circumstances as being better off. Daniel similarly describes that he "felt hurt" by the "bust up with my mum to go into foster care" and earlier, when telling his positive story Daniel stated that he was not on speaking terms with his mother.

Jack, Ruby and Daniel's stories are all similar in expressing that the initial going into care was the negative aspect but had now come to the conclusion that they were better off in being in care (fostered or with relations) and without their parent or parents. Charlie's story on the other hand was condemning of the actions of social services as he felt that he and his siblings did not really need to go into care. He told a similar story of the initial experience being "really bad, it was horrible, at the time it was like, I dunno, you just want to cry all the time and you just want to come home". He goes on to talk about becoming used to the situation "you get used to it and stuff and then everything was okay while I was in care it is just like living at home". However, unlike the other

three, the story does not have any mention of why he and his siblings were placed in care nor is there any blame aimed towards his mother, in fact he states “we got to come home which was like the ultimate reward at the end of it”. The common experience between all five stories is the initial being taken away from their families and being put into foster care, and although the outcomes were different, the actual negative experience described by the young people seems similar.

Four of the young peoples’ (Grace, Jim Bob Junior, Jeanette and Chloe) negative stories related to poor interactions with peers. A common element between Jim Bob Junior and Chloe’s accounts are their reactions to the situation, both act in a way that does not resolve the problem, i.e. Jim Bob Junior began “fighting kids at school” when she was called names (“goofy”) and Chloe said that she stops talking to people when she falls out with them, rather than trying to sort out the problem; “I just don’t speak then they know that I’m not happy”. Grace on the other hand turns her situation into a positive one by speaking to her peers, which meant she “made really nice friends”. Jeanette is different again in her approach in that she does nothing about the situation despite saying she was “really upset” by it, although, in a way, this is similar to Chloe who also does not try to change the situation and takes passive action. Here we see three approaches to a similar problem, that is relationships and interactions with others. All four girls had a negative experience involving peers, one approach to solve the problem was to take positive action (Grace), another approach was to take negative action (Jim Bob Junior) and finally the third approach was being passive to the situation (Chloe and Jeanette).

Thomas reported that he had many negative experiences, but one of his negative experiences was “nearly getting beaten up” and “fights”, indicating that one of his

negative experiences was related to bad behaviour. Similarly, Sophie reported being in secure units and being in “loads of trouble with the police”. Interestingly, Thomas’ other negative experience was that his brother was in prison, while Thomas did not indicate that his behaviour had led him to be in any criminal trouble, later in the interview, Thomas did reveal that it had led him to him having to be educated at home through home tuition. In addition, in describing how he reacted to his brother going to prison he said that at the time he wanted to “kill the people who put him there”. Both Thomas and Sophie’s experiences are about behaviour that leads to being in trouble, both their own behaviour and that of others.

Two of the young people, Jim Bob and Joshua, told stories of being physically hurt as a negative experience. Jim Bob starts by stating, “I don’t think I’ve had anything negative in my life”, which is similar to Oliver who reported “nothing” when asked to describe a negative experience in his life. This is different to the other two young people who did not report negative stories, Olivia and The Invincible, who indicated that they did not know or could not think of one, which is different to saying that they had not had a negative experience in their life. However, Jim Bob then adds, “apart from my broken finger”, which a peer accidentally broke in a drama lesson. Joshua was also injured accidentally by a peer in his negative story, “I got hit with a golf club... I thought I was going to go blind in one eye”. It is interesting that both boys chose stories involving physical trauma when all the other participants who reported a negative story chose experiences involving emotional trauma. In addition, Joshua later reported that “at school I was getting bullied a lot” in responding to another question, yet he chose the story about being injured over this story of being bullied.

Of the other negative stories, they are all unique in the experience being told, however,

some of the reactions to the experiences show common themes to the other young peoples' stories. For example, both Harry and Emily reported being angry about their experiences, however, while Emily has found a way of seeing the situation positively "They've been writing to me and I know that, now I know that they're getting on all right. It's made me happier", while Harry reported "I just walk out the class sometimes" indicating that he may have difficulties in dealing constructively with the situation in a way that won't get him into trouble. Finally, Petal spoke of learning about the death of her father. She spoke about her reaction, "crying", and having family around who "gave me a cuddle".

From these stories, more themes have emerged. The care experiences relate to the trauma of entering the care system, but they also imply a loss; that is being taken away from their parents and family and the mourning they go through of the life they have lost (e.g. Charlie "you just want to cry all the time and you just want to come home"). Therefore, I felt it appropriate to create a new category "Loss – being taken away from or losing family", and felt that both Emily and Petal's experiences could fit within this new theme. Similarly, Thomas' story about his brother being imprisoned and not being able to see him could also be seen as a loss. Finally, Thomas, Sophie and Harry's stories referred to behaviour difficulties, engaging in behaviour that got them into trouble and not coping with the problems or difficulties they were facing. Therefore, I think that the main theme from their stories is not coping with difficulties.

Table 6. Master table of themes for negative stories told by the young people.

Theme	Participant
Trauma of entering care	Ruby, Jack, Jessica, Charlie and Daniel
Loss – being taken away from or losing family	Ruby, Jack, Jessica, Charlie, Daniel, Emily, Petal and Thomas

Poor interactions with peers	Grace, Jim Bob Junior, Jeanette and Chloe
Physical injuries (accidental)	Jim Bob and Joshua
Not coping with difficulties	Thomas, Sophie and Harry

HOW HAVE THEY COPEd WITH THE DIFFICULTIES THEY HAVE EXPERIENCED IN THEIR LIVES?

Next, the participants were asked how they have coped with difficulties they have experienced, a summary of their responses are presented in Table 7. The excerpts from their interviews are given in Appendix U.

Table 7. Summary of participants' responses to how they have coped with difficult situations

Key Stage	Name	Coping with difficulties
Key Stage Three	Grace	Inner strength, determination
	Jim Bob Junior	Blocking difficult situations
	Olivia	Someone to speak to at school
	Petal	Stress, possible mental health issues, not listened to
	Ruby	Talking to people, supportive friends
	Jack	Being placed with grandparents
	Jim Bob	Talking to people, friends, being alone
	Thomas	Game console to relieve stress, talking to mum
Key Stage Four	Emily	Talking to people - friends and mum
	Jeanette	Being calm, activity to release being "mad", throwing things to deal with situations
	Jessica	Talking to people
	Sophie	Having to deal with things herself, blocking things out, support from friends
	Harry	Getting help from police
	The Invincible	Not coping very well with death of parents and grandmother, being alone, support from school
	Joshua	Using different tactics to change a negative situation
	Oliver	Don't think about negatives
Post 16	Chloe	Talking to people
	Charlie	Accept situation and carry on
	Daniel	Asking for help from people around him

From the table, all the participants were able to report how they coped in difficult situations. In my first attempt to make sense of their responses, I grouped them into the following broad categories:

- Dealing with things yourself (Grace, Jim Bob, Thomas, Jeanette, Sophie, The Invincible, Joshua and Charlie)
- Talking to people (Ruby, Jim Bob, Thomas, Emily, Jessica and Chloe)
- Getting help from others (Emily, Harry and Daniel)
- Friends (Ruby, Jim Bob and Sophie)
- Blocking and not thinking about problems (Jim Bob Junior, Sophie and Oliver)
- School support (Olivia and The Invincible)
- Not coping (Petal and The Invincible)
- Being placed with family (Jack)

Next, I wanted to ensure that these categories accurately described the essence of the young person's experience, so I looked again at their accounts in their own words. I was looking for similarities as well as differences between each of the young persons accounts within each category.

Many of the participants reported their own coping behaviour of dealing with difficult experiences. For example, Jim Bob and The Invincible both reported that they coped by being alone, while Thomas and Jeanette did activities to cope with the situation (e.g.

games console and scribbling). The latter could be avoidance techniques and may be more similar to blocking or ignoring the problem like Jim Bob Junior, Sophie and Oliver reported. Grace, Joshua and Charlie took positive steps during difficult situations: Grace “stayed strong” and “fought for the future”, Joshua when faced with bullying “ignored what they were doing” and Charlie reported “you just take it and carry on”.

Within the category of talking to people, the young people had different experiences of how this helped them. For example, Ruby reported “I’d rather (...) tell people and they know about it, then just keep it all locked inside of me”, so for her it was therapeutic to talk to others about her problems. While for Emily it was more about getting help from people so “they sort the situation out”. Some of the participants referred to specific people they would talk to: Ruby (friends), Jim Bob (mum, grandmother, grandfather, teachers and friends) and Thomas (mum), while others just referred to ‘talking to people’ (Jessica, Chloe and Emily).

Petal and The Invincible both reported behaviours that indicated that they did not cope or know how to appropriately deal with difficult situations. Petal reported that she would “feel stressed”, that “no one wants to listen” and wished she “was dead”, while The Invincible simply reported that he “didn’t cope very well” when his parents and grandmother died. These experiences appeared different in that The Invincible spoke of finding it difficult to cope with one major life event, while Petal spoke of a hypothetical situation; if “no one’s listening to me”, if “they keep on being nasty to me and keep on bullying me” and a real situation “my social worker doesn’t listen [to] me so I just [spent] the whole morning wishing I was dead”, suggesting that an accumulation of negative events does not allow her to cope.

In looking at common elements between the themes, ‘talking to people’, ‘getting help from others’, ‘friends’, ‘being placed with family’ and ‘school support’ could be viewed from a systemic perspective as supportive systems surrounding the individual: parent system, family system, friend system, community system (e.g. police) and school system.

Table 8. Master table of themes for how young people coped with difficult situations

Theme	Participants
Supportive systems – parents, family, friends, community and school	Ruby, Jim Bob, Thomas, Emily, Jessica, Chloe, Harry, Daniel, Sophie, The Invincible and Jack
Individual resources to cope	Grace, Jim Bob, Thomas, Jeanette, Sophie, The Invincible, Joshua and Charlie
Not coping	Petal and The Invincible

WHAT FACTORS DO THEY CONSIDER CONTRIBUTE TO GOOD AND POOR EDUCATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL OUTCOMES?

Finally, the participants were asked what factors they felt led to good and poor outcomes (educational and vocational) for young people who had tough lives. The excerpts from their interviews are given in Appendix V and W. A summary of their responses for what factors led to positive outcomes is presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Summary of participants’ responses to what factors lead to good outcomes in young people with tough lives

Key Stage	Name	Factors that contribute to good educational and vocational outcomes for people with tough lives
Key Stage Three	Grace	Think ahead, not allowing it to stop you from doing things, revise and work hard for tests
	Jim Bob Junior	Getting on with lessons, try to enjoy lessons, teacher making lessons fun, putting the past behind you, having certain personal qualities for certain jobs, someone sort out the

		problems so they can focus
	Olivia	Asking for help
	Petal	Extra support at home if parents can't look after their children, encouragement, extra funding to go to university or college, having job advice and choices
	Ruby	Teachers knowing about the situation - having a designated teacher to go to
	Jack	Treating them to take their mind off things, having someone to talk to and help you, helping those with additional problems (e.g. ADHD) to keep them out of trouble
	Jim Bob	Concentrate on school work, leaving things for a bit and then coming back to it, do something that makes you happy and satisfied, help others
	Thomas	Don't think about things, don't "skive", avoid bad groups, get a good education, stay in school and be good
Key Stage Four	Emily	Talking to someone about their problems, get good grades
	Jeanette	Ignore the past, get on with your studies, searching for jobs on the internet, writing a CV, aim high
	Jessica	Talking with people, friendships, good personality - confident and polite
	Sophie	Exam results
	Harry	Support from foster carers, ask for help in finding work
	The Invincible	Going to college, having qualifications
	Joshua	Forget about their problems at home, friendships
	Oliver	Positive thinking, doing something you are interested in and good at
Post 16	Chloe	Individual help, support from everyone
	Charlie	Wanting it, thinking through situations, do it yourself - don't rely on others
	Daniel	Difficult to say because every child is different, peer support groups, "escape to school", support from - Connexions, social worker, foster carers

From the table, all the participants were able to give examples of factors that lead to good outcomes in young people with tough lives. In trying to make sense of their responses, I grouped them into the following broad categories:

- Cognition - thinking, focussing, concentrating
- Help, support and encouragement (from teachers, carers, professionals and peers)
- Good education (attainment and quality of education provided)
- Help for those with Special Educational Needs
- Personal qualities
- Enjoyment and interests
- Special treatment
- Careers advice
- Money
- Good friendships (having friends and avoiding “bad groups”)
- Resources to get a job (internet, CV)
- High goals
- Not relying on others
- Somewhere to escape to (school)

In making sense of these broad categories, it was felt that they could be grouped into the following areas: self factors (cognition, personal qualities, enjoyment and interests, high

goals, and not relying on others); social factors (help, support and encouragement, good friendships and special treatment); resources and advice (careers advice, money and resources to get a job); and school (good education, help for SEN and to escape home-life).

As the factors identified for good and poor outcomes in young people with tough lives are closely linked, the factors for poor outcomes will be presented next before the results are analysed further. A summary of their responses for what factors led to negative outcomes is presented in Table 10.

Table 10. Summary of participants’ responses to what factors lead to poor outcomes in young people with tough lives

Key Stage	Name	Factors that contribute to poor educational and vocational outcomes
Key Stage Three	Grace	Feel different from others - not normal, life events – parents separating, death
	Jim Bob Junior	Not thinking about school – worrying about home, hard to focus at school, not having qualifications and knowledge
	Olivia	Not choosing the right subjects - having the right information
	Petal	Too much to worry about - hard to focus, overwhelmed by problems, people not listening, qualifications and results, not having a good education, feeling down
	Ruby	Memories from the past - difficult to concentrate, failing exams and GCSEs, failing the subjects they needed to do what they wanted to do after finishing school
	Jack	Bullying, getting upset over things, not want to do anything - stubborn, feeling different, those who get into trouble not changing and getting worse - drugs etc, not having interpersonal skills, not having qualifications
	Jim Bob	Too much on their mind - thinking about the past, having too much emotions - leading to anger issues,
	Thomas	Have too much on their mind, having too much to cope with, not being able to get a job quickly
Key Stage Four	Emily	Problems at home, not concentrating and listening, bullying, thoughts about the past, getting into trouble

	Jeanette	Feeling insecure - like the whole world hates them, bullying yourself, low self-esteem, low confidence - interviews, to answer difficult questions, to stand up to people
	Jessica	Teachers putting them down, friends putting them down, low confidence
	Sophie	Reacting badly to people saying things to you
	Harry	People not being nice to them, messing about, not having good grades
	The Invincible	Not doing their school work, memories affecting their concentration in class, missing parts of the lesson, walking out of lessons, not going to college, not having qualifications
	Joshua	Problems at home, peers at school, work being too hard so they give up, peer pressure, giving up, getting emotional – suicide
	Oliver	Other things on their mind - parents/family
Post 16	Chloe	Not turning up because you have given up hope, life in general, not having qualifications, thinking they are not good enough
	Charlie	If something bad happens can get behind and can't catch up, not having belief in yourself
	Daniel	Letting things at home effect them, fighting with peers, lack of motivation, drugs, unexpected pregnancies, doing things that your friends are doing, going on the advice of your friends

From the table, all the participants were able to give examples of factors that lead to poor outcomes in young people with tough lives. In trying to make sense of their responses, I grouped them into the following broad categories:

- Feeling different
- Life events
- Problems at home
- Cognition – worries, poor concentration, bad memories

- Poor education – no qualifications, failing
- Lack of advice and information
- Afraid to ask for help
- Bullying
- Emotions
- Personal qualities
- Getting into trouble – managing behaviour, drugs, fighting
- Low self esteem, confidence and belief
- Teachers – being negative
- Friends and peers
- Poor attendance – missing school and lessons, getting behind
- Mental health – suicide, “Lost all hope”, feeling down
- Lack of motivation

In making sense of these broad categories, it was felt that they could be grouped into the following areas: self factors (feeling different, cognition, afraid to ask for help, emotions, personal qualities, getting into trouble, low self-esteem, confidence and belief, mental health and lack of motivation); background and environment (life events

and problems at home); social factors (bullying and friends and peers); resources and advice (lack of advice and information); and school (poor education, negative teachers and poor attendance).

Next some of the factors identified by the young people as leading to good and poor outcomes will be considered to identify similarities and differences between the young people's accounts.

The themes of 'flash-backs' and thinking (implied worrying) about problems, which were linked to lack of concentration and focus in lessons was common to most of the interviews about good and poor outcomes. Many of the young people felt that having memories, "flash-backs" or thoughts about the past or problems they had at home prevented them from succeeding at school, as The Invincible said: "Like if someone has like passed away in their life and it hits them when they're in the lesson and they just walk out". Similarly, Jim Bob Junior reported "Because I don't think they are really thinking about school, I think they're thinking 'oh dear, what's gonna happen when I get home' or 'oh dear, what's gonna happen when I get out of school', and I think it's really hard to focus at school". While for good outcomes, Jeanette suggested "Just try and ignore what happened because the past is the past, just leave it alone, and if the past keeps coming back at you then it's just going to hurt more, so just ignore it, and allow it to fade away and just try to get on with your studies".

The interviews also highlighted social factors as important in both good and poor outcomes. For example, having friendships seemed to be a protective factor for some (Jessica, Joshua and Daniel), but peers were also reported as a risk factor (Jack, Thomas, Emily, Jessica, Joshua, Charlie and Daniel). While Daniel recognised that peer

support led to good outcomes “then they can escape to school and go and talk to their peers about what’s going on and their problems”, he also saw peers as a risk “Things are going bad at home, arguments, they dwell on it for too long, start having fights because some kid said something about it or whatever” and that friends could lead you away from your goals “your friends they’re all going off to do one thing so you might wanna stay with your friends”. Thomas also recognised the importance of choosing good friendship groups “If you get into like bad groups just say no I’m not hanging around with you. Go and mix with another group, a good group”. While Jack and Emily both raised bullying as a risk factor to poor outcomes and Jessica spoke of friends putting you down as a risk.

As well as identifying peers and friendships as being factors that contribute to good and poor outcomes, the young people also identified receiving support from adults as a factor that contributes to good outcomes. Teachers were raised as both protective and risk factors. Jim Bob Junior spoke of teachers playing a role in engaging children in the lessons “I think what the teachers need to do also with some children with like hard backgrounds, they need to make the lesson fun so that actually they can remember it, having a good laugh about a lesson”, while Ruby felt they played a role in having someone to go to who knew your situation. Jessica on the other hand, spoke about teachers as a risk factor because they put pupils down.

Both Harry and Daniel raised getting support from foster carers; Harry said “...if they’re at a new carers and that, and they’re really helpful, they help you more to succeed better”. Daniel also talked about accessing support from the Connexions service and your social worker; “Yeah, you’ve got Connexions and that type of stuff, go to them, they’ll help you through it and where you’re in foster care anyway, you’ll get

your social worker coming out and giving you loads of different options to what to do, giving her support, the foster carer's support and everything. So you've got a lot of people helping you out wanting you to do good for yourself".

Petal felt that extra support in the home to prevent the child from going into care would lead to positive outcomes; "Say if there was a daughter looking after a mum when it should be the mum looking after the daughter. Not like phoning the social service. A woman come out just to look after their mum while the girl is at school and stuff. So she can take the mind off her mum...". Similarly, Jim Bob Junior also talked about having someone to sort out the problem so the child can focus. While Olivia, Jack, Emily, Jessica and Chloe talked in general about having help and support from people or someone to talk to.

Personal qualities were also identified as leading to good and poor outcomes. Themes for good outcomes included thinking ahead or thinking through situations (Grace and Charlie); having certain qualities for the job, such as confidence (Jim Bob Junior and Jessica) and positive thinking (Oliver). Themes for poor outcomes included: feeling different (Grace and Jack), overwhelming emotions (e.g. sadness, anger) or worrying (Jim Bob Junior, Petal, Jack, Jim Bob, Jeanette, The Invincible and Joshua) and low confidence, self-belief and self-esteem (Jeanette, Jessica, Chloe and Charlie).

To gain a better understanding of how these factors fitted into good (protective) outcomes and poor (risk) outcomes, a table was drawn up to summarise the results (Table 11).

Table 11. Summary of the protective and risk factors identified by the participants as contributing to good and poor outcomes for young people with tough lives

Factor	Protective	Risk
Self	Cognition Personal qualities Enjoyment and interests High goals Not relying on others	Feeling different Cognition Afraid to ask for help Emotions Personal qualities Getting into trouble Low self-esteem, confidence and self-belief Mental health Lack of motivation
Social	Help, support and encouragement Good friendships Special treatment	Bullying Friends and peers
Background and environment		Life events Problems at home
Resources and advice	Careers advice Money Resources to get a job	Lack of advice and information
School	Good education Help for SEN To escape home life	Poor education Negative teachers Poor attendance

From the table it can be seen that a number of factors overlap in the protective and risk categories, for example, friends in the social category and cognition and personal qualities in the self category. This seems to indicate that the relationship between the factors and the outcomes they produce is a complex one, which could easily go one way or the other depending on the variables. The table also highlights there are more factors within the self category than any of the other categories, indicating that for CiC this may play an important role in resilience, this will be discussed further in the discussion.

DISCUSSION

The previous research paper found that despite having high aspirations for the future, data (Harker, 2009) shows that young people in care are not achieving the success that the young people I interviewed were aiming for. Some limitations to the study make it difficult to generalise the results, but it was felt that further investigation into factors that could account for young people not achieving their goals would be insightful. The aims of this study were to elicit the positive and negative experiences of a group of young people in care, to determine what strategies these young people used to cope with difficult situations and to map out what factors these young people thought led to good educational and vocational outcomes versus poor outcomes for people who have tough lives. In doing so, I hoped to add to the current theories relating to resilience in CiC by seeking the perspective of young people currently in education or just finished rather than focussing on individuals who had already shown success and resilience upon finishing secondary education (i.e. university students from a care background, Jackson, Ajayi & Quigley, 2005).

The following research questions were asked to meet the aims of the study:

5. What positive and negative stories are told by young people in care?
6. How do young people in care cope with difficulties experienced in their lives?
7. What factors do young people in care think lead to good educational and vocational outcomes for people with “tough lives”?
8. What factors do young people in care think lead to poor educational and vocational outcomes for people with “tough lives”?

In looking at the positive and negative stories told by young people in care, it was hoped that this would highlight protective factors as well as risk factors in their lives that may mediate their ability to show resilience in their circumstances. Taking a developmental systems perspective (Werner & Smith, 1992; Yellin, June 2007), the stories can be grouped into: individual, family and social systems, as shown below:

- Individual – self achievement (Emily, Jessica and Olivia), something you like (Chloe), childhood memory (Thomas), meeting needs and potential (Charlie, Daniel and Jim Bob Junior), behaviour related difficulties (Thomas and Sophie)
- Family – family memory and death of a parent (Petal), being taken away from parents/family (Ruby, Jack, Jessica, Charlie and Daniel), adopted siblings (Emily), imprisoned sibling (Thomas)
- Social environment – education (Grace and Oliver), school/work experiences (Jim Bob, The Invincible, Joshua, Jeanette and Harry), friendships and interaction with peers (Grace, Jim Bob Junior, Jeanette and Chloe), school going wrong (Harry)

It can be seen that all systems have both protective and risk factors and some factors can be both protective and a risk factor, for example, friendships and interactions with peers, depending on the individual and their experiences. Comparing the individual factors to prior research, Jackson and Martin (1998) looked at protective factors for educational success from a group of successful ex-care adults and found that having out-of-school interests and hobbies was a protective factor for this group. The experiences told by Emily and Jessica both relate to out of school activities where both girls achieved

success. In addition, Chloe's experience although it does relate to work, could also be classed as doing something she is interested in within the community, which might increase her links with people in the community and foster her resilience to the adversities she was facing in her life. It seems that for these girls, achieving success or finding something they were good at and enjoyed outside of school was a positive experience for them that could be a protective factor in their lives.

In addition, in a later study by Martin and Jackson (2002), which looked at a group of high achievers, the participants identified the importance of being like other people and not appearing different to their peers. Within the social environment system, Grace, Jim Bob Junior, and Jeanette all told negative stories about their interactions with peers. Their stories had themes of being misunderstood, bullied and isolated from or ignored by peers; "I never really got on with other people in my school" (Grace), "When I went to school everyone used to like ignore me or just bully me" (Jim Bob Junior) and "My thirteenth. I invited my whole class but no one arrived, it was just like one person, so it was quite upsetting" (Jeanette). These experiences by the young people could result in risk on a number of levels; for example, it is well documented the importance of social skills and socialising to development in the early years (Smith & Hart, 2002), having these experiences from an early age could have effected their development globally and had a knock on effect on their performance at school. It seems that at least for these young people, peers are presenting as a risk factor and rather than providing a supportive network which would foster resilience they are alienating them.

In looking at the young peoples' stories, I wanted to identify factors that set young people in care apart from other young people. Clearly, the actual care experiences set them apart and so "meeting needs and potential", being taken away from parents/family

and having siblings adopted can be said to be unique to CiC. The first two factors indicate that being taken into care can be both a protective and risk factor. In one of the stories about meeting needs and potential, Daniel spoke about how being in care changed his life “I wasn’t sleeping properly and wasn’t eating properly and then moved here and they pretty much just turned everything around... I’m eating properly, I’m healthy, I’m sleeping and everything, got myself back on track and it’s because of those two.” In understanding this experience, it is useful to see Daniel as having his basic needs met by going into foster care, which can be related to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943). At the base of Maslow’s triangle are physical needs, such as eating and sleeping, which are necessary for survival and unless are met, according to the theory, an individual cannot move on in their journey to self-actualisation. Daniel’s story talks about basic needs being met, but it also implies that an emotional need was met that allowed him to eat and sleep properly and it seemed like being in care allowed him to feel secure and safe, which is the next rung of the Hierarchy of Needs. Similarly, Jim Bob Junior’s story talked about care giving her “an almost proper family [and] was something to feel happy about, it just like made me feel normal” which implies that care gave her a sense of belonging, of being like others and perhaps of finally having a secure base; all of which can be related back to the third rung of the Hierarchy of Needs. For both Daniel and Jim Bob Junior, their care experiences were protective factors in their lives that allowed them to be healthy, happy and “normal”.

In looking at care experiences as a risk factor, all the young people’s stories related to the actual experience of being removed from their home and put into care rather than the care experience itself.

“Going into care... it was really bad, it was horrible, at the time it

was like I dunno you just want to cry all the time and you just want to come home all the time...” – Charlie

“Like when we first got taken away from our parents, that wasn’t too nice because we didn’t have a clue what was happening... and the police came and we just got taken to a foster care and we didn’t know why... and we were too young to understand really, so that’s not very nice.” – Jack

Gilligan (2007) writes about how life in care can mean being exposed to intense experiences of adversity; he writes (p136) that these relate to:

1. Admission to care (typically, exceptional stress, discontinuity and trauma in a child’s life);
2. Life in care (often disruptions to relationships with family and school and changes of care giver, etc); and
3. Frequently precarious and under-supported circumstances on discharge from care.

The stories do have themes of stress, lack of understanding and high emotional responses, and so could be described as a “traumatic” experience as Gilligan put it. As not all the young people reported entry into care as their negative experience, it is not possible to comment on whether this is the norm for all CiC. However, as a practical, real world application, this is an area that could be improved for CiC; an investigation into how CiC are removed from their homes and how the process could be friendlier to children and young people might reduce this element of care as a risk factor.

Next, the young people were asked how they had coped in difficult circumstances. Most of the young people reported effective strategies for coping with the multiple difficulties they faced in life; eight participants reporting that they used supportive systems such as parents, family, friends, community and school, five reported individual resources to cope, three used a combination of support and individual resources, one reported not coping in a particular situation but otherwise using individual resources and one had no coping strategies at all. In a book looking at women's experiences of neglect and abuse in childhood, Bifulco and Moran (1998) examined the importance of good support, good coping and meaningful roles for overcoming adversity. The importance of having supportive networks as a protective factor for CiC, has been explored (Gilligan, 2009; Martin & Jackson, 2002) and appears to be a good mechanism for coping with difficult situations. However, with the group using individual resources, it was not clear how effective these strategies were in dealing with the difficulties they were facing. Many reported "blocking" strategies, which did not address the problem and which may come back to them at other times. Later in this paper, the theme of "flashbacks" and memories as a barrier to learning will be discussed; it would be interesting to investigate whether there is a link between using "blocking" methods to cope with difficult situations and having difficulties concentrating and focussing on school and work due to "flashbacks" and memories of the past.

The final research question asked the young people to reflect in general on what they thought led to good and poor outcomes for people with tough lives. This question was seen as key in examining how the young people's experiences had shaped their understanding of the concept of resilience. The participants identified a number of factors as contributing to good outcomes and poor outcomes, within the following

domains: self, social, background and environment, advice and resources and school (see Table 10 for specific factors). Comparing these to the factors identified in the literature review, there is some overlap in what the young people identified and the current understanding of factors that are protective or a risk to showing resilience (as shown below in Figure 4).

THEME	RISK FACTORS	PROTECTIVE FACTORS
Stability and continuity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moves of home • Moves of school especially being moved at times disruptive to education • Lack of transport to maintain continuity of school placement • Poor attendance at school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Few moves in home or school • Planned moves with education secured • Transport provided to maintain continuity of school placement • Good attendance at school
Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No facilities or informed help for homework • Lack of access to educational resources including books • Lack of access to leisure services • Lack of funding for further or higher education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to books,libraries, study centres,ICT • Access to leisure, after school events,social activities • Developing out of school interests and hobbies
Friendships/ belonging at home and school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullying • Abuse • Harassment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having supportive friends who can be trusted
Significant adults who take an interest in education and offer consistent support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of significant adult support • No-one taking an interest in what went on at school • Parents/carers not valuing education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a parent/carer who values education and provides motivational support • Meeting a significant adult who offers consistent support and encouragement (often a teacher or support worker) and gives clear messages about dangers and consequences of risk-taking behaviours
Information sharing and involvement in decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools/parent/carers not informed of issues relating to school/home/care • Services not working together • Young person feels they have no control over decisions being made • Confidentiality issues not resolved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared care and education plans • Regular contact between education and parent/carers • Services aware of what overall plans for young person are and how they fit into that plan
Achievements, expectations and aspirations for the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No sense of achievement in any area • Difficulty getting educational aspirations recognised/low expectations • Lack of information on future options e.g. careers advice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of achievement in any area (not necessarily academic) • Personal goals,motivation and aspirations • Optimistic expectations about the future • Information on future options e.g. careers advice
Sources: Jackson and Martin (1998),DfEE (2000),Gilligan (2000),Smokowski et al (2000)		

Figure 4. Risk and Protective factors for children in care relating to environments and systems identified in previous research (Dearden, 2004, p189)

There was overlap between ‘Stability and continuity’ (from table) and ‘Education’ (from participants), in that the young people identified that missing lessons and school would contribute to poor outcomes. In addition facilities (funding), friendships, supportive adults, resources and information and personal qualities such as optimism, goals motivation were also brought up in the literature as well as identified by the young people of this study. It seems that in terms of the external factors that may help a young person to develop resilience, the participants’ reports were consistent with current knowledge. It would now be useful to look at the personal qualities identified by the participants.

One theme that is not so emphasised in the literature is the importance of self factors. The concept of ‘self’ and ‘self-reliance’ permeated through the interviews of the young people, both in talking about resilience as well as talking about aspirations in paper 1. Gilligan has written extensively (1999, 2002, 2007, 2009) on resilience in CiC and how resilience can be promoted in these children and young people and he too recognises the importance of giving young people tools to overcome the difficulties they face in their lives. Promoting a positive sense of self – self-efficacy, self-esteem, self-worth – are all identified as important in promoting resilience in young people in care (Gilligan, 2009). The young people of the study recognised that having confidence and self-belief was likely to lead to positive outcomes, but bullying yourself and lack of motivation would lead to poor outcomes. There were also many mentions of not being able to concentrate and that an inability to control your thoughts would lead to poor outcomes while being able to step back and think about the situation would lead to good outcomes. This is not

a factor that I was able to find research on in the literature review. However, Clausen (1991) wrote about the concept of “planned competence” which refers to the ability to avoid impulsive reactions to events. This seemed to tie in with the ideas presented by the young people of stepping back from a situation to consider actions and outcomes. Charlie, in particular made this point in his interview “the best thing to do really is if you want to do it yourself when you’re at school and things like that is just think about everything, everything before you do anything just take a couple of minutes”.

In comparing these findings to paper 1, it seems that CiC are relying on themselves both to develop their aspirations and goals for the future as well as cope with and overcome the adversity present in their lives. While it is understandable that the natural reaction to this is to implement social structures around CiC so that they don’t feel so isolated, I feel that the solution is not that simple. An undercurrent of the interviews was not relying on others and a lack of trust, if this is the case then simply increasing the social support would not necessarily be beneficial to the young people. Perhaps a more useful way forward is to address the internal factors raised by the young people as promoting poor outcomes. For example, programmes could target areas such as raising motivation, increasing confidence and managing behaviour, all of which will empower the young people to deal with their own problems, which seems to be the message that the young people in this study were giving.

It is clear that the results of this study have both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, it highlights that many of the theories focus on the systems surrounding the child in identifying factors that lead to resilient outcomes and do not consider in as much detail the internal processes in play within the child, which if the external support systems are missing (as indicated in some of the negative stories told by the young

people) there is a greater reliance on oneself to cope and overcome the difficulties alone. From the perspective of the young people of this study, these internal processes seem to play a much more important role than the external processes. On a practical level, support needs to focus more on empowering the young person so that they have the resources within them to overcome the adversities in their lives and achieve success.

In this respect, the role of the Educational Psychologist is quite clear, our knowledge of theory and research in this area makes us very qualified to work with and support these young people to reach their potential. In particular, educational psychologists can help to support the promotion of a positive self so that young people in care have the tools to work through and overcome their difficulties. Using psychology, educational psychologists can provide training to adults working with CiC on promoting the young person's self-esteem, confidence, motivation and coping strategies (for example, using the resources from the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning; DfES, 2007). In addition, our knowledge of systems and skills in consultation (Wagner, 1995) can bring together the different domains that young people in care live with so that as many protective factors are present to promote resilience. Our link to schools makes us well placed to effect a change within the school system so that the young people get a "good education", support and encouragement from a significant adult within the school, positive peer networks (Circle of Friends; Newton, Taylor & Wilson, 1996) and friendships and high expectations from teachers. Our knowledge of how people think can help support teachers who may be faced with the behaviour presented when these young people do have "flashbacks" in class. Finally, we can also support schools to keep track of and monitor their young people in care to ensure that any difficulties are highlighted early and that they are not allowed to fall through the cracks.

There are a number of limitations to this study, which may have impacted on the validity and generalisation of the results to all CiC. For example, one of the main findings of the study is that self factors seem important to CiC in mediating good and poor outcomes. However, these results may be a consequence of the methods of data collection used in this study (self-report), if, for example, a questionnaire was given to adults working with young people in care, would the results be the same?

Furthermore, the methods used to recruit participants could have created a biased sample. Out of the 36 randomly selected participants approached to take part in the study, only 10 agreed to participate (28%); it is possible that only those who were achieving success chose to take part, or those with certain personal characteristics, which are not reflective of the CiC population in general. In addition, the remaining 9 participants who chose to participate were recruited during events held by LACES and are therefore engaging with services, and through social workers, who were selecting young people they thought would most likely want to take part in the study and would provide useful information. Future studies should consider how they recruit participants and how they can motivate participants who are least likely to want to participate.

Another limitation of the study, which also has ethical implications is that due to time constraints, it was not possible to obtain signed consent from the young person's parents. Instead a verbal agreement was made between the parents and the young person's social worker and signed consent was obtained from the social worker that had parental responsibility. Ideally, it would have been best to seek signed consent from both the parents and the social worker; however, this is likely to be a common difficulty encountered by researchers when looking at the care population. Given the importance of studies that are aimed at finding knowledge that will improve the outcomes of CiC,

further thought should be given to this dilemma to ensure that researchers are able to access this population in an ethical manner.

Finally, because of the methodology chosen for this study, the sample size was too large and it became very difficult to manage all the data and analyse it using IPA. Future studies could focus on fewer young people (maximum five) and have a more complete picture of how they have shown or not shown resilience in their life and the factors they felt mediated those outcomes.

CONCLUSION

The aims of this study were to elicit the positive and negative experiences of a group of young people in care, to determine what strategies these young people used to cope with difficult situations and to map out what factors these young people thought led to good educational and vocational outcomes versus poor outcomes for people who have tough lives. The findings have identified a number of protective and risk factors from individual, school, home and community that contribute to resilience. In particular, the young people identified supportive networks (peers and adults), education, positive personal qualities, advice and resources, positive experiences (e.g. achievements) and having their basic and emotional needs met as being protective factors that promote resilient outcomes. While poor interactions and relationships, unsupportive adults, experiences of entering care, loss, negative personal qualities, poor education, overwhelming emotions, memories and lack of control over thoughts, life events, and home experiences as being risk factors and promoting poor outcomes. Overall however, there was an emphasis on the importance of self factors and internal processes mediating good and poor outcomes. This has implications for how services should be delivered to CiC and needs to be further investigated.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: LITERATURE REVIEW (09/04/2009)

Introduction

This literature review forms part of a research study about the aspirations and resilience of Children in Care (CiC). As such, it sets out to justify the need for this piece of research and in doing so, critically evaluate the current knowledge and prior research into the themes of the topic under investigation. The review is organised using a thematic approach that includes three chapters: Children in Care, The Resilient Child and Education and Aspirations. This introduction will explain briefly how the topic of the study was devised, give an outline of the chapters of this review and explain how this review was carried out.

The idea to investigate CiC was initially driven by the Care Matters agenda (DfES, 2006b), which recognised that action needed to be taken to close the widening gap between the outcomes of CiC and that of all children. Recent figures suggest that young people from a public care background are at the highest risk of facing economical and social exclusion in European nations and are more likely to leave education without any qualifications and enter into the category of Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET; Höjer, Johansson, Hill, Cameron & Jackson, 2008). However, the concern was that programs were being implemented to improve outcomes for CiC and other disadvantaged young people, for example, the Aim Higher program (Aimhigher, 2008), without research to suggest that they were relevant to the needs of the children and young people they were aimed at.

From the many research studies that have investigated the educational and life outcomes of CiC (Barnado's 1996; Colton, Heath & Jackson, 1994; Hojer, et al., 2008; Social

Exclusion Unit, 2003), something that has become clear is that not all young people leaving care have poor outcomes, and in fact, some are succeeding ‘despite the odds’ and showing resilience to their circumstances (Jackson, Ajayi & Quigley, 2005). Furthermore, despite government policy suggesting that the aspirations of CiC needed to be promoted to encourage them to aim higher (DfES, 2006b; DCSF, 2008), little research evidence exists to suggest that CiC had no or low aspirations.

Therefore the decision to investigate aspirations and resilience in CiC was primarily policy and practice driven and it was during the course of the literature review that gaps were identified in the previous research and as such the aims of the study were to address these gaps. The aim of this review is to look at how theories of resilience and aspirations can account for poor educational and vocational outcomes in Children in Care. In Chapter One, the context will be set by describing who Children in Care are and the difficulties they face by being in public care. Chapter Two will introduce the concept of resilience and how it relates to Children in Care. Chapter Three will discuss research around aspirations and the links between aspirations and educational outcomes. Finally, the conclusion will bring together these two concepts and highlight the gaps in the research that will form the basis of the research project being undertaken.

CHAPTER ONE: CHILDREN IN CARE

Definition

Children and young people are defined as being in care, according to the Children Act 1989, if he or she is in the care of the local authority or is provided by accommodation for more than 24 hours by the authority. This can be under the following four circumstances:

- (i) Children who are accommodated under a voluntary agreement with their parents (section 20);
- (ii) Children who are the subject of a care order (Section 31) or interim care order (Section 38);
- (iii) Children who are the subject of emergency orders for their protection (Section 44 and 46); and
- (iv) Children who are compulsorily accommodated. This includes children remanded to the local authority or subject to a criminal justice supervision order with a residence requirement (Section 21).

(DfES, 2006a)

The National Picture

CiC are a changing and diverse population with a high level of need. There are about 60,000 children and young people in care at any given time and over the course of a year about 83,000 will enter into care with many of them rapidly entering and leaving the system (DfES, 2006b). Data collected by social services show that 63% of children enter care because of abuse or neglect (see Figure 1). Furthermore, research has found that the family backgrounds of many children in care include factors such as parental drug or alcohol addiction, mental illness and domestic violence (Narey, 2007).

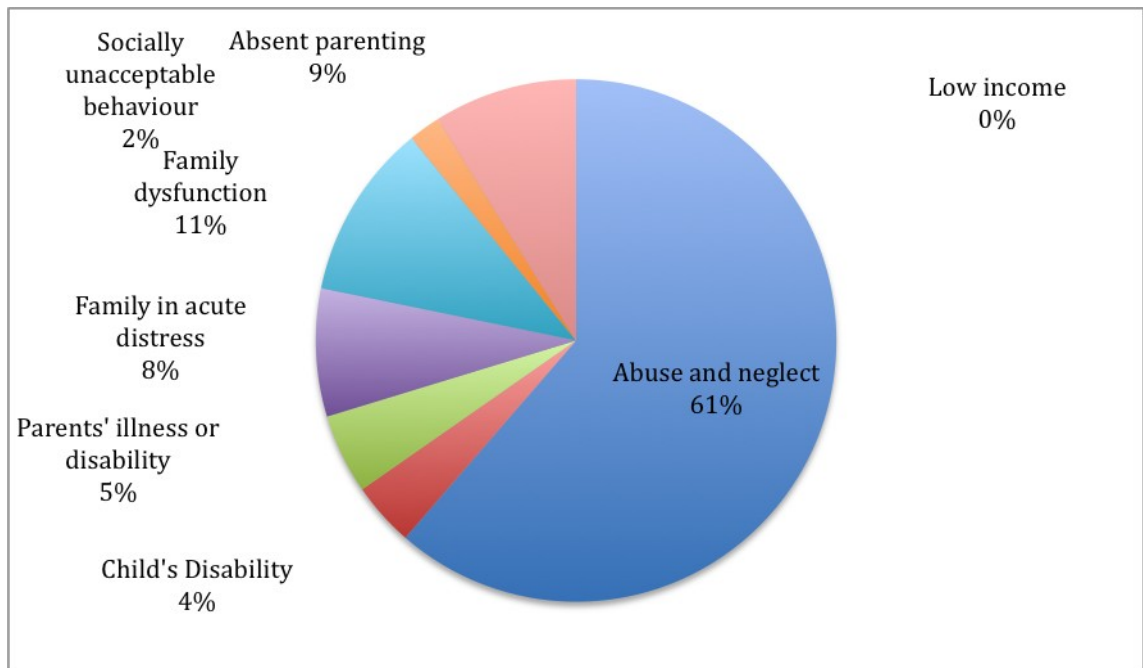


Figure 1. Children in care at 31 March 2005 by category of need (DfES, 2006b).

Government Policy on Children in Care

“Our aspirations for children in care are no less than those each parent has for their own children. Children in care are often in much greater need than other children but much less likely to get the help they require. We aim to create a care system that provides every child with a safe, happy, healthy, secure and loving childhood nurturing their aspirations and enabling them to fulfil their potential.”

(DCSF, 2008)

In June 2007, the government launched the white paper ‘Care Matters’ (DfES, 2006b). This was amid a changing context of Children’s Services in general which resulted from the introduction of the Every Child Matters (2003) agenda. The paper highlighted the extremely poor outcomes faced by most Children in Care (CiC) and emphasised that changing these outcomes is the responsibility of everyone who works with and for CiC

both at a national and local level (Corporate Parents). Following on from this, the Children and Young Persons Act came into force in 2008, which increased the statutory framework for the provision of services to CiC.

Research on the Educational Experiences of Children in Care

It is well known and highly publicised that young people in and leaving care have significantly poorer educational attainment and life outcomes than other young people (Colton, Heath & Jackson, 1994). Only 12% of children in care achieved five good GCSEs in 2006, compared to 59% of all children, and 37% of children in care did not achieve any passes compared to only 2% of all children (Collarbone, 2007). It is perhaps not surprising then that over 30% of care leavers are not in education, employment or training at age 19 compared to 13% of all young people (DfES, 2006b). Studies that have focused on the outcomes of young people leaving care consistently show that care-leavers are many times more likely than their peers to be unemployed, to become young (adolescent) parents, to be homeless, to misuse alcohol or drugs, and to suffer from mental health problems (Stein, 2004). For example:

- More than 75% of care leavers have no academic qualifications
- Between 50% and 80% of care leavers are unemployed
- 23% of adult prisoners and 38% of young prisoners have been in care
- At least one in seven young women leaving care are pregnant or already mothers
- 30% of young, single homeless people have been in care

- One in ten 16-17 year old claimants of severe hardship payments have been in care

(Barnardo's, 1996)

As mentioned in the previous section, recent government policies (DfES, 2006b; DCSF, 2008) have prioritised CiC with the aim of promoting better outcomes for them and closing the gap between them and their peers. The former Prime Minister Tony Blair declared, '...the Government is committed to giving children in care all the same life chances any parent would give their child, and none is more important than a good education which is crucial to a brighter future.' (Social Exclusion Unit, 2003). Similarly, the Department of Health had previously asserted: 'The single most important indicator of children's life chances is educational attainment.' (p.50, paragraph 5.5; 2000).

What seems clear from the literature is that this is not a new concern. CiC have been consistently underperforming for a long time, and knowing this fact has not made a difference to their outcomes. On the other hand, not all CiC have poor outcomes, in fact some continue their education, obtain work and lead successful lives (Jackson, Ajayi & Quigley, 2005). Jackson and colleagues discovered from their research that one of the key protective factors for CiC succeeding in life is to have a stable foster placement. They recommended that planning for university should start early and that CiC and care leavers need to be specifically targeted to participate in initiatives. The concept of resilience and protective factors that have been shown to help CYP in care to succeed will be further discussed in Chapter Two.

CHAPTER TWO: THE RESILIENT CHILD

Definition

The generally accepted definition of resilience is that it is a dynamic process involving positive adjustment to significant adversity, trauma or risks (Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000). It is therefore a two-dimensional construct in that the subject must first be exposed to a threat and then adapt positively despite the odds in order to have shown resilience (Quadrant B in Figure 2).

Outcome	Adversity	
	<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Positive</i>	A. Favourable experience of life	B. Resilience: Unexpected positive outcome
<i>Negative</i>	C. Unexpected negative outcome	D. Risk and vulnerability

Figure 2. Identification of Resilience (Bartley, 2006).

The difficulty with this definition is that it does not provide an operational, scientifically measurable definition of resilience. What makes a risk ‘significant’? Is a single risk factor significant or does the subject need to overcome multiple risk factors to be considered showing resilience? What does a positive outcome look like versus a negative one? To fully understand the concept of resilience, it is important to examine where the term originated from and how it has evolved. This will be discussed in the next section.

Finally, whilst research into resilience has looked beyond the resilience of individuals to that of systems, for example, resilient families or resilient communities (Van Breda,

2001), this document will focus on the literature around the resilient child.

History of Resilience Research

Early investigations into the concept of psychological resilience began from research that focussed on maladaptive behaviour in disordered patients but discovered that some patients had ‘atypical’ trajectories, that is, they had developed adaptive behaviour (Luthar et al., 2000). A prominent researcher in these studies, Norman Garmezy, went onto looking at the children of these patients and found that despite their vulnerability, these children thrived in their environment (Garmezy & Streitman, 1974). Simultaneously, Emmy Werner and Ruth Smith were conducting a longitudinal study in Hawaii involving the monitoring of a cohort of children born in 1955. This research was groundbreaking in that it considered the impact of multiple risk factors such as biological and psychosocial factors and stressful life events, as well as looking at the protective factors that mediated their development (Werner & Smith, 1992). In these early studies, the focus was to find the factors that differentiated the children that were resilient to the adversities present in their lives from those who developed maladaptive behaviour. Taking a medical model perspective, these studies were more a shopping list of potential risks and protective factors that mediated development in light of adversity (Masten & Obradovic, 2006). It was however from these beginnings that a major paradigm shift was instigated from a deficit model emphasising dysfunction and unidirectional trajectories to pathological outcomes, to an assets-based model emphasising strengths and capabilities within individuals and considering developmental processes that lead to well-being (Schoon & Bartley, 2008).

In the 1990’s the research shifted towards a developmental-systems approach (Yellin,

June, 2007). This approach recognised the interplay between three features in the development of resilience: individual, family and social environment (Werner & Smith, 1992). Using Bronfenbrenner's Ecosystemic Model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) as well as looking at the interactions between nature and nurture (Plomin, Reiss, Hetherington & Howe, 1994; Rutter, 2006), the complexity of resilience could begin to be understood. "Human development is continually produced, sustained and changed by interactions between individual and context, and human functioning has to be understood as a dynamic process which is shaped by the opportunities available to individuals and the choices they can exercise." (Schoon & Bartley, 2008, p.25). Furthermore, Michael Rutter, who has written extensively on resilience (Rutter, 1987; Rutter, 1999; Rutter, 2003; Rutter, 2006), challenges the existence of a single resilience trait (ego-resiliency; Block, 1980, cited in Luthar et al., 2000) by looking at the findings of the Dunedin study (cited in Rutter, 2006), which demonstrated that "the influence of the genes was only shown through demonstration of the interaction with the environmental hazard." (p. 6).

Clearly, resilience is more than just a sum of protective factors that outweigh risk factors. Returning to the definition introduced in the previous section, the dynamic process, thus refers to a complex interplay between a child's innate factors, the family environment within which he or she grows up in, the social context that family lives within and the adversities that exist within these systems. However, in coming up with a clear operational definition of 'high adversity' or 'significant risk' the literature is not so clear (Luthar et al., 2000; Schoon & Bartley, 2008). Although, the consensus is that both risk and protective factors are multi-factorial when referring to resilience. For example, in the Christchurch longitudinal study (Fergusson & Lynskey, 1996)

highlighted that multiple risks greatly increased the number of problems the adolescent would be faced with as opposed to just looking at single factors. As such, they felt that to look at resilience researchers need to examine the effects of a combination of factors on children from high risk environments.

From the previous chapter, it is undeniable that children in care are often exposed to highly adverse environments, as such, it is not surprising, when taking the literature on resiliency into account, that the outcomes for the majority of CiC are quite poor. The next section will look at resiliency research in the field of CiC to look at what may mediate the often poor outcomes of CiC and what research has found out about what mediates good outcomes.

Resilience and Children in Care

The previous section highlighted the difficulties resilience research has had in operationalising its meaning. In relation to CiC this becomes simpler to define. In terms of high adversity, all CiC can be said to have experienced family risk factors, for example, poor or absent parenting, plus an additional risk factor that is linked to the family factor, for example, parental mental health, substance abuse or death. As such, the lives of CiC expose them to multiple risk factors and the poor outcomes (educational and vocational) already described in chapter one shows that the majority do not have the resources available to them to develop resiliency against these risks. Therefore, it is important to identify the processes that allow some of these children to thrive and succeed in life.

One of the key findings to come out of the literature on CYP in care ‘overcoming the odds’ is the importance of stable placements (Berridge, 1985). In becoming looked after

by the authority, often the placements are not permanent and the child may be moved several times, including periods of returning to their birth families, thus making it difficult for these children to form secure and stable attachments to their primary care givers (National Children’s Trust, 2006). The history and importance of attachment to child development has been illustrated elsewhere (Bretherton, 1992), it is suffice to say that the loss CiC feel due to the inconsistency, neglect or loss of their primary caregiver has major ramifications on the way they think, feel and behave, which over time has significant effects on their outcomes in life:

“If you are in care you don’t know what will happen to you. When I was told I was to live with a foster family, I worried too much and couldn’t eat. I just went to despair.”

(National Children’s Bureau, 2006, p3)

Many studies have provided estimates on how many placements children typically have whilst in care; however these vary a great deal (Stein, 2005). A summary of these studies is provided in Table 1.

Study	Sample size	Placements			
		Number of placements	Percentage of YP	Average per YP	
<i>Stein and Carey, 1986</i>	76	3 or more	~75%		
		5 or more	40%	4.2	
		10 or more	6%		
<i>Stein, 1990</i>	18	7 – 12	50%	6	
<i>Biehal, Clayden, Stein and Wade, 1992</i>	183	1	<10%		
		4 or more	40%	Unknown	
		10 or more	10%		

<i>Dixon and Stein, 2002</i>	107	4 or more	30%	Unknown
		1	7%	

Table 1. Variations in number of placements in the UK (cited in Stein, 2005)

From the Table, it appears that only a minority of CiC are being provided with one stable placement while the rest vary to upwards of 10 placements. While these studies are important to illustrate the discord in the stability of the lives of CiC, the results must be taken with caution as they rely on very small samples and half were based on survey data.

In trying to explain why CYP in care have so many placements, it is easier to just view it as a failing of the care system to provide secure and stable placements (Evans, 2003; Jackson & Martin, 1998). However, like all factors in the lives of these children, there is a complex interplay between the individuals and their environments, as was discussed in the previous section. Placements may breakdown for a number of reasons, but the impact the child has on his or her environment cannot be discounted. Stein (2005) highlighted a relationship between children with more risks and problems present in their lives and the number of placements they have whilst in care. So in keeping with resilience research, what are the processes involved in the number of placements CiC are subjected to and what can be done to reduce the number or enable the CYP to adapt positively to the changes? Whilst this is an important question, for the purpose of this paper the lessons that will be taken from these findings is that stability is important for the lives of these CYP and the risk and protection afforded by placements is a complex relationship between child and environment.

The next factor that will be considered is education. It has already been highlighted that education is important for life chances: ‘The single most important indicator of children’s life chances is educational attainment.’ (Department of Health, 2000, p.50, paragraph 5.5). The poor educational outcomes of CiC have also already been illustrated in Chapter One, as well as highlighting that some care leavers do well in school and go on to university (Jackson et al., 2005). Several themes come out of the studies that look at resiliency in educational outcomes as to what really matters (Howard & Johnson, 2000; Jackson & Martin, 1998; Stein, 2005):

- Protective factors
- Early reading
- Friendships with people who are doing well in school
- A mentor to provide support and encouragement
- Hobbies and interests outside of school
- Relationship between motivation of the child to succeed and the importance attributed to education by birth parents
- Attitude of carer/social worker towards education and commitment of school to providing a stable and consistent education (e.g. exclusions, Personal Education Plan)
- Number of placements, and in particular whether the placements impacted on number of school placements

In Jackson and Martin's study, what was apparent was that the care leavers who succeeded had shown "extraordinary determination and persistence to succeed" and most felt that they could have achieved more with better support and fewer obstacles to deal with. Whilst the limitations of the sample (concerns about how subjects were recruited and whether this skewed the sample) precludes the generalisation of the results to all care leavers, the message seems clear that CiC feel that the support that exists is not enough to enable them to achieve their full potential.

Picking up again the ecological perspective, it can be seen that the studies are showing a relationship between individual, family and community (e.g. school) as well as the impact of outside systems (care system) and success in school. What has not been discussed is the impact of socio-cultural factors on educational impact. Research into the educational attainment of children in general (Scott, 2004), reveals some interesting findings that can be applied to CiC:

- Socio-economic status plays a crucial role in educational attainment
- YP's attitudes to school and aspirations for the future are significantly linked with members in their family environment (the concept of 'linked lives', Elder, 2001)
- Parental involvement in their child's education plays a role in succeeding in school
- Youth aspirations to continue their education significantly impacts educational attainment

These findings clearly relate to the findings from CiC studies. Berridge (2007)

highlighted the socio-economic risk factors present in the lives of CiC and the difficulties this creates in terms of 'social mobility'. Furthermore, the impact of birth parent beliefs and attitudes was highlighted by the Jackson & Martin study. What remains to be discussed is the importance of aspirations on educational success. This will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: EDUCATION AND ASPIRATIONS

Individual factors are important in educational achievement. Scott (2004) demonstrated the importance of aspirations on educational attainment in her longitudinal study looking at factors that mediate educational attainment in Britain. This replicates findings of American studies that similarly found that educational aspirations influenced outcomes in school (Campbell, 1983). This chapter will set out to first define what is meant by aspirations, then provide an overview of the current research and finally highlight the lack of research with respect to the aspirations of CiC.

What are Aspirations?

Sherwood (1989) defined aspirations as: "Any goal an individual is willing to invest in beforehand" (p.62). According to Lewin's field theory (Lewin, 1951, cited in Sherwood, 1989), a person's aspirations are directly proportional to the value the person places on the goal and their perception of the likelihood of achieving it. Therefore it can be said that the concept of aspiration is linked to self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) in that, if a person does not believe they are capable of achieving a goal then they will not aspire to it. Implicit in Lewin's definition of aspirations is that they mediate motivation. As such, aspirations can be seen as being future oriented, as opposed to immediate gratifications, and as motivators, as opposed to dreams and wishes (Sherwood, 1989).

Research on Aspirations

The idea that self-efficacy is related to aspirations has been examined empirically. Evidence suggests that individuals with higher self-efficacy develop higher career aspirations (O'Brien, Friedman, Tipton & Linn, 2000). As self-efficacy is defined as a person's belief in his or her ability to succeed in a particular situation (Bandura, 1997), there must be some precedent on which the person bases this belief, for example, having succeeded in the past or being told they can succeed by a significant other. In fact, research suggests that attainment is very much linked with self-efficacy and that parental efficacy, involvement and aspirations play a role in mediating that effect (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Vittorio & Concetta, 2001; Dandy & Nettleback, 2001; Hill, Castellino, Lansford, Nowlin, Dodge, Bates & Pettit, 2004). Adding the child's aspirations into the equations makes the relationship between these variables even more complex. In an attempt to map out the relationship between family background, individual characteristics, proximal settings and adolescents' aspirations, Marjoribanks (2002) developed the Moderation-Mediation Model, based on a bio-ecological framework, see Figure 3.

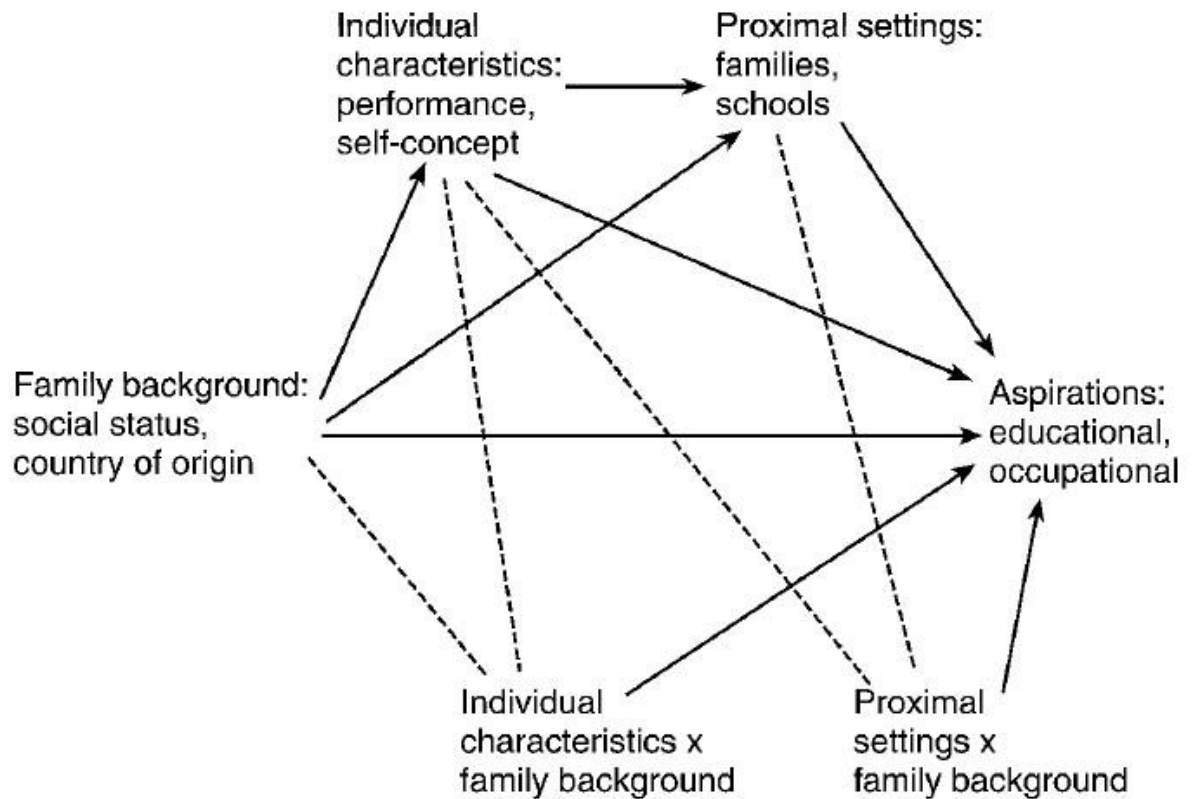


Figure 3. Moderation-mediation model for relationships among family background, individual characteristics, proximal settings and adolescents' aspirations. (Marjoribanks, 2002, p. 34).

This model clearly demonstrates that an individual's development of educational and career aspirations involves complex relationships between individual characteristics, family background and their environment. Supporting the model, a longitudinal study conducted in Italy looking at the relationship between self-efficacy beliefs, children's aspirations and career trajectories, the researchers found that school aspirations were strongly linked to poverty and social class, but were not determined by them, instead they found a complex interplay between class, parental efficacy and aspirations, and the child's efficacy and aspirations (Bandura et al., 2001). Socio-economic status was only indirectly related to career pathways in that it mediated parental educational aspirations

and belief in their efficacy to promote their children's academic development, supporting previous findings that efficacy promotes high aspirations in both children and adults (Bandura, 1997). Furthermore, the relationship pathway is that parental aspirations act to build on a child's self-efficacy (academic, social and self-regulatory) which then raises their aspirations thus impacting on their educational achievements (Bandura et al, 2001).

Aspirations of Children in Care?

In relating this research to CiC, already many risk factors are present that might make it difficult for CYP in the care system to develop educational and career aspirations. The relationships between SES and parental aspirations would certainly impact on this group. Perhaps then, when looking at resilient CiC, it is not surprising that a protective factor for educational achievement is having a supportive significant adult with high expectations (for example, a foster carer, teacher or mentor; Jackson & Martin, 1998). Furthermore, in the Leaving Care study (cited in Stein, 1994), young people expressed their regret at not being more motivated and determined at school. It could be said that they lacked aspirations for the future that would enable them to be more motivated and determined in their studies. Could this have been related to low expectations from significant adult figures?

Surprisingly, despite the plethora of literature detailing the lack of academic success of CiC (Barnardo's, 1996; Colton et al., 1994; Evans, 2003; Stein, 1994), there appears to be very few studies looking at how educational aspirations are related to academic achievement, and none at all aimed at identifying the educational and career aspirations of CiC. Instead studies have tended to focus on factors that protect CYP from or put

them at risk of low educational attainment, which have been detailed in Chapter Two. It seems clear from the research that having educational and career aspirations helps children to succeed at school and in life by motivating them to take action to achieve their goals. As was outlined in Chapter One, the government has made the educational achievement and life outcomes of CiC a high priority (DCSF, 2008), as such it is important for research to look into the concept of aspirations with relation to CiC and to investigate the processes that may mediate low or high educational and career aspirations in this group. Adding the concept of resiliency to this research would also add greater depth to the analysis, as then the aspirations of those who have succeeded in life could be compared to those who may not have done so well. Also, as aspirations may change over time with development, it may be useful for researchers to either follow longitudinally the developing aspirations of young people or to look at a cross-section of young people to examine how aspirations develop for CiC.

Despite the lack of research into aspirations of CiC, the government has recognised the importance of raising aspirations in ‘at risk’ groups (the Aimhigher programme). In the next section, an overview of these initiatives will be provided.

National Initiatives to Promote Aspirations

In August 2004, the government began the Aimhigher program, which is aimed at widening the participation of under-represented groups in higher education. The role of Aimhigher is to:

- Raise aspirations and motivation to enter HE among young people from under-represented groups

- Raise attainment of potential students from under-represented groups so that they gain the academic or vocational qualifications that will enable them to enter HE
- Strengthen progression routes into HE via vocational courses
- Offer information, advice and guidance to potential students and their teachers and families

(Aimhigher, 2008)

The program involves both national and local action and activities that help young people to achieve the aims of Aimhigher, for example, mentoring schemes using university students, summer schools and university days. Swindon is part of the Aimhigher West Area Partnership (AWAP), which covers Gloucestershire, Bristol, Wiltshire, Somerset, South Gloucestershire, North Somerset, and Bath and North East Somerset.

The program is currently being evaluated nationally by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), however the results are not anticipated until the end of 2008. Research into some of the initiatives being carried out by the AWAP is showing positive findings that support that the program is raising the aspirations of the YP it targets (AWAP, 2006-2007).

Conclusion

This literature review has outlined the context within which this study was proposed, that is, amid changes to policies and services directed at CiC, and presented the research

that exists that could inform policy and practice. In doing so it highlighted that many of the changes being proposed by the Care Matters agenda are informed by research (for example, the agenda aims to reduce the number of placements CiC have and the research indicates that having more placements is detrimental to CiC). It did not however reveal any research to suggest that outcomes for CiC would be improved by raising their aspirations, and it showed that there is no research investigating whether the development of aspirations in CiC is the same as that in other children. This therefore led to the development of the first paper in the research study, which aims at investigating the aspirations of a group of young people in care.

Secondly, the many studies have looked into the concept of resilience to explain the outcomes of CiC and identify what could help to promote positive outcomes. Few studies however have chosen to seek the views of CiC themselves, and those who have used young people who had already shown resilient outcomes (for example, care leavers in university). This was felt to be a gap in the literature as the views of current CiC on resilience, rather than their retrospective views, could reveal factors that have not been considered. This therefore formed the aims and research questions of the second paper, which aimed to seek the “lived experiences” of CiC around the topic of resilience.

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APPENDIX B: A REVIEW OF THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS CONSIDERED FOR PAPER 1 AND PAPER 2

The qualitative methods I considered for Paper 1 were grounded theory and thematic analysis. The aim of grounded theory is to generate a theory or model from the situation being studied (Smith, 2008), as such it is not theory driven and instead takes a ‘back-to-front’ approach where data is collected and then a theory is proposed (hypothesis) from the data. This was felt to be an appropriate method for this study, which had to be entirely exploratory given that no previous research was found on the development of aspirations in CiC and I did not want to make any assumptions about the similarities between the development of aspirations in CiC with that of other young people. The disadvantages of using this method lie in the data collection, which involve a simultaneous process of data collection and analysis, which repeats itself as new theories are proposed from the data collected. Other than the obvious time implications for this method, it would also involve keeping the data collection of paper 1 separate to that of paper 2. Given the difficulties I had in recruiting the participants for this study and that I had decided to use one interview schedule to collect the data for both papers, grounded theory was ruled out purely for practical reasons, and as such, it would have been an appropriate method for this paper if the circumstances were different (e.g. different participant group, more time). The next method I considered was thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998). In comparing the two approaches, thematic analysis and grounded theory, share commonalities in their approach to data analysis. The main differences lie in the data collection, while grounded theory takes an interactive approach to data collection, thematic analysis does not. As this was the main reason for ruling out grounded theory, I decided that thematic analysis was the best approach to

take as it allowed for an exploratory method of analysis, while not impacting on the methods of data collection, which had already been decided.

The three main qualitative research methods I considered for Paper 2 were content analysis, grounded theory and IPA. Content analysis is a theory driven, “top-down” approach (Breakwell, Hammond, Fife-Schaw & Smith, 2006). It uses prior knowledge to define codes that are then used to analyse the data into these pre-defined categories. The advantages of using content analysis is that has high reliability due to the systematic coding of the data, it is good for data reduction and it quantifies qualitative data. The disadvantages are that data is ‘forced’ into analytical categories from current theory and experiences and meaning of the participants are not considered relevant. Despite the large amount of research into resilience, I decided that I wanted to take a ‘bottom up’ approach with this study and seek the opinions of young people and gain their perspective without first ‘tainting’ the analysis with prior knowledge and theory. As such, I ruled out content analysis as an appropriate methodology for this study. Next, I considered grounded theory, which as previously mentioned, uses a ‘bottom up’ approach with the aim of generating a theory or model from the situation being studied (Smith, 2008). The advantages of grounded theory is that it is aimed at understanding the research situation and constructing theory from the data, there is a constant comparison between, data, themes and theory, and it is interpretative. The disadvantages are that it does not consider the impact of the researcher’s experiences on the data analysis and it is a time-consuming process of data collection and analysis followed by further data collection and analysis. I decided against using grounded theory for a number of reasons, the first was a practical reason in that it was difficult to gain the involvement of young people in care in my study and I did not think it would be

possible to secure further involvement if the analysis warranted further data collection. From a theoretical perspective, I also felt that grounded theory was inappropriate because the theory on resilience is well developed and the aim of this study was more to gain the perspectives of young people in care on resilience to see if it could add to current knowledge rather than create a new theory or model. It was therefore felt that IPA was the most appropriate methodology to use in this study as it offered a way of adding to current knowledge in a unique and new way and satisfied what I wanted to do with the data.

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APPENDIX C: DEFINITION OF BEING IN CARE AND TYPES OF CARE ORDERS.

Children and young people are defined as being in care, according to the Children Act 1989, if he or she is in the care of the local authority or is provided accommodation for more than 24 hours by the authority. This can be under the following four circumstances:

- (i) Children who are accommodated under a voluntary agreement with their parents (section 20);
- (ii) Children who are the subject of a care order (Section 31) or interim care order (Section 38);
- (iii) Children who are the subject of emergency orders for their protection (Section 44 and 46); and
- (iv) Children who are compulsorily accommodated. This includes children remanded to the local authority or subject to a criminal justice supervision order with a residence requirement (Section 21).

APPENDIX D: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR THE INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Interview schedule for Key Stage 3 and 4 participants:

Opening

This interview is aimed at looking at the experiences of young people today and what goals they have for the future. It is important that you feel comfortable with sharing your experiences and so we will agree that what is discussed today is confidential and will only be used in an anonymised form so that no one will know it was you that said it. Do you agree? Are you still happy to take part?

To start off, could you introduce yourself by making up a name that you would like to be known as, this is so that I can use your answers without anybody knowing it was you who said it. And could you then tell me your favourite T.V. program or favourite activity. I'll go first.

Introductory

We are here today to talk about experiences you have had in your life and the plans that you have for your future, for example, what your aspirations and goals are for the future.

Why do you think this might be important to talk about?

Transition

What experiences do you think have helped you to decide on what you want to do in the future?

Key Questions

Can you describe a positive experience that you have had in your life? Prompts: What made it positive? How did it make you feel?

Can you describe a negative experience that you have had in your life? Prompts: What made it negative? How did it make you feel? What was the outcome? How did you react to the situation?

Transition

Do you know what the word ‘resilience’ means? (Definition: When someone is able to adapt positively despite having significant adversity in their life – in other words, someone who is able to deal with or cope with many difficulties in their life)

Key Questions

Thinking about the difficulties that you have in your life, can you describe how you have dealt with difficult situations?

Can you think of a situation when you were expected to fail but managed to succeed? Prompts: How did you succeed?

Thinking in general about young people who have tough lives, what do you think might help them to succeed at school? What do you think might help them to get a job when they finish school?

Thinking about young people who have tough lives, why do you think they might fail at school? Prompts: What things happen that make them not do well? Now think about why they might not be able to get a job when they finish school?

Transition

Why do you think it is important to have goals and ambitions?

Key Questions

What do you hope to achieve at school? Prompts: What marks are you aiming for?

What plans do you have for your options? Why do you have these goals? Where do they come from – family, friends?

What goals do you have for your future after you finish school? Prompts: Do you want to get a job, continue studying or do something else? How do you plan to achieve these goals? Why do you have these goals? Where do they come from – family, friends?

End Question

Thinking about everything we have discussed, what do you think is most important to having high goals and aspirations for the future?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you for taking part in this interview. Your responses are very valuable and I have learnt a lot from them. I will only be using your answers for my study and anything you have said will be anonymised so that you cannot be identified.

Interview questions for Post 16 participants:

Opening

This interview is aimed at looking at the experiences of young people today and what goals they have for the future. It is important that you feel comfortable with sharing

your experiences and so we will agree that what is discussed today is confidential and will only be used in an anonymised form so that no one will know it was you that said it. Do you agree? Are you still happy to take part?

To start off, could you introduce yourself by making up a name that you would like to be known as, this is so that I can use your answers without anybody knowing it was you who said it. And could you then tell me your favourite T.V. program or favourite activity. I'll go first.

Introductory

We are here today to talk about experiences you have had in your life and the plans that you have for your future, for example, what your aspirations and goals are for the future.

Why do you think this might be important to talk about?

Transition

What experiences do you think have helped you to decide on what you want to do in the future?

Key Questions

Can you describe a positive experience that you have had in your life? Prompts: What made it positive? How did it make you feel?

Can you describe a negative experience that you have had in your life? Prompts: What made it negative? How did it make you feel? What was the outcome? How did you react to the situation?

Transition

Do you know what the word 'resilience' means? (Definition: When someone is able to adapt positively despite having significant adversity in their life – in other words, someone who is able to deal with or cope with many difficulties in their life)

Key Questions

Thinking about the difficulties that you have in your life, can you describe how you have dealt with difficult situations?

Can you think of a situation when you were expected to fail but managed to succeed?

Prompts: How did you succeed?

Thinking in general about young people who have tough lives, what do you think might help them to succeed at school? What do you think might help them to get a job when they finish school?

Thinking about young people who have tough lives, why do you think they might fail at school? Prompts: What things happen that make them not do well? Now think about why they might not be able to get a job when they finish school?

Transition

Why do you think it is important to have goals and ambitions?

Key Questions

Tell me a little about what you are doing at the moment. How did you get to doing what you are doing? Are you happy? What would you change?

What would you like to have achieved in a years time? Is this different to what you wanted to do when you were at school?

(Optional – not NEET) What has helped you the most to get to what you are doing now? What will help you to get to where you want to be?

End Question

Thinking about everything we have discussed, what do you think is most important to having high goals and aspirations for the future?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you for taking part in this interview. Your responses are very valuable and I have learnt a lot from them. I will only be using your answers for my study and anything you have said will be anonymised so that you cannot be identified.

**APPENDIX E: LETTER SENT TO THE SOCIAL WORKERS REQUESTING
PERMISSION FOR THE YP TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH
STUDY**

Dear Key Worker,

As you may already be aware, I am completing a research study looking at the lives and aspirations of Children in Care. The research involves an online questionnaire (Life and Future Online Questionnaire) and focus group interviews that will be held at the Looked After Children Education Service (LACES) offices.

For the focus groups, I have selected students from Key Stage 3, KS4 and Post 16 in the Local Authority to participate. I am writing to you to request permission for <<YP>> (DOB) to attend a focus group on: <<focus group date and time>> at the Looked After Children Education Service (LACES) offices. I will be making transport arrangements with the LACES team so that all the pupils who have consent to participate and wish to take part in the research can attend.

If you have any questions about my research you can contact me on 07525852356 or 01793 463074, alternatively you can email me at ac298@ex.ac.uk or ACarvalho@swindon.gov.uk. If you have any concerns about this research contact my supervisor Elias Avramidis: Ph: 01392 264750 or Email: E.Avramidis@exeter.ac.uk. If you would like a copy of the research findings please contact me and I will happily send you a copy.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Alice Pereira Carvalho

Trainee Educational Psychologist

The Local Authority

As the key worker of <<YP>> (DOB), I give permission for him to attend the focus group interview for the research project looking at aspirations of Children in Care.

Please print your name: _____

Signature

Date

I would be grateful if you could return this form at your earliest convenience by internal mail to: Alice Carvalho, Educational Psychology Service.

**APPENDIX F: LETTER SENT TO THE PARENTS OR CARERS OF THE YOUNG
PEOPLE INFORMING THEM OF THE RESEARCH STUDY**

Dear the parents/carers of <<young person>>,

As you may already be aware, I am completing a research study looking at the lives and aspirations of Children in Care; that is children or young people who are looked after by the Local Authority. I wrote to <<YP>> to complete an online questionnaire (Life and Future Online Questionnaire) and enclosed a letter to yourself explaining the research study. If you did not receive this letter, please let me know and I will send it again.

In the second part of the research study, I am inviting a small number of young people to participate in a group interview (focus group), which will involve questions about their life experiences, for example, ‘Can you describe a positive experience that you have had in your life?’, and their aspirations for the future, for example, ‘What goals do you have for your future after you finish school?’. For the focus groups, I have selected students from secondary schools and colleges in the Local Authority to participate. If <<YP>> participates, they will be in a group of no more than 6 young people of similar age and all the group participants will be of the same gender (either all female or all male).

I am writing to you to request permission for <<YP>> (DOB) to attend a focus group on: <<focus group date and time>> at the Looked After Children Education Service (LACES) offices. If you are happy for <<YP>> to participate and they would like to take part but are not able to get to the Lyndhurst Centre, please call me as soon as you can so that I can make transport arrangements for them. Please complete the form below and ask <<YP>> to bring it with them to the focus group interview.

If you have any questions about my research you can contact me on 07525852356 or 01793 463074, alternatively you can email me at ac298@ex.ac.uk or ACarvalho@swindon.gov.uk. If you have any concerns about this research contact my supervisor Elias Avramidis: Ph: 01392 264750 or Email: E.Avramidis@exeter.ac.uk. If you would like a copy of the research findings please contact me and I will happily send you a copy.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Alice Pereira Carvalho

Trainee Educational Psychologist

The Local Authority

As the parent/carer of <<YP>> (DOB), I give permission for them to attend the focus group interview for the research project looking at aspirations of Children in Care.

Please print your name: _____

Signature

Date

Could you please ensure that <<YP>> brings this with them to the focus group interview on <<focus group date and time>>.

APPENDIX G: LETTERS TO SECONDARY SCHOOLS INFORMING THEM OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

Letter to the Head teacher:

«GreetingLine»

I am a third year student from the University of Exeter completing a Doctorate in Educational Psychology. I also have a work placement in the Educational Psychology Service of The Local Authority.

I am writing to you to ask for your support in a piece of research I am carrying out about the lives and aspirations of secondary aged and post 16 Children in Care. As you may be aware the government has made the outcomes of Children in Care a high priority, my aim is to gather information to inform decisions made about services for these young people.

The research will involve asking all secondary and post 16 children in care in the Local Authority to complete an online questionnaire (Life and Future Online Questionnaire) and a small number of young people will be invited to participate in a focus group that will be held at the Looked After Children Education Service (LACES) offices.

It is important to receive a full range of responses for the online questionnaire; therefore I am asking all schools and colleges to support this study by allowing all the children in care attending their schools time to complete the questionnaire during school hours with a member of staff that can help them if they require it. It would be beneficial if this member of staff had a mentoring role and was able to support the young person if they had any worries or concerns about the questionnaire. Please inform all Heads of Year at

your school so that they can be prepared when the young people bring their participation letters to school.

I will write to you again to inform you if any of the young people in care attending your school will be participating in the focus groups. I will inform you of the date and time and will be organising, jointly with the LACES team, transport to get them to the LACES offices. I would be grateful if you could inform the Head's of Year of all the pupils who will be taking part in the focus groups and ask if they can make time to speak to them when they return to school following the focus groups to discuss any concerns they may have about the questions they were asked.

Your support in this research is greatly appreciated. I feel it is an important topic that has received very little research attention, hence the importance of seeking the voice of all children in care.

If you have any questions about my research please I can be contacted on: 07525852356 or email me at ac298@ex.ac.uk or ACarvalho@swindon.gov.uk. If you have any concerns about this research please contact my supervisor Elias Avramidis: Ph: 01392 264750 or Email: E.Avramidis@exeter.ac.uk. All schools will be sent a summary of the results at the conclusion of the study.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Alice Pereira Carvalho

The Local Authority

Letter to the Designated CiC teacher:

Dear Designated Teacher,

I am a third year student from the University of Exeter completing a Doctorate in Educational Psychology. I also have a work placement in the Educational Psychology Service of The Local Authority.

I am writing to you to ask for your support in a piece of research I am carrying out about the lives and aspirations of secondary aged Children in Care. As you may be aware the government has made the outcomes of Children in Care a high priority, my aim is to gather information to inform decisions made about services for these young people.

The research will involve asking all secondary children in care in the Local Authority to complete an online questionnaire (Life and Future Online Questionnaire) and a small number of young people will be invited to participate in a focus group that will be held at the Looked After Children Education Service (LACES) offices.

It is important to receive a full range of responses for the online questionnaire; therefore I am asking all secondary schools to support this study by allowing all the children in care attending their schools time to complete the questionnaire during school hours with a member of staff that can help them if they require it. It would be beneficial if this member of staff had a mentoring role and was able to support the young person if they had any worries or concerns about the questionnaire.

Your support in this research is greatly appreciated. I feel it is an important topic that has received very little research attention, hence the importance of seeking the voice of

all children in care.

If you have any questions about my research please I can be contacted on: 07525852356 or email me at ac298@ex.ac.uk. If you have any concerns about this research please contact my supervisor Elias Avramidis: Ph: 01392 264750 or Email: E.Avramidis@exeter.ac.uk. All schools will be sent a summary of the results at the conclusion of the study.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Alice Pereira Carvalho

Trainee Educational Psychologist

APPENDIX H: INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR THE PARTICIPANT



SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

Young Person Consent Form

You are being asked to be part of a research project being done by the University of Exeter, School of Education and Lifelong Learning.

This study involves asking young people like yourself to participate in an individual interview that asks questions about your experiences and your hopes for the future. This is important so that people who support children in care can provide the best services that are aimed at what young people need to succeed in life.

You will be asked to participate in an interview that will take about 30 minutes depending on your answers.

If you decide to be part of this study, please remember:

- You don't have to be a part of this research unless you want to be
- You can stop participating any time you want to and request to have all your information and interviews destroyed at any point
- All your information will be confidential and anonymous so that no one other than the interviewer (Alice Carvalho) will know what you said in the interview
- If I choose to publish the research (eg make an article for a journal) your name or any identifiable information will not be printed
- You have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about yourself

If you would like to be part of this study, please sign your name below.

Printed Name of Young Person

Signature of Young Person

Date

Signature of Principal Investigator

Date

If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please contact:

Alice Carvalho (Researcher)
Ph: 07525852356 or 01793 463074
Email: ac298@exeter.ac.uk

OR

Elias Avramidis (Supervisor)
Ph: 01392 264750
Email: E.Avramidis@exeter.ac.uk

APPENDIX I: PARTICIPANT DATA COLLECTION FORM

Age: _____

Gender: (please circle) Male Female

Year at school: 7 8 9 10 11 Other: _____

What is your ethnic background: (please tick)

- White – British
- White – Irish
- White – Traveller of Irish heritage
- White – Romany or Gypsy
- White – any other white background
- Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
- Mixed – White and Black African
- Mixed – White and Asian
- Mixed – any other mixed race background
- Asian or Asian British – Indian
- Asian or Asian British – Pakistani
- Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
- Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
- Black or Black British – Caribbean
- Black or Black British – African
- Black or Black British – any other Black background
- Chinese
- Any other ethnic background
- Don't know

Do you have a learning difficulty: (please circle) Yes No

Do you have a disability: (please circle) Yes No

Who do you live with: (please tick)

- I live with one or more of my birth parent(s)

I live with adoptive parent(s)

I live with foster parent(s)

I live in a children's home

Other: _____

Do you receive free school meals: (please circle) Yes No

APPENDIX J: THE INVINCIBLE'S INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT ANNOTATED TO

SHOW QUESTIONS FROM PAPER 1 AND PAPER 2

¶1: *So to start off I'm going to give you an opportunity, if you would like, you don't have to, to make up a name for yourself to be used in the study. So I'm not going to be able to use your real name *, but if you wanted a made up name for yourself, then you could. Some people have chosen like cartoon characters and just odd things like that. Or people that they like or things like that. If you want to, you can if you don't want to I'll just make up a name myself.*

¶2:

¶3: I got to think of all the names I've used sometimes, The Invincible.

¶4:

¶5: *The Invincible. Okay, all right. I would just ask you to speak a little bit louder, because otherwise I won't be able to catch your voice, okay?*

¶6:

¶7: **RESILIENCE**

¶8:

¶9: *So we're going to move on now and I'm going to ask you to describe an experience for me. I'd like you to describe a positive experience that you've had in your life. What made it positive and how it made you feel. And that could be from anything. From school, home or with your friends. Or anything that you think of, that you think is positive.*

¶10:

¶11: Well I did like landscape gardening with my school, like on work experience. I got to use petrol mowers and stuff.

¶12:

¶13: *You got to use what, sorry?*

¶14:

¶15: Petrol lawn mowers.

¶16:

¶17: *Petrol lawn mowers oh right wow!*

¶18:

¶19: And petrol strimmers, petrol hedge cutters.

¶20:

¶21: *Yeah.*

¶22:

¶23: And I got to use their rotavator, a wacka? plate, and a sit and ride lawn mower tractor thing.

¶24:

¶25: *Oh I see. So was that with like a local company around here or.*

¶26:

¶27: Reed Landscaping.

¶28:

¶29: *Yeah. Yes.*

¶30:

¶31: Which is a local business.

¶32:

¶33: *Did the school organise that or did you look out for it and .*

¶34:

¶35: They organised it, yeah.

¶36:

¶37: *Brilliant. So how did it make you feel then, when you were doing all that stuff?*

¶38:

¶39: Okay. When I got to the sit and ride mower it was so cool.

¶40:

¶41: *Yeah, yeah.*

¶42:

¶43: Sit on there with the music and just cut the grass.

¶44:

¶45: *[laughter] Awsome. Okay right then, now I'd like you to describe a negative experience that you've had in your life. What made it negative and how it made you feel.*

¶46:

¶47: Can't even think of one now.

¶48:

¶49: *Can't think of one, no? Can be from anything like from may be a school experience or something that's happened to you at home or anything. Can't think of anything at the moment, No?*

¶50:

¶51: No.

¶52:

¶53: *No, okay. Right do you know what the word "resilience" means or have you heard it before?*

¶54:

¶55: No.

¶56:

¶57: *No? Okay, so we say that someone has resilience when they are able to adapt positively despite having significant adversity in their life. So in other words someone who's able to deal with or cope with lots of problems and difficulties they've had in their life. And even, despite all these things they are able to succeed and get on in life. Yeah? So thinking about difficulties that you've had in your life. Can you describe how you have dealt with difficult situations?*

¶58:

¶59: Well when I lost my parents, obviously. And my gran, like recently. I didn't cope very well.

¶60:

¶61: *No? How do you react to the situation to begin with?*

¶62:

¶63: Not very hu...ly. I just wanted to be on my own.

¶64:

¶65: *Yeah? You just wanted to be on your own so you sort of relied on yourself to get through it?*

¶66:

¶67: Yeah.

¶68:

¶69: *And then as time sort of passed did you learn to cope in other ways or you just relied on yourself?*

¶70:

¶71: Just rely on myself. At school I had bereavement counselling and stuff to help me. That helped a little.

¶72:

¶73: *That helped a little? Yeah? Okay. All right now I'd like you to think. Can you think of a situation when you were expected to fail but managed to succeed?*

¶74:

¶75: ICT at school.

¶76:

¶77: *ICT, yeah. All right tell me a little bit about that then.*

¶78:

¶79: Where I was doing me work experience obviously we had a double ICT lesson on the Friday. And where I weren't in I missed out a lot of my work. So on a Wednesday at like evening, I stayed at school and did some. And like I missed a couple of weeks of it and stuff. And I thought I would fail but I didn't.

¶80:

¶81: *You didn't! Fantastic.*

¶82:

¶83: I think I got "C" or something.

¶84:

¶85: *Oh wow! Brilliant! That's really good. So, I mean, how did you manage to succeed then. You said that you stayed back a bit and did some work. So was it just like the extra effort that you made that?*

¶86:

¶87: Yeah.

¶88:

¶89: *Yeah. Anything else that helped you to succeed?*

¶90:

¶91: My confidence.

¶92:

¶93: *Your confidence? Good.*

¶94:

¶95: Cos you sit there and just do it.

¶96:

¶97: *Yeah, yeah, brilliant. Okay. Right now I want to think in general about young people who have tough lives. What do you think might help them to succeed at school?*

¶98:

¶99: Not sure.

¶100:

¶101: *Not sure? No? Can you think of anything that might help them to get a job when they finish school if they've had a tough life. What sort of ...*

¶102:

¶103: Going to college, get qualifications.

¶104:

¶105: *Yeah, get qualifications. Okay. All right. I want you to still think in general about young people who have tough lives. Why do you think they might fail at school? What sort of things might get in the way or might happen to make them not do well?*

¶106:

¶107: If they don't do their work, like it sets them back. And then they have to catch up and that could take time or weeks or months or something.

¶108:

¶109: *Yeah, yeah. What would stop them from doing their work then? Why would they get behind in the first place.*

¶110:

¶111: Depends. Like if someone has like passed away in their life and it hits them when they're in the lesson and they just walk out. They're missing that part of the lesson, what it might crucial for their GCSEs or something.

¶112:

¶113: *Yeah, yeah. Right. Now I want you to think. Still thinking in general about young people who have tough lives, what do you think might stop them from getting a job when they finish school? So they've done their schooling. They're out in the real world. They're their own person. They're not relying on anyone. What do you think might act as a barrier or prevent them from doing well after they've finished school?*

¶114:

¶115: Not going to college.

¶116:

¶117: *Yeah?*

¶118:

¶119: Cos at the moment, we're at the credit crunch and everything. People don't want young kids at the moment. Like they want them to get more qualification on the job or something. Like I'm going to college and doing vocational studies. I'm having a go at painting and decorating.

¶120:

¶121: *Painting and decorating, yeah.*

¶122:

¶123: Motor vehicle diploma.

¶124:

¶125: *Motor vehicle, yeah.*

¶126:

¶127: And I'm having a go at brick laying.

¶128:

¶129: *Brick laying. Wow! What all three at the same time? [laughter]*

¶130:

¶131: Well not in one whole day.

¶132:

¶133: *No.*

¶134:

¶135: Different times.

¶136:

¶137: *Yeah.*

¶138:

¶139: It branches off.

¶140:

¶141: *Oh so they're like different subjects that you take.*

¶142:

¶143: So one time you do motor vehicle, another time you do painting and decorating. You go on trips and you do all sorts.

¶144:

¶145: *Brilliant. Okay.*

¶146:

¶147: **ASPIRATIONS**

¶148:

¶149: *So we're here today to talk about experiences that you've had in your life and the plans that you have for your future, okay? For example, what your aspirations or goals are for the future. Why do think this might be important to talk about?*

¶150:

¶151: Dunno.

¶152:

¶153: *Not sure? Do you think it's important to talk about aspirations and goals? Is that something that's important or not really?*

¶154:

¶155: Well goals, yeah, cos it's giving you a bit of a chance.

¶156:

¶157: *Gives you a bit of chance, what's ...*

¶158:

¶159: To achieve them goals and get your self-confidence up and stuff.

¶160:

¶161: *Get your confidence up, okay. Yeah. What experiences do you think have helped you to decide on what you want to do in the future?*

¶162:

¶163: Well, I cut the grass here and like that's what I would like to do in the future.

¶164:

¶165: *Yeah, like you like to work for somebody or start up your own?*

¶166:

¶167: Like doing me own, like grass cutting and things.

¶168:

¶169: *Yeah, yes. Great.*

¶170:

¶171:

¶172:

¶173: *So why do you think it's important to have goals and ambitions? What would happen if you didn't?*

¶174:

¶175: Well if you didn't have goals then you wouldn't hardly get anywhere with like what you wanted to do.

¶176:

¶177: *Okay.*

¶178:

¶179: And like with ambition, I'm not quite sure but if I was that person I would put some ambitions down so there there to like work to.

¶180:

¶181: *So you put them there so you can work to it and ...*

¶182:

¶183: Yeah.

¶184:

¶185: *Yeah. Okay. So you've just finished school. [laughter] Seem very pleased by it. What are you aiming for? What would you ideally like to have achieved?*

¶186:

¶187: Qualification in like bricklaying, motor vehicle.

¶188:

¶189: *Oh okay. That's for your future but at school. So, you've done your GCSEs, is that right? Are you aiming for particular marks or do you have to get particular marks to do the courses that you're doing or had you thought at all about what you wanted?*

¶190:

¶191: No. Like at college, like they have some courses what needs grade C and D. And if you don't get them you have to either do the exam again to get it. Or you revise for the exam. So if you revise like you can get that grade by knowing everything in the exam [laughter].

¶192:

¶193: *By knowing everything in the exam. [laughter] Okay so is that what you would like to get Cs and Ds then for the subjects that you've done?*

¶194:

¶195: Yeah.

¶196:

¶197: *Okay. And why do you think it's important then. Where did this come from? That you know you thought you wanted to do well at school and you wanted to get good marks?*

¶198:

¶199: Well where I was looking after my dad for like three or four years, I didn't go to school.

¶200:

¶201: *Yeah.*

¶202:

¶203: Then I went to Riverside and like I caught up quite a lot. So I'm back on track.

¶204:

¶205: *You're back on track? But what made you do that? Because I can imagine that a young person in your position. After having gone through what you've gone through they might think "Oh, I can't be bothered. I don't want to. Things have been really hard and I don't want to have to keep trying". But you seem to have tried really hard. You caught up with all the things that you missed out on. And you're on track to going where you want to go. So what*

made it important for you to do that? What sort of ...

¶206:

¶207: What to get back into school?

¶208:

¶209: *Yes. Why was that important for you? Why didn't you just give up and think it's too hard?*

¶210:

¶211: Basically it's your education on the line if you don't go to school. And then your parents could like get a fine and go to court. Or even leave [00:12:48].

¶212:

¶213: *Okay. So that's something, you know, obviously you don't want that to happen to your parents and things.*

¶214:

¶215: Yeah.

¶216:

¶217: *Okay, so that's something, you know, obviously you don't want to happen to your parents and things. But you were saying that, you know, it's your education on the line. Why is having an education important then?*

¶218:

¶219: So you to have education and it's like educating your brain. So you know what's what. And like when it comes to GSEs, like coming up to the exams. All that is like in that lesson so you use it all in the lesson.

¶220:

¶221: *Yeah, yeah. So you need to soak it all up so you can get on. Is that?*

¶222:

¶223: Yeah.

¶224:

¶225: *Yeah. Okay right. So you've talked a little bit about the goals that you have after you finish school. Yeah? So you've got some courses that you want to take at college and then later on down the track you said you'd like to start up your own business within like lawn mowing and things like that, yeah? What plans do you have to achieve that? What sort of things are you going to make sure happen so that you are on track to succeeding?*

¶226:

¶227: What like the plans?

¶228:

¶229: *Yeah what in your head are you thinking this is what I'm going to do from now until I get to where what my ambitions are?*

¶230:

¶231: Well hopefully get the qualification for it.

¶232:

¶233: *Yeah, yeah. Okay. And where did it come from you wanting to go into having your own business and doing lawn mowing.*

¶234:

¶235: Like cutting the grass for a while. I did it when I was at home. And I did it for my gran and I did it for my brother with a pair of shears and a rake.

¶236:

¶237: *[laughter]. So is it something that you just enjoy. It's not like*

something that someone's taught you or, you know, that someone else did in your family. It's just something that you enjoy doing?

¶238:

¶239: Yeah. It's like with lawn mowing you can't be distracted, concentrating and doing it perfectly.

¶240:

¶241: *Yeah, yeah. Okay right. I want you now to think about everything that we've discussed and what do you think is most important to having high goals and aspirations for the future?*

¶242:

¶243: The education.

¶244:

¶245: *Education? Yeah? That is what's going to make you aim high and do well? Yeah.*

¶246:

¶247: Yeah.

¶248:

¶249: *Okay. Is there anything else that you'd like to add that you think might be important or that I've missed out that you think's important?*

¶250:

¶251: No. I can't think of anything.

¶252:

¶253: *That's okay.*



School of Education and Lifelong Learning

Certificate of ethical research approval

STUDENT RESEARCH/FIELDWORK/CASEWORK AND DISSERTATION/THESIS

You will need to complete this certificate when you undertake a piece of higher-level research (e.g. Masters, PhD, EdD level).

To activate this certificate you need to first sign it yourself, then have it signed by your supervisor and by the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee.

For further information on ethical educational research access the guidelines on the BERA web site: <http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/guides.php> and view the School's statement in your handbooks.

READ THIS FORM CAREFULLY AND THEN COMPLETE IT ON YOUR COMPUTER (the form will expand to contain the text you enter).

DO NOT COMPLETE BY HAND

Your name: Alice Pereira Carvalho

Your student no: 560021537

Degree/Programme of Study: D. Educational Psychology

Project Supervisor(s): Elias Avramidis and Margie Tunbridge

Your email address: ac298@exeter.ac.uk

Tel: 07525852356

Title of your project: Resilience and Aspirations of Children in Care

Brief description of your research project: A qualitative research study seeking the views and experiences of children in care attending secondary mainstream and special school (social, emotional and behavioural difficulties) settings. The study will use focus groups to elicit the views of these young people around their experiences in life, including how they have coped with tough situations, and their aspirations for the future. A quantitative online survey will be used to get information about the Swindon secondary children in care population (mainstream only).

Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved): Quantitative study: The participants will be all children in care attending mainstream secondary schools in Swindon (currently 112 pupils); the ages will range from 11-16. Qualitative study: 16 children in care attending mainstream secondary schools, 8 females and 8 males, and aged 11-16; as well as 8 young people in care, who currently or previously attended mainstream education, 4 males and 4 females, and aged 16-19, will participate in part one of the study. Part two will consist of 8 children in care, 4 males and 4 females, attending special school settings, who have a Statement of Special Educational Needs for emotional, social and behavioural difficulties, and are aged 11-16; as well as 4 young people in care who currently or previously attended special school settings and have a Statement of Special Educational Needs for emotional, social and behavioural difficulties, and are aged 16-19. See table below for summary of children taking part in the qualitative parts of the research.

	Mainstream		Special School	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
KS3	4	4	2	2
KS4	4	4	2	2
Post 16	4	4	2	2

Each set will be interviewed jointly as part of a focus group, e.g. 4 males from key stage 3 will form one focus group.

Give details regarding the ethical issues of informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality (with special reference to any children or those with special needs) a blank consent form can be downloaded from the SELL student access on-line documents: Due to the high vulnerability of the participants informed consent will be obtained from all persons holding parental responsibility (parents, carers and social workers) as well as from the participants themselves. The qualitative data will be recorded on a digital recorder; participants will be reminded to not use identifiable information (e.g. full names, date of births etc) before recording begins, and the files will be password protected once they are downloaded. The online questionnaire will be hosted on www.surveymonkey.com and will not ask for identifiable information, and the additional feature of SSL encryption will be used to protect the data. A unique number (online survey) or word/noise (focus groups) will be given to identify the participants in the event that they later wish to withdraw their responses from the research.

Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress: Online Survey: Data will be collected online and downloaded to the researcher's PC for analysis using Excel and SPSS. Schools will be requested to give the participants time during school hours to complete the survey online with a staff member present (a request will be made that this be either a mentor/counsellor, Head of Year or the designated children in care teacher) to support them if needed and debrief them if they have any concerns about the content of the survey. Focus groups: the researcher will be holding the focus groups and using a digital recorder to record the proceedings. A debrief session will follow the focus groups for anyone who wishes to discuss any concerns they had about the questions asked, these sessions will also be held by the researcher. Schools will be advised of the students participating in the focus groups and the Head of Year will be asked to check in with the participants the next day that they are at school to ensure that the student has no concerns about the questions asked. For all participants in the post 16 group, their social workers will be asked to make a follow up call to ensure that the participants have no concerns that they wish to discuss. Additionally, all the participants will be given the phone number and email address of the researcher to contact at any point to either discuss any concerns or withdraw from the study.

Give details of any other ethical issues which may arise from this project (e.g. secure storage of videos/recorded interviews/photos/completed questionnaires or special arrangements made for participants with special needs etc.): Both the survey data and the digital recordings will be stored on the researcher's computer with password protection to prevent unauthorised access.

Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants): Due to the sensitive nature of the questions being asked of the participants it is possible that there may be conflicting ideas between the participants. To reduce this, males will be separated from females and discussions will be guided away from discussions that may be harmful to the participants. It is hoped that the views that are sought from the participants will help to inform services that are targeted to the needs of children in care, and as such the long term repercussions of the research are hoped to be positive outcomes rather than negative ones.

*This form should now be printed out, signed by you below and sent to your supervisor to sign. Your supervisor will forward this document to the School's **Research Support Office** for the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee to countersign. A unique approval reference will be added and this certificate will be returned to you to be included at the back of your dissertation/thesis.*

I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given above and that I undertake in my dissertation to respect the dignity and privacy of those participating in this research.

I confirm that if my research should change radically, I will complete a further form.

Signed: Alice Cro. date: 13/3/09

N.B. You should not start the fieldwork part of the project until you have the signature of your supervisor

This project has been approved for the period: 16-03-09 until: 31-03-09

By (above mentioned supervisor's signature): [Signature] date: 13/03/09

N.B. To Supervisor: Please ensure that ethical issues are addressed annually in your report and if any changes in the research occurs a further form is completed.

SELL unique approval reference: D/03/09/38

Signed: [Signature] date: 23/03/09

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee

This form is available from
<http://www.education.ex.ac.uk/students/index.php> then click on On-line documents.

APPENDIX L: TABLE OF YOUNG PEOPLES' VOCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS

Key Stage	Name	Aspirations
Key Stage Three	Grace	Grace does not know what she wants to do
	Jim Bob Junior	Professional actress and singer, a vet, a police officer or a chef.
	Olivia	Police officer
	Petal	Police officer and an actress
	Ruby	Dancing
	Jack	Have his own business in ICT, electronics or something similar
	Jim Bob	Fireman
	Thomas	Mechanic and join the army
Key Stage Four	Emily	Child minder
	Jeanette	Vet
	Jessica	English teacher
	Sophie	Wants to work with young people like herself
	Harry	Catering
	The Invincible	Start his own lawn mowing business
	Joshua	Sports related
Oliver	Oliver does not know what he wants to do	
Post 16	Chloe	Hairdresser
	Charlie	Police officer
	Daniel	Art or graphics related

APPENDIX M: TABLE OF YOUNG PEOPLES' VOCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS
ACCORDING TO THE NS-SEC AND SOCIAL CLASS GROUP

Key Stage	Name	Vocational Aspiration	NS-SEC Category	Social Class (I-V)
Key Stage 3	Grace	Doesn't know	NA	NA
	Jim Bob Junior	Actor/Musician, vet, police officer, chef	4.3,3.1,7.2,12.2**	I
	Olivia	Police officer	7.2	IIIN
	Petal	Police officer, actress	7.2,4.3**	II
	Ruby	Dancer	4.3	II
	Jack	Own business IT, electronics	4.1,7.3**	II
	Jim Bob	Fireman	7.2	IIIN
	Thomas	Mechanic, army	11.1	IIIM
Key Stage 4	Emily	Child minder	9.1	IIIM
	Jeanette	Vet	3.1	I
	Jessica	English teacher	4.1	II
	Sophie	Working with YP like herself (social worker)	4.1	II
	Harry	Catering	12.2	IV
	The Invincible	Own business lawn mowing (gardener)	11.1	IIIM
	Joshua	Sports (sports and fitness occupations)	7.2	IIIN
	Oliver	Doesn't know	NA	NA
Post 16	Chloe	Hairdresser	13.1	IV
	Charlie	Police officer	7.2	IIIN
	Daniel	Art, graphics	7.3	II

** For participants with multiple aspirations factors such as wanting to go to university or college and the type of position they aspired to have (i.e. owning their own business) were used to assign the most appropriate Social Class group.

**APPENDIX N: TABLE OF YOUNG PEOPLES' VOCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS BY
SOCIAL CLASS AND GENDER**

	Professional occupations (I)	Managerial and technical occupations (II)	Skilled occupations – non-manual (IIIN)	Skilled occupations – manual (IIIM)	Partly skilled occupations (IV)	Unskilled occupations (V)	None*
Female	2	4	1	1	1	0	1
Male	0	2	3	2	1	0	1

***One female participant and male participant did not have a vocational aspiration and therefore were not assigned a category.*

**APPENDIX O: EXCERPTS FROM THE YOUNG PEOPLES' INTERVIEWS OF
FACTORS THAT INFLUENCED THEIR ASPIRATIONS AND GOALS**

Key Stage	Name	Factors that influenced their aspirations and goals.
Key Stage Three	Grace	"My school is like always aiming to have an achievable goal", "It just came from me" (about doing better at school)
	Jim Bob Junior	"It's important for me cause I didn't really go to school when I was having a bad time. I only started going to school when I was about 7 but I caught up because I wanted to be educated, that was my dream initially", "Because a couple of years ago mum taught me that you have to work towards your SATs and stuff and i was like 'oh, i don't wanna work' and mum was like 'come on, you have to get good grades' and by working i got better grades than i thought i'd get", "It's just what i enjoy the most and i'd like to do a job that i enjoy", "I would like to be like one of my friends. She's called * and she's always happy, she always comes to school"
	Olivia	"I asked Miss for some information on stuff, what lessons I should do for being a police officer because we've got one of those career persons where they give you information and stuff and she gave me some information so I decided to take up law, psychology and cooking", "Because i want to get a good job when i'm older", "cause when i was little i never knew what to do and then i used to watch all these crimes on telly and all that and i was like 'oh, maybe i can be one of them when i'm older'."
	Petal	"I want to be a police officer is so I can go out on the job and help other people", "I want to be an actress when I'm older because I'm dramatic", "It just came from me", "All the time I've been watching 'The Bill' it's like I want to be a policewoman", "It's like what you want to be. It's like sometimes it comes naturally to you but sometimes you have to just see someone else go out there and see how you'd do it", "And acting, i really wanted to do acting anyway, and my friend goes to me, this is one good thing, my friend goes to me when we were doing drama, she goes to me 'You're not scared are you?', i goes 'What of?' She goes 'You're not scared of getting up there and looking like a fool are you?'"
	Ruby	"It's something that's always been a part of me really 'cos I used to do good at school anyway", "I'm interested in dancing and all that you know, 'cos I've been dancing like for years"

	Jack	"Dad he was always like a bit technical he was and liked all that kind of stuff and I can remember like when I was younger he used to get plugs, he would get a single plus and if there was two things there he used to wire them into one plug and stuff like that... and yeah it just came from that really"
	Jim Bob	"Because if you have a good GCSE you can get a good job and get a good rank in that job", "So you can help yourself get food and drink and clothes", "Within me and from school", "I don't know I've always been so fascinated by the fire service since I was about four or five years old", "Helping getting the firemen getting my brother's leg out of a banister out of two gaps he was stuck in. Cause my mum was asleep, i called the fire brigade, they come and by the time she woke up they were gone"
	Thomas	"Well I like come in a rotation of army people. My grandad, my grandad's an army person. My dad's in the army, so I just want to do it as well", "Well it is important to have good grades because if you have low grades someone will just look at like your grades and think no i don't want to employ you. Then someone comes in with like decent grades and goes 'Yes, you're hired'." "Because i've got loads of life ahead of me and i ain't just going to give up and just let my life slip away... No it's just something within me that just wants to carry on going, ain't letting me go yet."
Key Stage Four	Emily	"I used to look after my brother and sister when they was younger and ever since I wanted to work with children."
	Jeanette	"Horse riding... First with family and now like lessons and all that." "Oh no, it's really important to me." "I've liked animals since birth." <i>'How did you find out about that college then, that you want to go to?'</i> "School."
	Jessica	"When you are like in a classroom and you see how the teacher is working." "No I've been watching my English teacher and I was like I like the way he works. And I have seen how difficult it is."

	Sophie	<p>"No, just like because like the situation like I've been in like, some of the jobs you can get of it would be like people that has worked with me so like I want to work with people, young people like myself." "I don't know like I just, I just think it's important to have them innit because if not you are just not going to get a job or nothing." "I just don't want to be like working in McDonalds and that, i want a good job, i want something like, i want something good." "I don't know i think i'd be good at it. I think i could help them." "But from my experience in foster care like i would want to do more for that child than like the foster carers did for me because to be fair i don't think i actually did like i don't know don't work probably."</p>
	Harry	<p>"Oh like, cooking in like school, like when we were at school." "I really like people telling how to like do it, so that... Like friends, mum and dad, and next door neighbours to mum, just telling me how to do it." "You get more money into it." "I just love cooking, and i could just, if i had a family i could cook more for them." "Because when i was in the kitchen one day when my mum was at work and i was so bored so i just went into the kitchen looked for a chocolate cake recipe and i got told off because i scarred my mum's babysitter on the leg and she's still got it, and i was like i going to try and make myself better at it." "Yes, i just enjoy it."</p>
	The Invincible	<p>"Well, I cut the grass here and like that's what I would like to do in the future." "Well where I was looking after my dad for like three or four years, I didn't go to school. Then I went to ** and like I caught up quite a lot. So I'm back on track." "Basically it's your education on the line if you don't go to school. And then your parents could like get a fine and go to court." "So you to have education and it's like educating your brain. So you know what's what. And like when it comes to GSCEs, like coming up to the exams. All that is like in that lesson so you use it all in the lesson." "Like cutting the grass for a while. I did it when i was at home. And i did it for my gran and i did it for my brother with a pair of shears and a rake."</p>

	Joshua	"Well I've played in a couple of sports teams in school, outside of school. And, you know, I've always been sort of, well I've always been that sort of sporty person. And I want to do something like keeping active and that after, like later on in life, as a job." "Just come from my mind really... And friends have helped as well." "I don't know but some people think like schools just not worth it and you don't exactly learn anything. But you do. You benefit from it. And some people just don't think they do." "I think it was my dad cos me and him used to sort of go out and sort of have a game of football together." "Some of my friends from primary school, they got me into sport and that as well, so... Cos i got into my primary school football team, which was, you know. I had never played in a football team before so it was quite special, so it was good."
	Oliver	"Because it's easy. And like you don't have to do much." "I picked it. I tried it out cos I thought I might like it, so I did." "It comes from me really, like from what you do." "Come from myself."
Post 16	Chloe	"I just wanted to do hair." "Yeah, it was from me."
	Charlie	"Yeah everything does don't it like everything that happens to you in your life just makes how what a person you are don't it and then depending on what you like and what you enjoy depends on what you want to be doesn't it?" "Living in places like this where you just see like you know being in foster care and you're seeing the way some people are treated and things that go on and some of the places i've lived like the areas and communities and stuff just makes me want to change it." "It's like just life isn't it, it depends what experience you have depends on what you want to do with yours." "Ever since i was little i've always wanted to be in the army but i've got all like i've grown up a bit ad i'm not allowed to go into the army anyway and at school i dunno i just don't think of anything really, like at school before i got kicked out of school all i concentrated on was being with my friends and going out and getting drunk and getting high and just doing whatever like that and i just didn't really think about it i just weren't worried about it." "Myself. And my family. Ambition. It is to i dunno just belief in myself and people having belief in me, pushing myself like i dunno not letting myself down pretty much as long as i keep at what i want to do and don't let it change."

	Daniel	"Dropping out of college, continuously looking for a job but not being able to get hold of one. Foster care is helping me, pretty much 24/7 giving me advice and stuff like that really." "Mostly, and not being big headed but me because if it wasn't for my mum and all of like the bad stuff in the past and that, then it wouldn't have made me think 'well, if I ain't gonna do it for myself and if I ain't gonna go out there and try and get it then no one else is for me so I've got to do it myself' and that's mainly what it is." "Help and support but then I've just got to be motivated in myself to do it."
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**APPENDIX P: EXCERPTS FROM THE YOUNG PEOPLES' INTERVIEWS OF PLANS
FOR REALISING THEIR ASPIRATIONS AND GOALS**

Key Stage	Name	Plans for achieving aspirations.
Key Stage Three	Grace	"I hope to achieve, cause I have got my exams coming up and I hope to chieve that and I hope I get a higher level than I did", "To pass my GCSE exams and to work hard", "...my goal is to go to college and do well at college"
	Jim Bob Junior	"I hope to achieve good grades", "I'd like to go to college and if need be, say for like forensic science and all that, I'd like to go to Uni as well"
	Olivia	"I want to improve on maths 'cause I ain't that good at maths but when my GCSEs come, I want to improve on them as well", "If I ask for help, if I don't know anything, like a question like that and just hope that I end up achieving it"
	Petal	"I mostly want to concentrate on English and Maths", "But I want to concentrate on other lessons more though as well", "When I finish school I want to go to college and then I want to go to university, just so I've got the right qualifications and stuff for the job"
	Ruby	"make sure I pass all my GCSEs. Or even most of them 'cos *(foster mother) thinks I'll probably pass loads of them 'cos I always get like really high grades", "At art school we are doing the Arts Award which can put you though dancing and all that and I passed it", "Probably go to a dance school and like pass all the tests and exams", "And i'm always practising"
	Jack	"Like, done really well and well yeah, got a lot of qualifications and yeah done well", "I would like to get a good job and stay on that and then well yeah, if I could ever find the money I would probably start that [a business] like not necessarily by borrowing from a bank or something because that's a bad idea if you can't pay it off"
	Jim Bob	"My school work. My GCSEs and learn to be a fireman", "Go to college and learn about public services, go to university, practice there and hopefully I'll get a job", "Work with others. Don't do it all by yourself. Get others to help if you need it"
	Thomas	"You put your mind to that goal, just keep going to that goal and that's it you will succeed in the end", "Probably getting a well paid job, like a mechanic's job or something like that. Probably go in to the army or something like that and live there", "Get good grades and all that", "Well first i've got to start off slow, like doing my mechanics courses and army cadets and all that. Start off slow, but then i'll build myself up to get to the actual goal that i need to do"

Key Stage Four	Emily	"Get good grades. So I can get grades to work as a childminder." "Work hard and don't let anything bring me down. Just concentrate on school." "Yeah, cos I'm doing work experience at the moment. I'll try and get a job there."
	Jeanette	"Get high grades, B's and A's and become a vet." "So if I do a college course or further education, I can get higher and at least get the job that I want." "Well I want to go to ** College and study there."
	Jessica	"To get my English GCSE... C or above." "Go to sixth form and then go to uni."
	Sophie	"No my aims were just like to get my GCSE's but I didn't, I only got one but I'm retaking two more in college in September as well, but that was like one of my main achievements in school was just to get on with my GCSE's but then I didn't, got into some trouble, didn't go to school so i couldn't take them." "It's a year but i can go onto another course after that if i want." "...cause i did hair and beauty as well at college last year pre-16. But like because i did want to do that and then i was going to go to college, carry on that course and then go back to college and take the child care course. But when i did it you know i just didn't really like it so now i'm just going to... <i>'Focus on...'</i> Yeah"
	Harry	"I tried to get a better grade, tried to pass my music tech course and get a good grade in my GCSEs." "Pushed myself to it." "Doing catering in GCSE, and that's, I'm doing at the moment." "Go to college." "Maybe go to uni or go straight to the army, or go straight to the army after, not even college." "Just look straight ahead of you, see what you are going to do in the future."
	The Invincible	"Qualification in like bricklaying, motor vehicle." "Like at college, like they have some courses what needs grade C and D. And if you don't get them you have to either do the exam again to get it. Or you revise for the exam. So if you revise like you can get that grade by knowing everything in the exam." "Well hopefully get the qualification for it." "Well I did like landscape gardening with my school, like on work experience." "Like I'm going to college and doing vocational studies. I'm having a go at painting and decorating. Motor vehicle diploma. And i'm having a go at bricklaying."

	Joshua	"I want to get the job I want to do after my college and university course." "So I'm just hoping that I get the grades I want from my GCSEs." "Well get the GCSE results I want and then hopefully try on me high level course at college." "Five C's ideally but i don't think i'll get them to be honest. Don't know why." "I've chosen courses at college and hopefully i can get into those." "Diplomas in sport and leisure and sport and that. Like national awards and things like that. Certificates and everything so. It's going to be hard but i should get through it. Should do." <i>About going to university:</i> "Definitely. Bath would be the best one for me i think."
	Oliver	"Qualifications. To go somewhere else, get a good job." "Go to college... Like something that I like, something that I'm really into." "I'm doing like painting decoration in college so I might do that."
Post 16	Chloe	"I don't know really." "Be a hairdresser." "I do training already... My salon" "Just keep training."
	Charlie	"I'm doing sports... No I want to be a policeman... So that's the only thing, that's the only thing I can do at the moment towards becoming one." "BTEC First Diploma in Sports. I've just finished this year." "I applied for public services but I applied late and they didn't have no places left. So they said you know my grades weren't good enough to go into it anyway so they put me on this course and they said it'd give me what i need to get into a National Diploma for Public Services this next coming year. But i've decided no to do that i've decided to do a National Diploma in Sports and Outdoor Adventure instead." "And so i don't really have anything i want to improve on in the next year i just want to concentrate on college, my family and just things like that I don't want to put too much pressure on but i don't want to take nothing away because it is the way i like it at the moment."

	Daniel	<p>(talking about leaving college) "Motivation was lacking." "I was doing a graphics and design course, probably the only thing I'm good at but, yeah." "No, they messed up our classes. They put us all in specific classes that we wanted to be in but then they said that our classes were too big so they divided them up into more and pretty much flipped the rota so that we were doing the ones that we didn't want to do. So, it wasn't just me, pretty much half of my class flunked it just to go back the next year and do a different course." "Looking for a job. Doing little jobs for people that I know. Just giving me something to do." (about applying to college) "No, i haven't applied yet, no. I'm gonna be going again." "No, i keep popping up to * doing work up there on a building site... Family lives up there. They knew the man who was mainly working on the building site and he just asked me if i wanted a job." "Not in a year's time from now. Probably I'm going to be back in college, two merits. Merits are what you need, right if you do really really well and you pass a certain amount of your course, you get a merit for it and then merits add on to extra grades at the end. Two merits and just all in all doing really really well and in college itself still I've a good relationship here in the placement and just good all in all really." "Not really. In school i still wanted to go to college and everything." (about going back to college) "Along the lines of art and graphics."</p>
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**APPENDIX Q: EXCERPTS FROM THE YOUNG PEOPLES' INTERVIEWS OF
FACTORS MOST IMPORTANT FOR DEVELOPING HIGH ASPIRATIONS**

Key Stage	Name	Factors most important for having high aspirations.
Key Stage Three	Grace	"That they keep motivated and that they never give up on things that they thought were hard"
	Jim Bob Junior	"Well, I think probably most of your background inspires what you'd like to be, but sometimes it's just a job that you fancy", "I think it's a passion for what they are doing. It's a passion, they want to do it, they need to do it, they need to keep on going on or maybe it's something that keeps them going... this lady i used to know and her job literally kept her going, it kept her wanting to be in the world, it kept her wanting to see her friends and all that"
	Olivia	"Because to get a really good job and if you have high goals and all that, then you can be proud of yourself because you know that you're going really good in all your subjects"
	Petal	"I reckon it's because some people have courage. Some people like look at themselves and say 'Oh I'm want to go out there and get a job. So I can have a family of my own'. And some just look at their own, all of the family and go 'I'm going to do it for myself and them'. And sometimes the mum tries to influence them and say 'Well, soon i'm going to die' say. And then they'll be like 'Well you'd have to look after your own self, cos i can't keep on paying, so you are going have to get a job"
	Ruby	None
	Jack	"Definitely someone egging them on and like making sure no one puts them down about it", "You get people who are like really clever who do well in school and like people call them nerds and stuff and geeks or whatever. Yeah but it's, they are the people who are going to go really far aren't they and no one ever sees it like that, most people don't, they don't think about the fact that they are the ones that if they go in the right direction they will end up with the better life"
	Jim Bob	"People supporting them all the way. Getting help"
	Thomas	"People what think, feel like they give up, don't give up keep going." "Yes just keep going. Don't stop."
Key Stage Four	Emily	"Not let anyone bring me down or get bad thoughts. Just think that everything's going to be all right."
	Jeanette	"I think it is important because people if they want to really aim high and succeed well, they probably want a really good job that they will get a lot of benefit out of it."
	Jessica	"Don't just get rid of them, try and keep them." "Restart."
	Sophie	"I don't know."

	Harry	"If they just want to do something and they don't think they are good enough they should just focus on it and think about what they are going to do."
	The Invincible	"The education."
	Joshua	"Well, like I said earlier, they're going to benefit from it, init? So they sort of get somewhere in life. Whereas some people who just couldn't really care, they're just sort of, you know. They won't get very far." "Probably sort of being motivated by people, other people that are sort of wanting to succeed."
	Oliver	"Don't know."
Post 16	Chloe	"I think if you've had a rubbish life I think it should make you stronger instead of making you do nothing. To prove everyone wrong, you know."
	Charlie	"Don't be a numpty... Think about it you just have to take that time to actually one day just think to yourself is that what I want or is this what I want think about what I dunno like for me I thought about what my future would be like if I went down that path and thought what my future would be like if i went down this other path and then it is obvious innit you choose which one you want what you think you'd be happier with." "The thing is school I really don't think I had any sense while I was at school I think if anybody had come up to me and said anything like that I'd believe I wouldn't believe them I'd believe what would be expected of me anyway because I wouldn't believe I don't think that I'd be able to change what it is but once you've actually nobody can tell like do that to you, you have to be able to do it to yourself unless you can tell yourself that you want to change and that you can actually do it if you want to that's the only way it is going to work because it is belief in yourself innit, 'cos otherwise you'd just being pushed and you might necessarily not want to do whatever and you don't want people to say things like that to you." "I dunno I just all those things the main thing that affected me through wanting to change and it sounds really, really weird and random but the main thing that set make me want to change is I'm really into like history and things like that and just I read up on quotes from like Roman war generals and things like that and just things that they've said all these people have said like thousands of years ago just really make you think if you are by yourself and you read what they said it just Latin words and things people have said and it makes you think like that person's actually right and I dunno it's weird it's like not nobody real can make you do or be what you want but I felt like people that lived thousands of years ago were the people that made me who I am now because they inspired me by what they've said so just great things, great people changed my mind."

	Daniel	"To set yourself some. Don't sit back and not have anything, have something to go for, so you're setting yourself the basics pretty much, you're getting yourself your grades, you're getting yourself qualifications to then get a job, because that is supposed to be the normal life, school, college, grades, job, retirement, done." (<i>Is that what you want?</i>) "Kind of but with your own little fun and bits in the middle of it, going away on holidays, blah, blah, blah."
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APPENDIX R: MAIN RESILIENCE THEMES PRESENTED BY EACH PARTICIPANT.

Grace - KS3F
School being a positive experience
Positive thoughts of self in the future
Negative interactions with peers
Doing something to change a negative situation
Not having self-confidence
Making friendships
Being strong mentally
Doing well in exams and tests
Low expectations of yourself
Working hard to achieve something
Think ahead
Think ahead and do not let thoughts of the past stop you from doing things
Feeling different to others
Family breakup
Bereavement
Ruby - KS3F
Separation from her mother
Being taken into care as a negative experience
Questioning the actions of social care
Apathy towards not being with her mother
Acceptance of reasons why she is in care
Negative perception of mother's actions
Talking to people about difficulties
Not keeping things locked up inside
Telling your friends about your past
Having supportive friends that don't spread things about you or make fun of you
Identifying with having a "tough life"
Talking to a teacher about her difficulties to access support
Having flashbacks from the past when trying to do work
Not concentrating in class
Failing GCSEs as a barrier to succeeding
Low grades in school preventing you from succeeding
Positive self-concept of performance at school
Failing subjects you need to do what you want in the future
Olivia - KS3F
Doing better at school as a positive experience
Positive self-concept of performance at school
Feeling proud that she improved in her subjects
Access to support at school if your upset or worried
Thought would fail exams

Relied on own skills to succeed
Asking for help to succeed
Not choosing the right subjects preventing them in the future
Petal - KS3F
Family outing to the beach as a positive experience
Positive/funny memory of lost father
Regret that her father died "Unfortunately he died"
"I still feel very sad" – bereavement
Memory of being told her father was dead
Regret at not making it easy for her mother to tell her of his death
Support from family members
Feels stressed when not listened to
Bullying and people being nasty
"I wish I was dead" - people being nasty, bullying or not listening
Being in care she doesn't feel listened to
Social worker doesn't listen
Low expectations from teachers about achievement in school
Achieved better than expected grades
Feeling proud that she achieved better than expected
Improved self-concept in school subjects
Couldn't revise for test so just relaxed as teacher was talking and did it
Questioning the actions of social care
Having support for the family not just putting the child in care
Encouragement to succeed at school
Supporting YP financially if they want to go to college/university
Receiving advice about careers to help make choices
Failing at school because too much to worry about
Not concentrating on work - because worrying
Apathy about their school work - because worrying
Feeling overwhelmed in school - because worrying
Failing because not being listened to
YP feeling they want someone to come and help them
Failing in life because of their qualifications
Failing because of their results
People wont want you if you don't have a good education
Failing because you don't know what you are doing
Failing because you are feeling down
Support to "calm things down", someone coming to the home to help
Having someone at home to help so don't need to go to social services
Jim Bob Junior - KS3F
Going into foster care as a positive experience
Feeling happy about having "an almost proper family"
Feeling normal - being with a foster family
Didn't feel put aside being in a foster family
Thinks most foster families you are put aside

Doesn't fully identify as being completely part of the family - use of "almost"
Feeling like no one understood her and her past as a negative experience
At school "everyone used to to like ignore me"
Being bullied at school
Fought against bullying - "I became very violent", anger issues, behaviour
Turning point: sister threw brick at boy - realised not good to hit people
Block out difficult situations, distraction - "hum a tune"
Thinks she is expected to fail at lots of things
Managed to stay happy and bubbly through it all
Thinking there is always someone else worse off than you
Optimism, positive attitude
Making an effort to enjoy lessons even if they are bad
Teachers need to make lessons fun so that children remember it
Put it all behind you
"Not everyone's going to be like the person or whatever you had wrong with you"
Act the part of the job role you have - banker: polite and smiling
Failing at school because not really thinking about school
Worried about what is going to happen at home etc when at school
Hard to focus at school
Failing because not having good education/qualifications = no good job
"they should like sort out the problem so the kids can actually focus"
Jack - KS3M
"being taken away from our parents" - negative experience
We were here and police came and took us into care, didn't really understand
Upset and scared, but went along with it - being taken into care
Grandparents went to court to have the children with them - won
Happy because "we are staying with someone you know really"
"I would rather stay here than with our parents"
"you just forget about it because it's better here than it was there"
Not being told what is going to happen
Positive treatment to take mind off things
Having someone to talk to
Changes you, does stuff to you
Not wanting to be alone
Need people to help you, be there for you
Common view that CiC - ADHD or low mental age, so high needs = need high support
Difficulties make CiC become badly behaved, cause stress - help to keep out of trouble
Bullying - failing at school
Affects you more as you get older - get more upset
Start to feel different
Become stubborn not wanting to do anything
YP who get into trouble if don't change might lead to more serious crimes - eg drugs
Poor interaction skills preventing you from getting a job
Not getting qualifications as a barrier to succeeding
Jim Bob - KS3M

Doing an extracurricular project linked with vocational aspirations - positive experience
"I don't think I have had anything negative in my life apart from my broken finger"
Talking to family to deal with difficult situations
Talking to teachers to deal with difficult situations
Talking to friends to deal with difficult situations
Being alone to deal with difficult situations
Overcame a fear of heights - expected to fail but closed his eyes and was ok
Think of school work to succeed at school
Let things go and do school work then come back to difficulties at break time
Do something that will keep you happy and satisfied
Put your differences aside to help others
Failing at school because too much on their mind
Thoughts of the past interfering at school
Having too many emotions preventing you from succeeding
Not letting things go, anger issues
Not able to get a decent job because can't deal with emotions
Thomas - KS3M
"I did like one bit of my life"
Riding bike for first time - positive experience
"everything's just gone in the world and it's just me" - riding a bike
Negative experience - "where do I start, I've got too many"
Brother going into prison as a negative experience
Fighting as a negative experience
Feeling sad and angry about brother, wanting to kill the people who put him there
Coping - sat in my room, played on playstation, just forgot about it
Identifies with having lots of difficulties and problems
Using PS2 to calm down, release stress
Talking to mum about problems to cope with difficulties
Expected to fail in education
"I failed it but then I got it back up in the end"
Good self concept of education in year 7
Getting into wrong crowds - "it went downhill", skiing
Home tuition to help regain education
Would like to go back to school
About friends - "They've probably forgot about me"
Succeeding at school - don't think about things
Don't skive, get into bad groups, go with good groups
Getting a good education to get a good job, good grades
Having lots of "stuff" on your mind - failing school
Need support – talk to someone, get your feelings out
"crack on with your work"
Problems you need to cope with stopping you when you finish school
Emily - KS4F
Going to a youth group as a positive experience
Received an award
Boosted confidence

Siblings being adopted as a negative experience
Felt angry and happy about adoption
Knows that they are better off so feels happier
Behaviour difficulties - reaction to adoption
If a problem happens you tell someone they will sort it
Go to friends for help
Go to mum for help
Expected to fail exams
Low expectations from teachers
Helped to succeed - listening in lessons, taking things seriously
Talk to people about their problems to succeed at school
Get good grades to get a job
Having problems at home – failing
Not concentrating and listening – failing
Bullying – failing
Thoughts of the past - start misbehaving, getting into trouble
Jessica - KS4F
Getting an award as a positive experience
Being away from parents as a negative experience - felt sad
Coped because had people there for her
Talking to people to cope with difficulties
Expected to fail some exams
Worked harder to succeed - revision for exams, relied on herself
Talking to people to succeed at school
Having family around you to succeed at school
Good personality to succeed later – politeness
Don't have low confidence
Teachers putting you down – failing
Friends putting out down – failing
People "back stabbing" you – failing
Confidence as a barrier to succeeding
Sophie - KS4F
"I've got loads of negative experiences"
Trouble with police, secure units
Decided to change "I just didn't like it", woke up one day, this is not good
Behaviour problems - BESD school, kicked out of primary school
Support from SW to change
Support from YOT to change
Support from school to change
Didn't really think about things at the time
Sometimes had help from friends
"I have always had to do everything myself since I was like 10"
Sometimes blocked things out
Sometimes had to just deal with things
Doing well in exams to succeed
If she had thoughts on her mind would take over, play up all day, end up being sent home

Walks into a class and someone says something to me and I just go mad at them
Jeanette - KS4F
Getting her first dog as a positive experience
Negative experience of inviting whole class to birthday party and only one person showing up
Deal with situations calmly, but be a bit mad, but get over it
Get over being mad by distraction - scribbling on piece of paper
When she was with her mum would throw stuff in her room to deal with things
Expected would fail like the others in controlling a canoe
Relied on her skills to control canoe and on instructor
Ignore the past and let it fade away so it can't hurt you - to succeed at school
Try to get on with your studies
Try to aim high so that you can get a good family and house
Fail at school because insecure - feel the whole world hates them
Bullying themselves about things
Low self esteem as a barrier to succeed
Not having the confidence to do job interviews and answer difficult questions
Don't have the confidence to stand up to people and talk about things in their life
Oliver - KS4M
Going to school as a positive experience
Getting education and getting further
Doesn't think about difficult situations - just does what he needs to do
He expected to fail in school tests
Thought he had failed because he didn't revise but remembered some and got through it
Relied on his brain
Thinking positively to succeed at school and not letting anything get you down
Doing something you are interested in or good at after you finish school
Fail at school because their mind is elsewhere
They might be thinking about parents, family - a lot of things
Harry - KS4M
Cooking as a positive experience - makes me happier
Negative experience - "when something goes wrong at school"
Gets angry when things go wrong, walks out of lessons
Seeking help from authority – police
In care because of step-father, got police involved and they sorted it out
Expected to fail in exam
Succeeded in exam because he did more revision
Having supportive foster carers to succeed in school
Get help to find a job if they got bad grades
Messing about in school – failing
Not getting good grades preventing you from getting a good job
The Invincible - KS4M
Work experience as a positive experience
Bereavement – loss of parents and nan - didn't cope very well
Wanted to be alone to cope - relied on himself
Support at school - bereavement counselling

Expected to fail ICT because missed a lot of classes during work experience
Stayed back after school to do extra work to catch up on ICT
"and I thought I would fail but I didn't" - sounded proud "I think I got a C or something"
Having confidence helped to succeed
"cause you sit there and just do it"
Going to college to get qualifications to help you get a job
Not doing your work, you get behind and harder to catch up - failing school
Not doing your work because a problem hits them and they walk out of lessons
Missing parts of lessons that are crucial to GCSE's
Not going to college - barrier to succeeding
Credit crunch - people don't want to employ YP
Employers want employees with qualifications
Joshua - KS4M
School outing as a positive experience
Outing helped him to learn more about what he wants to do in the future
Hit with a golf club as a negative experience
Being bullied at school
Thinking about the situation - bullying
Ignored the bullying - helped
Realised that getting angry wouldn't help solve the situation
He expected to fail an exam - but was top in class
Negative self belief in science exam
"I think I worked harder for it"
"I wasn't very optimistic about myself when it comes to exams and that"
"I used to think I'm going to fail so there's no point even trying"
Try to forget about bad problems at home to succeed at school
They might lose their concentration because they keep thinking about bad problems
Try to find friends to help
Problems at home - failing
Kids at school - failing
Thinking the work is too hard so they don't try - failing
Peer pressure barrier to success
Not bothering because of problems, hopelessness, - barrier to success
Becoming emotional, suicide - barrier to success
Charlie - Post16M
Going into care as a positive experience
Didn't want to go into care
"it changed the way my life was and changed who I am"
"I like who I am now and I wouldn't have been this way if I didn't go into foster care"
Going into care negative experience - "it was really bad, it was horrible"
"you just want to come home all the time" - coming home, not really settled
Questioning the actions of social services
SS could have been helping someone else
Bad experience to go through when you didn't need to
You get used to it, everything was ok while I was in care, it was just like living at home

Felt coming home was the ultimate reward
Wanted to be with siblings but eventually was separated from them
I don't know how I deal with difficult situations, you just take it and carry on/move on
Living on the estates and everyone expects you to fail
"I'm going to prove them wrong and succeed in what I want"
Got kicked out of school
Went back to school and started college - didn't want to be what you are expected to be
Stopped doing things I shouldn't do
Stopped hanging around with the wrong people
Expectations of others - I changed to be what I should and wanted to be
Turning point - getting a bit of sense, maturity
everyone tells you but you don't pay attention when you're in school
think about everything you do, take a couple of minutes to make a decision about something
think about what you can actually achieve
if you want something, don't be lazy, go out of your way to sort it out for yourself
its important for people to support you but you can't rely on other people
can only rely on family or people you are really close to
shouldn't rely on friends
shouldn't rely on people you don't really know
when something bad happens, it stops you, get behind, hard to catch up
it could happen to anybody, not just someone who had a tough life
if you want to succeed and you actually try you'll succeed
you need to believe in yourself
stay in school - education is free
don't worry about what other people think
stay strong
concentrate really hard on what you want to do
Chloe - Post16F
Working as a positive experience
Something to do that I liked - working
Falling out with people as a negative experience - poor relationships/interactions?
"I just stay calm now. I just don't speak then they know I'm not happy"
Apathy about situation, "don't bother me really, as long as they know I'm angry with them"
Difficult situation - "just get on with it"
Talking to people to deal with difficult situations
Family expected her to fail in everything when she was little
Took awhile to overcome, but with help was able to
support from foster carer
Individual help at school to succeed
Everyone to support them to succeed in getting a job etc
Failing at school because not attending
Not attending school because lost all hope
Life in general stopping them from doing well
Not doing qualifications as a barrier to succeed

Not thinking their good enough as a barrier to succeed
Daniel - Post16M
foster carers - supportive, advice
moving to current foster placement as a positive experience
not getting along with mum, arguing
negative effect on health because of issues with mum
placement - turned things around, helped him, got himself back on track
doesn't talk to mum now
big argument with mum that led to going into care - negative experience
dealing with difficult situations - turning to others around me and asking for help
mum expected him to fail school and end up in "juve" - but went to college, going back
"I remember thinking that I wouldn't be able to turn my life around but I did"
Succeeded because he wanted to prove his mother wrong
Succeeded with support of current foster carers
Hard to know what will make YP succeed at school because everyone is motivated by diff things
Having peers to support you, being there for you, chat to when something goes wrong
Support from connexions to help get a job
Support from SW with getting a job
Support from foster carers in getting a job
"So you've got a lot of people helping you out, wanting you to do good for yourself"
Fail because they let things (problems) get the better of them, dwell too much
Fail - might start getting into fights with peers because they say stuff about you
Fail because lack motivation
Fail after because might get into drugs
Fail after because of unexpected pregnancies
Fail after because of friendships, unsupportive?

APPENDIX S: EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS OF THE POSITIVE STORIES

TOLD BY THE YOUNG PEOPLE

Charlie	<p>In some ways I'd say going into foster care even though I didn't want it to happen as much as I don't want it to happen I think it's a good thing in certain ways like 'cos again like it changed the way my life was and changed who I am, I don't know what I would have been like if I stayed here but I like who I am now and I wouldn't have been this way if I didn't go into foster care.</p> <p><i>Yeah, yeah</i></p> <p>So that's a good experience I suppose for some people it is, some people it ain't.</p>
Chloe	<p>Working.</p> <p><i>Yeah? Okay. And so is that like getting your first job or getting a job in general?</i></p> <p>Yeah.</p> <p><i>Yeah? And why was it positive for you?</i></p> <p>Because I had something to do that I liked.</p> <p><i>Yeah, good. Okay. And how did that make you feel?</i></p> <p>Good.</p>
Daniel	<p>Moving here.</p> <p><i>Oh, moving here, yep, OK. What sort of thoughts were going on and how were you feeling about that?</i></p> <p>Well, me and my mum were going through a bad stage because I was on another placement before I came here. But me and my mum just weren't like talking properly, arguing, blah, blah, blah. I wasn't sleeping properly and wasn't eating properly and then moved here and they pretty much just turned everything around, helped me out and that. I don't talk to my mum now but I mean I'm eating properly, I'm healthy, I'm sleeping and everything, got myself back on track and it's because of those two.</p>
Emily	<p>Going to a group called "Step" and that boosted my confidence and then I got a parascending award.</p> <p><i>Oh wow! Cool. And what did you do at Step then?</i></p> <p>We done anger management, first aid. We done loads of different courses.</p> <p><i>Yeah? And how did it make you feel when you were doing stuff?</i></p> <p>Didn't care what anyone else thought.</p>
Grace	<p>The fact I started school and it made me think positive about what I am going to grow up to be like.</p> <p><i>Yep. Okay. So when you began school did you say?</i></p> <p>Yeah.</p> <p><i>Is that primary or secondary?</i></p> <p>Secondary.</p>

	<p><i>Secondary school, okay great. So how did it make you feel when you first started then?</i></p> <p>It made me feel excited.</p>
Harry	<p>Cooking something really nice.</p> <p><i>Yes, okay, and what makes that positive? How do you feel when you are cooking something?</i></p> <p>Makes me happier.</p>
Jack	<p>I don't like that question really because you like get that in lots of stuff and it's a hard question to ask, answer even.</p>
Jeanette	<p>I think when I first got my first ever dog.</p> <p><i>Yes, when you first got your dog, and how did that come about?</i></p> <p>When I first had ferrets and they got loose and we had, our neighbours had chickens and so you can imagine the rest and then my mum, the neighbours complained to her to get rid of them, so mum got me a dog instead.</p> <p><i>Oh right. So how did it make you feel to have a dog, is that something that you really wanted?</i></p> <p>It feels like that I've got a massive responsibility on me, because it's like walking it, feeding it, bathing it (laughter) It's hard.</p>
Jessica	<p>Getting my girl's brigade badge.</p> <p><i>Your girl's brigade badge ok and how did you get that then, did you have to do something to earn that or?</i></p> <p>I had to work for it.</p> <p><i>Ok, what sort of things did you do?</i></p> <p>All different types of activities.</p> <p><i>Brilliant and how did it make you feel when you got given it then?</i></p> <p>Happy.</p>
Jim Bob	<p>Through school.</p> <p><i>Yeah?</i></p> <p>Fire, no not fire cadet. The Salamander Project</p> <p><i>The Salamander Project okay do you want to tell me a little bit about it?</i></p> <p>You go to the Fire Station for a week doing what they do and practicing for the Friday we have to do a big presentation for it.</p> <p><i>Okay, yeah.</i></p> <p>And that's it basically.</p> <p><i>Why was it a positive experience for you?</i></p> <p>Because I want to be a fireman when I am older to help me learn a little bit.</p> <p><i>Okay yeah and how did it make you feel while you were participating in the project?</i></p> <p>Happy</p>
Jim Bob Junior	<p>Actually, first going into foster care.</p> <p><i>Yeah, OK. Can you tell me a little bit about it?</i></p> <p>Well, having like an almost proper family was something to feel happy about, it just like made me feel normal and I'm not</p>

	<p>like put aside like, well, I hate to say it but most foster families. I'm like part of the central family almost.</p> <p><i>Yeah?</i></p> <p>Yeah.</p> <p><i>That's good. And so how does it make you feel then to have that?</i></p> <p>It just makes me feel happy.</p>
Joshua	<p>I'd say, I'd say. Well going to Twickenham in Year 10 when I was at school that was good.</p> <p><i>Going to where?</i></p> <p>Twickenham in London in Year 10 with the school. It sort of helped me understand the sort of like, you know, rules of playing certain sports and that so ... And before I sort of, before that in Year 7/8 at school I didn't really sort of know how to play a different variety of sports but this sort of ... All of its helped me so ...</p> <p><i>Brilliant. And how did it make you feel? When you were there and ...</i></p> <p>Oh it was absolutely amazing!</p> <p><i>Yeah?</i></p> <p>Actually it was electric, it was buzzing. You couldn't really hear yourself think cos they was just so many people there. There was about 40 odd thousand there. It'd didn't look it, really didn't look like it.</p> <p><i>Yeah. Brilliant. That sounds amazing.</i></p> <p>Yeah it was.</p>
Oliver	<p>Going to school.</p> <p><i>Going to school? Yeah...</i></p> <p>Yeah, getting education and getting furtherer.</p> <p><i>Yeah? So you feel positive when you're at school and when you're learning? Yeah?</i></p> <p>Yes.</p>
Olivia	<p>When I got really good levels in all my subjects and I started improving and went up in higher sets.</p> <p><i>Good. And how did that make you feel.</i></p> <p>It made me feel proud because I knew that I was improving.</p>
Petal	<p>I'll have to think.</p> <p><i>That's okay. Take your time.</i></p> <p>I think it's when me, my mum and dad and I think it was my two brothers and my sister went to the Weston-super-mare and just sat on the beach. And my dad went off. He only went into the changing rooms, didn't he? Put on a gorilla suit, came back right. And then he patted me on the back. I looked back and I screamed and rang into the water. I just remember that because it was so funny. But now unfortunately he died. I still feel very sad, but there we go.</p> <p><i>Yeah, no. And that's something that you ...</i></p> <p>Yeah, I always remember.</p>
Ruby	<p><i>Okay, can you describe a positive experience or a positive</i></p>

	<p><i>memory that you have had in your life, and just tell me a little bit about it.</i></p> <p>(Laughter).</p> <p><i>Just something positive that comes to your mind or something that makes you feel happy or, can you think of anything? It could even be something that's happened today that made you happy?</i></p> <p>Nothing really happened today (Laughter).</p> <p><i>Just an average day,</i></p> <p>Yeah, more boring day.</p>
Sophie	<p>I don't know.</p> <p><i>No? Is there anything that pops into your head that makes you smile or something that makes you happy?</i></p> <p>I don't think so, I don't know.</p>
The Invincible	<p>Well I did like landscape gardening with my school, like on work experience. I got to use petrol mowers and stuff.</p> <p><i>You got to use what, sorry?</i></p> <p>Petrol lawn mowers.</p> <p><i>Petrol lawn mowers. Oh right wow!</i></p> <p>And petrol trimmers, petrol hedge cutters.</p> <p><i>Yeah?</i></p> <p>And I got to use their rotavator, a wacka plate, and a sit and ride lawn mower tractor thing.</p> <p><i>Oh I see. So was that with like a local company around here or...</i></p> <p>*** Landscaping.</p> <p><i>Yeah. Yes.</i></p> <p>Which is a local business.</p> <p><i>Did the school organise that or did you look out for it and ...</i></p> <p>They organised it, yeah.</p> <p><i>Brilliant. So how did it make you feel then, when you were doing all that stuff?</i></p> <p>Okay. When I got to the sit and ride mower it was so cool.</p> <p><i>Yeah, yeah.</i></p> <p>Sit on there with the music and just cut the grass.</p>
Thomas	<p>I did like one bit of my life. The first time I rode a bike.</p> <p><i>Yes, the first time you rode a bike. Tell me about it.</i></p> <p>Bit positive, some of its positive and some of its negative.</p> <p><i>Yes.</i></p> <p>First time I rode a bike, it's like and it just felt like everything's just gone in the world and it's just me. I was so happy and then all of a sudden I went down a little ramp, went down the road and went boom right into a car.</p> <p><i>Oh no.</i></p> <p>My head was like that.</p> <p><i>Oh goodness. Goodness me.</i></p> <p>But I'm fine now; I know how to ride a bike.</p>

APPENDIX T: EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS OF THE NEGATIVE STORIES

TOLD BY THE YOUNG PEOPLE

<p>Charlie</p>	<p>Going into care again it was really bad, it was horrible, at the time it was like I dunno you just want to cry all the time and you just want to come home all the time depending on who you are again, some people like need to be in care and stuff but I think like the Social Services need to think more about who needs to go into care like they need to concentrate more on who needs help and who doesn't because we really didn't and the State put us into care anyway yeah and we didn't really need to and they could have been helping somebody else who needed to so it is just bad experience really for us like to go through all that when you don't need to.</p> <p><i>Yep, yep and so you said that was the experience itself what was the outcome, what happened after that then?</i></p> <p>You just get used to it and stuff and then everything was okay while I was in care it is just like living at home and then the outcome was we got to come home which was like the ultimate reward at the end of it.</p> <p><i>Yeah, yeah and when it first happened, when you were first put into care what was your reaction and how did you react to the situation?</i></p> <p>I dunno I just cried a lot and I wanted to stay with my brothers and i was allowed with two of my brothers for a while and then I got moved and then they got moved and then things were weird again 'cos we was all separated like fully apart.</p>
<p>Chloe</p>	<p>Well, its always happening, like falling out with people.</p> <p><i>Yeah? Okay, okay. And so what's usually the outcome then when you fall out?</i></p> <p>We just don't speak.</p> <p><i>Yeah. And how do you react to the situation. What sort of things do you do to react to it?</i></p> <p>I just stay calm now. I just don't speak then they know that I'm not happy.</p> <p><i>Yeah, yeah. Okay. And how does it make you feel?</i></p> <p>Just, don't really bother me really, as long as they know that I'm angry with them.</p>
<p>Daniel</p>	<p>Probably when I had a big bust up with my mum to go into foster care. It wasn't the best feeling in the world. Felt hurt. That's pretty much it really, just felt hurt, went into foster care.</p>
<p>Emily</p>	<p>When my brother and sister got adopted. And I didn't want them to.</p> <p><i>Okay. What sort of things were you feeling at the time?</i></p> <p>Angry and a bit happy.</p> <p><i>Yeah? And the outcome I guess was they were adopted and what's happened since then?</i></p>

	<p>They've been writing to me and I know that, now I know that they're getting on all right. It's made me happier.</p> <p><i>Yeah? Okay. But at the time what sort of things – how did you react against the situation. Did you do anything or...?</i></p> <p>I kept saying to my social worker that I didn't want them to. And my behaviour just went, you know.</p>
Grace	<p>The negative thing was that I never really got on with other people in my school and the outcome is that I went to speak them and because I wasn't actually, wasn't actually confident in myself, and I made really nice friends.</p> <p><i>Brilliant. That's a good outcome then, yeah. Okay. So how do you feel about it now, thinking back about it?</i></p> <p>I feel happy that I have made that move sort of thing.</p>
Harry	<p>When something goes wrong at school.</p> <p><i>Yes, okay, and how does that make you feel?</i></p> <p>Angry.</p> <p><i>Yes and what's usually the outcome? What usually happens when something goes wrong?</i></p> <p>I just walk out the class sometimes.</p>
Jack	<p>Like when we first got taken away from our parents, that wasn't too nice because we didn't have a clue what was happening really because we were like just at home and then the police, well they were here staying for the night and the police came and we just got taken to a foster care and we didn't know why and then everything and we were too young to understand really, so that's not very nice.</p> <p><i>No, no. And how did you react to the situation? What was your reaction at the time?</i></p> <p>Just went along with it. A bit upset though and scared.</p> <p><i>Yeah, yeah. How old were you at the time?</i></p> <p>About five or six.</p> <p><i>Yeah and then so you went to a foster placement then and then what was the outcome after that, what happened after that?</i></p> <p>I think Grandma Henry they start, they went, they started going to court a lot and stuff to debate if we could come and live here with them and that's what happened after that.</p> <p><i>Oh ok.</i></p> <p>Because we were allowed so we come and stay, came and stay here.</p> <p><i>Yeah ok. So were you happier about that situation then?</i></p> <p>Well yeah because we are staying with someone you know really and well yeah.</p>
Jeanette	<p>My thirteenth. I invited my whole class but no one arrived, it was just like one person, so it was quite upsetting.</p> <p><i>Yes, and then how did that make you sort of feel then, the fact that you had invited them?</i></p> <p>Really upset, because like if you invited someone at least try to come or ring or say why you can't come and that.</p> <p><i>Yes, absolutely and how did you react, what happened then,</i></p>

	<p><i>did you just continue with...?</i> I didn't continue we just like shut down and closed and went back home.</p>
Jessica	<p>Being away from my parents. <i>Yep ok and how did that make you feel at the time?</i> Sad. <i>Sad yeah and how were you able to cope with that?</i> Because I had people there for me. <i>You had people helping you yep and at the time how did you react to the situation?</i> I don't know.</p>
Jim Bob	<p>I don't think I have had anything negative in my life apart from my broken finger</p>
Jim Bob Junior	<p>That no one really like understood me and my past. When I went to school everyone used to like ignore me or just bully me but it's not really that bad anymore but that was my negative experience, yeah, no one really understood me. <i>And how did you react to the situation or how did you react to having that negativity?</i> Well, I became quite feisty almost. I kept on fighting kids at school whenever they called me 'goofy' or something and I became very violent, yeah. <i>Ok, and so what was the outcome then, did then you become fostered, was that the ultimate outcome or did something happen before that?</i> I think something happened, well I sort of like become feisty when my sister who had worse anger problems than me, she threw a brick at a boy and that sort of like made me realise not to like hit people, it was not really worth it but yeah, something else happened that made me go into foster care.</p>
Joshua	<p>Well I got hit with a golf club when I was nine years old. Had a scar there for ages. And when it happened I thought I was going to go blind in one eye for a minute. But I was lucky so. And it sort of, I just felt like so much pain when it happened. Then when I left the hospital on the way back home I sort of wasn't feeling too good. And I was sick in a drain cos of the shock so. It wasn't a nice experience at all.</p>
Oliver	<p>Nothing.</p>
Olivia	<p>I don't know really.</p>
Petal	<p>Um, let me think. <i>Go ahead.</i> Oh it's when, no, no, no. Oh yeah it's when I had a great day at school and I came back home. And my mum was sat down and she told us to sit down and I wouldn't sit down? So she just said it anyway. She goes, "Do you know those stars?". I goes "Yeah" and I started laughing. And... <i>Do you know what?</i> Those stars,</p>

	<p><i>Stars, okay.</i></p> <p>Yeah. And I goes “Yeah” and I started laughing But I don’t know why. And then she goes “Well the angels have come down to get dad”. And I started crying. And I thought, “Oh it’s not a funny thing to laugh at”. I thought if I had just listened it would have been a lot easier for mum to say. But I just can’t, I just always can remember that day.</p> <p><i>Yeah. Okay. And what happened after that then?</i></p> <p>I started crying. The family came around because they heard right. Gave me a cuddle. Went to bed the next day and the next day we went to see him.</p>
Ruby	<p>What like absolutely hated?</p> <p><i>Yeah if you want, if you want to share it</i></p> <p>I pretty much hated moving away from my mum when I was like 7, pretty much.</p> <p><i>Yeah, and how did it make you feel, what sort of things did you feel at the time?</i></p> <p>I knew what she’d done but I was like why take us away just because she’d done that to one person.</p> <p><i>Yeah?</i></p> <p>Yeah, why didn’t they just take that one away?</p> <p><i>Yep, yep.</i></p> <p>They took all six of us away.</p> <p><i>Okay.</i></p> <p>Mum’s had seven kids now (laughter).</p> <p><i>Okay so she’s had another child after you?</i></p> <p>Yeah.</p> <p><i>Okay and so what was the outcome then? So what sort of happened then afterwards?</i></p> <p>What after we moved?</p> <p><i>Yeah.</i></p> <p>First we went to our aunty for about half a year, then we came here.</p> <p><i>Okay.</i></p> <p>Only three, there’s me and my older brother and my older sister here.</p> <p><i>Okay and how do you feel about the situation now then?</i></p> <p>I feel alright with it, I don’t mind being without my mum, I know what she did was bad, so I don’t really care (laughter).</p>
Sophie	<p>I’ve got loads of negative experiences.</p> <p><i>Yeah, anything you would share?</i></p> <p>Yeah. Like I’ve been to like secure units, that is negative. Like been in loads of trouble with the police and things like that.</p> <p><i>Yep and what, what I guess happens during those experiences, how did that make you feel and what sort of things did you I guess learn from and?</i></p> <p>I don’t know.</p> <p><i>At the time, how did you feel for example when you went into the secure unit?</i></p>

	<p>I don't know, sad. <i>And what was the outcome of these experiences, what happened? Did you sort of look back and think that you had changed or how did you?</i> Yeah, yeah. When I went I wanted to change. <i>Yep, and so what sort of things made you want to change then?</i> I don't know, I just, I just didn't like it. <i>Didn't like the person that you had become maybe or?</i> Yeah, yeah. <i>Did you sort of look at the things that you had done and think that you wanted to do something better?</i> Yeah. <i>At what point did you sort of realise that this wasn't what you wanted to be?</i> Not even that long ago about six months ago. <i>Six months ago. Was there any particular thing that happened six months ago that you thought?</i> I don't know, I don't know I just think I woke up one day like, this is not good.</p>
The Invincible	Can't even think of one now.
Thomas	<p>[laughter] Where do I start, I've got too many. Yes. Yes. Like my brother going into prison and nearly getting beaten up. Fights and all that. I've got too many. <i>Too many. Okay let's focus on the first one that you said.</i> Like my brother going in prison. <i>Yes, okay. So how did it make you feel at the time?</i> Sad, angry, wanted to go and kill the people who put him in there. <i>And what was the outcome? What happened?</i> He went in prison and now he's just serving his time.</p>

**APPENDIX U: EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS OF HOW THE YOUNG
PEOPLE COPED IN DIFFICULT SITUATIONS**

Key Stage	Name	Coping with difficulties
Key Stage Three	Grace	<p>So thinking about some difficulties that you may have had in your life, can you describe how you have coped in a difficult situation?</p> <p>I stayed strong with my head up high and always fought for the future.</p> <p>Okay. Can you think of a situation when you were expected to fail, but managed to succeed?</p> <p>Yeah I think so. It was, I think it was in my exam papers and I thought that I would get all the questions wrong, but then I got them all right and I got a high level.</p> <p>Brilliant. So how did you, how were you able to succeed then in that situation?</p> <p>Because I worked hard and I remembered that I had, I revised very well, so that is what helped me succeed.</p>

	<p>Jim Bob Junior</p>	<p>So thinking about the difficulties you've had in your life, can you describe how you have dealt with difficult situations? I think I really just blocked them out. I don't really know, I just plod through them I think. Yeah, yeah. Is there anything in particular, like any other strategies you use, you said you block things out, any other strategies that you use to sort of get on with things? Hum a tune. OK, can you think of a situation where you were expected to fail but managed to succeed? That's a difficult one. I haven't really thought about that. I mean I'm expected to fail at loads of things but I can't remember, no, I can't remember. No, well is there anything in particular that you are quite proud about that you managed to do? I'm quite proud that I managed to stay like happy and bubbly through all of it, yeah, oh look, my brother. OK, so you managed to keep that part of your personality of being bubbly, you know, despite everything else that was going on, yeah? And how did you manage to do that? I mean, how have you maintained</p> <p>I don't know, I've just always thought that there's someone always worse off than me, there is always someone worse off than you if you think about it. And so that makes you think you know that it's OK and you can deal with it? Yeah, my friends call me an optimist. Yeah, it sounds like it. I don't really think I am one.</p>
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	Olivia	<p>So thinking about difficulties that you may have had in your life, can you describe how you have dealt with difficult situation?</p> <p>You've got this person you can go to see and if you're ever upset or if you get bullied, I've never been bullied, but if you have, you go to him and he like sorts it out and all that and you call it the LSC, it's Learning Support Centre, but they also help you out with your worries as well.</p> <p>Oh right, OK, yeah. And can you think of a situation when you were expected to fail but managed to succeed.</p> <p>In English, 'cause where I am in the top set for English, they gave me this exam and I didn't get it at all because it told you to write a story and then it had all these sets of questions and I didn't know what to do and then I found out I actually passed it even though I didn't know what to do on it.</p> <p>Brilliant, wow, that's really good. So what sort of strategies do you think you used and how do you think you succeeded then?</p> <p>'Cause what I done was that I wrote about the story and answered all the questions in the story as well.</p>
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	Petal	<p>So thinking about the difficulties that you have had in your life. Can you describe how you have dealt with difficult situations?</p> <p>I tried my best to help out with them</p> <p>Hm, Hm. Okay.</p> <p>And like if it was somebody's own problem I would just go on my own for a bit to give the person a bit of space. And then I would try to find out what was wrong and stuff so.</p> <p>Yeah. Okay. And what about how you cope with it? So that's helping other people cope with it. How do you, if you've got something what do you...</p> <p>If I've got some problems and no one's listening to me I just feel stressed. If someone says something to me, and they keep on being nasty to me and keep on bullying me. Sometimes I say I wish I was dead. Because that's how I feel. But now I'm in care right it's just all the [00:06:37] come to me and it's like no one wants to listen to me anymore. Like my social worker doesn't listen me so I just the whole morning wishing I was dead.</p> <p>It's hard. Yeah. Can you think * of a situation when you expected to fail but managed to succeed?</p> <p>Well in school, my levels are 4A and the teachers was discussing it, about that I'll get a lower level. And then actually, when I was doing it, I got a 5C.</p> <p>Oh wow!. That's fantastic. How did that you make you feel?</p> <p>It made me just feel a little bit proud and that. When I got it I was yes! And the teacher's like well done! So I was like thanks mum. I was like well pleased with it. I was like, I didn't know I was good at RE but now I actually find out I am.</p> <p>So ..</p> <p>Do you know how you managed to get such a good grade?</p> <p>Was there anything that you did to make you succeed in that situation?</p> <p>Mum said to revise. I couldn't revise because I don't want to overblow my mind. And when I got to the day I laid my head down and just relaxed for like two minutes as the teacher was speaking. I read my piece of paper and I was just whizzing away.</p>
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	Ruby	<p>So thinking about the difficulties that you may have had in your life, can you describe how you have coped in a difficult situation?</p> <p>Don't know.</p> <p>Is there anything that you can think about that has helped you to cope better with what has happened?</p> <p>Talking to people pretty much, makes me cope better cause then I know that they know all about it and they're not gonna say, take it out and tell everyone else.</p> <p>Yeah, yeah.</p> <p>'cos I feel like I'd rather I can cope if I tell people and they know about it, then just keep it all locked inside of me and not say anything, I can't cope then.</p> <p>No, that makes sense, okay can you...</p> <p>That's why I told my friends about it all and that, and they haven't spread it, I can cope with everything, I can tell them all the other stuff and then they all know and they don't spread it and they don't make fun of me because of it. I hate it when that happens.</p> <p>It's good to have supportive friends isn't it?</p> <p>I have loads of supportive friends 'cos I'm friends with like everyone, literally, most of the people in my school.</p> <p>That's good.</p> <p>Brilliant, you must be very popular then.</p> <p>I went to primary school with most of them, back in the same school as someone I knew in **primary school** actually that's the second primary school I went to.</p> <p>Okay, can you think of a situation where you were expected to fail but managed to succeed?</p> <p>No not really.</p>
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	Jack	<p>So thinking about the difficulties that you have had in your life, can you describe how you have dealt with the difficult situations?</p> <p>It's like some things they affect you more than others so like staying here that is a good thing and I, it sounds horrible but I would rather stay here than with our parents now, it would probably be a bit more different if they were different themselves, but really you just forget about it because it's better here than it was there. That helps a lot.</p> <p>Yeah, yeah and if it had been, if you were not in this situation for example if you weren't able to stay with your grandparents, if you had to stay somewhere else how do you think you would have coped then?</p> <p>I don't expect we would have been told but if we were I suspect that would have been a bit more upsetting but I expect, I don't suppose it would be as easy really.</p> <p>No? Ok can you think of a situation when you were expected to fail but managed to succeed?</p> <p>I expect so. I can't really think of one?</p> <p>No, do you want a little bit more time to think, you can think of maybe at school if there was anything at school that you were expected to fail or you know maybe thinking about your parents and how it was with them or anything like that no?</p> <p>When you say expected to fail, who do you mean by expected you?</p> <p>Anyone, it could be anyone, it could be a teacher, it could be your social worker even, it could be anybody really...</p> <p>What like even yourself or like?</p> <p>Yeah or yourself that you expected to fail but managed to succeed.</p> <p>Yeah, I expect there is a few. It's hard to remember off the top of your head though.</p> <p>Can you think of a situation where you were successful perhaps, you were maybe you weren't expected to fail but you were successful, you feel that you succeeded in that situation?</p> <p>Yeah I guess so because a few months back I built my computer, I didn't exactly expect that to work the first time I tried it but it did.</p> <p>Oh wow, like you built it from scratch?</p> <p>Well yeah, buy the stuff and put it all in.</p> <p>Oh wow, that is fantastic, that must be really hard. I don't think I could do that. So how did you succeed in that situation then?</p> <p>Because it worked, nothing wrong with it, it's still working fine at the moment.</p>
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	Jim Bob	<p>So thinking about any difficulties that you have had in your life can you describe how you have dealt with difficult situations?</p> <p>Talk to my mum, talk to Nan and Gramps sometimes and talk to my teachers.</p> <p>Okay so you feel that talking with people that you feel safe with that that helps you to...</p> <p>And my friends.</p> <p>And your friends that helps you to deal with situations by talking to them Yeah? Are there any other things that you do that help you to deal with difficult situations?</p> <p>Sit in my room a little bit.</p> <p>So just being alone helps sometimes?</p> <p>Pardon?</p> <p>Being alone sometimes helps so being in your room. Okay so sometimes talking with people, sometimes being alone, anything else that you do that helps you to cope?</p> <p>Hmmm... No.</p> <p>No? Okay. Can you think of a situation when you were expected to fail but managed to succeed?</p> <p>I don't know.</p> <p>No?</p> <p>Let me think.</p> <p>We have time so don't worry.</p> <p>Gramps have I ever succeeded at anything good?</p> <p>(Well your fire cadets is one thing).</p> <p>I know that fire cadets. And the Salamander Project because I'm scared of heights. I went up in the Alpha.</p> <p>Oh right you said that you were afraid of heights but you managed to overcome that fear yeah? How did you do that, what sort of things went through your mind to make you able to do that?</p> <p>I closed my eyes.</p> <p>You closed your eyes. What about when you opened them or did you keep them closed throughout?</p> <p>Like this.</p> <p>Just peeking a little bit?</p> <p>I can see the John Ray building.</p>
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	Thomas	<p>Thinking about the difficulties that you've had in your life, can you describe how you have dealt with difficult situations? Well if I didn't have my PS2 I would probably be stressed all the time.</p> <p>Yes.</p> <p>PS2 is about the only thing that calms me down.</p> <p>Yes. Anything else that you use, anything else that helps you to deal with it?</p> <p>Probably like talk to my mum.</p> <p>Yes.</p> <p>Yes just sitting down and talking to my mum. Talking about my problems and all that.</p> <p>Yes. Any other things that you do?</p> <p>No.</p> <p>Can you think of a situation when you were expected to fail but managed to succeed?</p> <p>Expected to fail. Probably my education.</p> <p>Okay.</p> <p>I failed it, but then I got it back up in the end. So.</p> <p>Yes, good. How did you manage to do that?</p> <p>Well in *secondary school*, it's going back a long way now, in *secondary school*.</p> <p>Go for it.</p> <p>I done my year 7, highest in my group. But then I met some, went into like a dark group and that's it went downhill.</p> <p>Skived a lot, but then went to home tuition and now my education has come back up a bit.</p>
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Key Stage Four	Emily	<p>So thinking about the difficulties that you have had in your life. Can you describe how you have dealt with difficult situations?</p> <p>Don't know.</p> <p>No? If a problem comes your way, what your initial reaction?</p> <p>Well you then go tell someone.</p> <p>Okay. Yeah. And then do you get help from them and then you are able ...</p> <p>Yeah. You get help and then they sort the situation out.</p> <p>Yeah. Okay. Is there anyone in particular that you feel that you can go to for help or is it just anyone that ...?</p> <p>My friends and my mum.</p> <p>Yeah? Okay. Can you think of a situation when you were expected to fail but managed to succeed? That could be in anything.</p> <p>My mock exams?</p> <p>Yeah, your mock exams, okay. And what happened there?</p> <p>The teacher said that I was going to get a low grade and then I got a "D".</p> <p>Cool, brilliant. And how do you think that you managed to succeed in that situation. What did you do to succeed?</p> <p>Start listening in lessons and taking things seriously.</p>
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	Jeanette	<p>So thinking about perhaps difficulties that you have had in your life, can you describe how you have dealt with difficult situations?</p> <p>Quite calmly sometimes it would be, but I'd be a bit mad but (get over it?) eventually.</p> <p>Okay, and how do you sort of get over that sort of madness that you feel mad, how do you get over that?</p> <p>Scribble on a piece of paper, or something.</p> <p>Yes, okay, is there anything else that you do to sort of be able to deal with things?</p> <p>Well when I was with my mum I like threw stuff in my room.</p> <p>Yes, just to release, yes, okay and can you think of a situation when you were expected to fail but managed to succeed?</p> <p>When I first went canoeing, no it was kayaking and I was in the kayak and everyone started tipping over, capsizing and then I thought I was going to do that as well, but then I had to control my kayak and eventually I got through.</p> <p>Yes, okay, and so how did you succeed in that situation, what did you rely on to be able...?</p> <p>I relied on myself, my hand-skills, and my instructor.</p>
	Jessica	<p>when you are confronted with a difficult situation, what sort of things do you do to overcome it or to get by it or to just get on?</p> <p>Talk to people.</p> <p>Yeah, talk to people, anything else that you do?</p> <p>Don't know. Just talk to people.</p> <p>Yeah, ok. And can you think of a situation when you were expected to fail but managed to succeed?</p> <p>On some of my exams.</p> <p>On some of your exams ok. And how were you able to succeed then even though you were expected to fail, what did you do?</p> <p>Doing more revision.</p> <p>Yeah. Can you think of things that you did to sort of you know be able to succeed at them like did you just study harder or did you go...</p> <p>I worked harder.</p> <p>Yeah, worked harder. Did you get help from others or did you just rely on yourself?</p> <p>Did it all myself.</p>

	Sophie	<p>So thinking about difficulties that you have had in your life, can you describe how you have dealt with difficult situations? I don't know.</p> <p>Are there any sort of strategies that you have used that have helped you to deal with it or? Not really, no.</p> <p>No, was there anyone in particular that you can think of that you thought they were most helpful and it doesn't even have to be an adult, it might have been like maybe you turn to your friends or? Yeah.</p> <p>Would you say that your friends were the most helpful? Yeah, a little bit at some times they weren't but.</p> <p>Did you rely a lot on yourself then? Yeah.</p> <p>And what sort of things did you sort of rely on yourself like did you? Everything really. I have always had to do everything myself since I was like ten so.</p> <p>So you just got on with things? Yeah.</p> <p>Did you have to like block things out or you just were able to think about it and move on from it? Sometimes I did just like block things out, quite often actually. But sometimes I did have to just deal with it and whatever.</p> <p>Yeah ok. Alright, can you think of a situation when you were expected to fail but managed to succeed in that situation? Is there any sort of point where someone, did someone or something sort of said no, you know you are not any good or you are not going to do this and then you have managed to overcome that? No.</p>
	Harry	<p>So thinking about difficulties that you may have had in your life, can you describe how you've dealt with difficult situations? I got the police involved with my step-dad, and they sorted it all out, and that's why I'm in here really, because of my step-dad.</p> <p>Okay, can you think of a situation when you were expected to fail but managed to succeed? My exam.</p> <p>Yes, and what do you think helped you to succeed in that situation? More revision.</p> <p>Yes, so you think that it was effort you put in that helped you? Yes.</p>

	The Invincible	<p>Can you describe how you have dealt with difficult situations?</p> <p>Well when I lost my parents, obviously. And my gran, like recently. I didn't cope very well.</p> <p>No? How do you react to the situation to begin with?</p> <p>Not very (hu...ly?). I just wanted to be on my own.</p> <p>Yeah? You just wanted to be on your own so you sort of relied on yourself to get through it?</p> <p>Yeah.</p> <p>And then as time sort of passed did you learn to cope in other ways or you just relied on yourself?</p> <p>Just rely on myself. At school I had bereavement counselling and stuff to help me. That helped a little.</p> <p>That helped a little? Yeah? Okay. All right now I'd like you to think. Can you think of a situation when you were expected to fail but managed to succeed?</p> <p>ICT at school.</p> <p>ICT, yeah. All right tell me a little bit about that then.</p> <p>Where I was doing me work experience obviously we had a double ICT lesson on the Friday. And where I weren't in I missed out a lot of my work. So on a Wednesday at like evening, I stayed at school and did some. And like I missed a couple of weeks of it and stuff. And I thought I would fail but I didn't.</p> <p>You didn't! Fantastic.</p> <p>I think I got "C" or something.</p> <p>Oh wow! Brilliant! That's really good. So, I mean, how did you manage to succeed then. You said that you stayed back a bit and did some work. So was it just like the extra effort that you made that?</p> <p>Yeah.</p> <p>Yeah. Anything else that helped you to succeed?</p> <p>My confidence.</p> <p>Your confidence? Good.</p> <p>Cos you sit there and just do it.</p>
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	Joshua	<p>Can you describe how you have dealt with difficult situations? Well at school I was getting bullied a lot and I sort of, I used to let it get to me. But then I sort of thought, I thought “No, that’s not right. I’m not doing it right”. So I just sort of ignored what they were doing and then I sort of changed the way that I sort of went about it, so. And that helped. Took a while but it was worth it.</p> <p>Yeah, okay. So what sort of things then can you remember that you did to them?</p> <p>I don’t know. I was just sort of thinking, I was just thinking well, I was thinking to myself “What’s the right thing to do?” Not just sort of ignore it and let it be or just, you know, just go mad, go mad with rage. And I thought, I thought “Getting angry is not going to get anywhere” So I just sort of, I just thought “No, I’m just going to ignore it and see what happens”. And it worked so ...</p> <p>Brilliant. Oh well done. Okay can you think of a situation when you were expected to fail but managed to succeed?</p> <p>One of my science practice exams at school. I thought I was going to do so badly in it and I ended up getting top in class. Wow!</p> <p>I got the best in the class and I was like really pleased. I thought, I kept asking around the class to see what everybody got. And I thought “Hopefully I got the best score in the class”. And I did so...</p> <p>So you said that you thought you were going to fail it. How did you manage to succeed then. What did you think, what can you attribute it to?</p> <p>I dunno.</p> <p>Had you worked harder for it? Or studied or?</p> <p>Dunno. I just sort of . I think I worked hard for it really.</p> <p>Yeah? But you still thought that you wouldn’t do well? Yeah [laughter]?</p> <p>Yeah. I wasn’t very sort of optimistic about myself when it comes to exams and that. I used to think I’m going to fail so there’s no point even trying.</p> <p>Right.</p> <p>But sometimes I do and sometimes I don’t so. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn’t but that’s life.</p>
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	Oliver	<p>Thinking about the difficulties that you may have had in your life. Can you describe how you have dealt with difficult situations?</p> <p>Don't think about it really.</p> <p>You don't think about it?</p> <p>No</p> <p>Just have your ...</p> <p>Do what I've got to do.</p> <p>Do what you have to do. Yeah. Okay. Can you think of a situation when you were expected to fail but managed to succeed?</p> <p>School test.</p> <p>Yeah? In a school test yeah?</p> <p>I thought I was going to fail because I didn't revise but I remembered some of it and I got through it. So.</p> <p>Yeah, brilliant. That's really good. So how do you think you succeeded then in that instant? What did you rely on?</p> <p>I relied on my brain.</p>
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Post 16	Chloe	<p>So thinking about difficulties that you may have had in your life, can you describe how you have dealt with difficult situations?</p> <p>Just get on with it [laughter].</p> <p>Yeah. And how so? What sort of strategies or things do you use to just, you know, overcome it.</p> <p>Talk to people.</p> <p>Yeah. Can you think of a situation when you were expected to fail but managed to succeed?</p> <p>When I was little.</p> <p>Yeah? How so?</p> <p>About nine or ten.</p> <p>Okay and what was the situation. What were you expected to fail at?</p> <p>Everything so ...</p> <p>And so who had that expectation?</p> <p>What with me to do good?</p> <p>No, who sort of expected you to fail.</p> <p>My family.</p> <p>Your family, yeah. And did that, how did you sort of overcome that to become, to get to where you are now.</p> <p>Oh it took me a while.</p> <p>Was it sort of something that you were able to work out yourself or did you use other things.</p> <p>No I had help.</p> <p>Yeah?</p> <p>Yeah.</p> <p>Who sort of helped you then along the way?</p> <p>**foster mother**</p>
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	Charlie	<p>so thinking about the difficulties that you've had in your life can you describe how you have dealt with difficult situations? You just take it don't you, I dunno it is hard to explain I don't ever really deal with any difficult situations like but obviously I've had difficult situations but I don't know how I deal with it you just take it and carry on.</p> <p>Yeah, yeah.</p> <p>And then you feel better or worse or whatever.</p> <p>But in a way that's coping with it isn't it just by accepting it and moving on?</p> <p>Yeah, yeah that's like yeah I did I suppose that's my way of just taking it on the chin and just move on thats how i cope with it</p> <p>Yep, okay can you think of a situation when you were expected to fail but managed to succeed? It could come from school or from home or any situation really.</p> <p>I dunno, ain't got a clue, that's basically I feel like because I dunno that hasn't really happened to me yet but on the big scale I can say like my life, like the way my life has been since I was like being a kid living on estates and learning to kind of think like that like everybody sort of expects you to fail and I'm going to prove them wrong and succeed in what I want so that's like the only reason thing I can say it is the only thing I know of</p> <p>Yeah and how do you succeed, what do you do?</p> <p>Well I got kicked out of school and then I decided that I didn't want be just what you are expected to be I wanted to be different so I went back to school and start college and stopped like doing things I shouldn't and stopped hanging round with people that were just the wrong people to hang around with just whatever i don't know anything that anybody expected me to do anything like that like was expected of me because if the way people see me and see what might they presume that that's the way I am I just sort of changed to be what I should be and what I wanted to be truely.</p> <p>Yeah, yeah and what was the turning point for you do you think?</p> <p>Getting a bit of sense, getting a bit older and realising just that's it really just getting a big mature or something and realising that it is not going to turn out alright and you're just going to turn out in a mess if you don't sort it out now.</p>
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	Daniel	<p>Thinking about difficulties that you've had in your life, can you describe how you've dealt with a difficult situation? Just turning to others around me and asking for help. Can you think of a situation when you were expected to fail but managed to succeed? Once in my exams but I failed in them. Not that I know of, no. I think my mum, she expected me just to not actually be able to make it through school in itself, just end up in juve or whatever. I mean I went all the way through school, I did go to college, I'm going back to college and doing little jobs, giving myself thingy and that. Looking more healthy and all that. Probably that one my mum thinking that I wouldn't be able to turn my life around but I did. So, how did you manage to do it then. How did you manage to succeed. Was there any</p> <p>Because I wanted to prove her wrong and with the help of **foster father** and **foster mother** which helped out quite a lot.</p>
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APPENDIX V: EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS OF THE FACTORS

MEDIATING GOOD EDUCATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL OUTCOMES

Key Stage	Name	Factors that contribute to good educational and vocational outcomes
Key Stage Three	Grace	<p>Thinking in general about young people who have tough lives, what do you think might help them to succeed at school? To always think ahead sort of thing and like always, never think awh that's what bad happened in my life and you shouldn't do this, you shouldn't do that, that's what happened to me sort of thing. So. Yeah. What do you think might help them to get a job when they finish school? Just to keep revising and like do hard on the tests sort of thing, if you get tests.</p>
	Jim Bob Junior	<p>Thinking in general now, so not specifically about you but about young people who have tough lives, what do you think might help them to succeed at school? I think if they buckle down and just enjoy the work even if it's the worst lesson ever. I think what the teachers need to do also with some children with like hard backgrounds, they need to make the lesson fun so that actually like they can remember it, having a good laugh about a lesson. Yeah, great and what do you think might help them to get a job when they finish school if they've had a tough life? If you just put it all behind you, not everyone's going to be like the person or whatever you had wrong with you, you just need to put it all behind you because you don't need to keep on dwelling on things. You get a job, like say for a bank worker, you have to be polite and smiling unless you have a really tough customer then you have to be fierce.</p>

	Olivia	<p>Thinking in general now about young people who have had tough lives, OK, what do you think might help them to succeed at school?</p> <p>By asking for help on a subject that they can't do and by doing that and say if they didn't know what something meant in maths or anything like that, you'd put your hand up and then they explain and then next time you do it you know what to do and then you might end up improving or something.</p> <p>Yep, absolutely. And what do you think might help them to get a job when they finish school, if they've had a tough life, what do you think might help them? Not sure? That's alright.</p>
	Petal	<p>Thinking in general now about young people who have tough lives. Okay? What do you think might help them to succeed at school?</p> <p>If like someone just goes around their house. Say if there was a daughter looking after a mum when it should be the mum looking after the daughter. Not like phoning the social service. A woman come out just to look after their mum while the girl is at school and stuff. So she can take the mind off her mum, or something. Just like that. Just like a person coming around. Not saying like "Oh, she's going into care".</p> <p>Otherwise the girl or boy wouldn't ring up would they?</p> <p>Yeah, yeah. Absolutely.</p> <p>Encouragement as well.</p> <p>Yeah. Good. What do you think might help them to get a job when they've finished school? A person who has a tough life? What might help them?</p> <p>Well they might not have a lot of money. So if the government would like pay. And so they can go to Uni or college. And then see what they want to do there.</p> <p>Yeah.</p> <p>And like you would be like some people like saying like "Oh this is a good job because this is", "You shouldn't really do this job in a way because..". And give them just choices about how to go in life.</p>

	Ruby	<p>Thinking in general about young people who have tough lives...</p> <p>Like me? (laughs).</p> <p>Yeah, what do you think might help them to succeed at school?</p> <p>Could tell the teacher about it and [06:56] then they know all about it. 'cos that's what I do, 'cos if like the teachers don't know anything, then they can say well that happened and that happened and all that and tell everybody, make sure they know so then they're not saying stuff and all that.</p> <p>Yeah, that sounds like a good idea.</p> <p>'cos that's what I did I always make sure one of the teachers at school know about it so then if like everyone made fun of me about then all I need to do is go to the teacher that knows and then they can sort it out</p> <p>Yeah, absolutely. What do you think might help a person who has had a tough life get a job when they finish school?</p> <p>I don't know.</p>
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	Jack	<p>Thinking now in general ok about young people who have tough lives alright, what do you think might help them to succeed at school? What sort of things might help them to do well?</p> <p>Probably having, what do you mean something to make them feel a bit more positive?</p> <p>It could be yeah, if that is something that you think will help them.</p> <p>It's like, I know it sounds like as if kind of like not exactly spoiling them but treating them a bit more, to take their mind off of it and making sure there is someone to talk to and that because like I probably could say that it's like sometimes when that happens, it it does change you a bit doesn't it, you know it does stuff to you and it makes you kind of think like stuff like you don't really want to be alone on your own ever and stuff like that, so it's just making sure that there is like someone there like to help you but whenever anyone says to me like saying like we are always here for you, that kind of makes me angry in a way because it's like it's a bit obvious really, but it does help and even if you don't realise it.</p> <p>Do you think it makes you angry because it's obvious or because it's it's like a promise that maybe you make but it's not always possible to keep?</p> <p>No it's just because it's a bit obvious and it always gets said really.</p> <p>Yeah, yeah, yeah. Ok good. Ok now thinking about how they might do after they finish school, this is people who have tough lives, what do you think might help them to succeed in getting a job later on? What do you think they will need?</p> <p>I know there is like a stereotypical kind of thinking about like you see a lot of programmes and like most kids that go into foster have ADHD because their parents didn't want to know about them or they have some sort of you know like a mental age like that is a lot younger than theirs and so their parents don't want to keep them because they know they will be a bit of trouble and also that because they have been put into foster they start being neglectful don't they and like badly behaved because there is a lot of stress and stuff on all people so, it's just really trying to keep people out of trouble isn't it.</p> <p>Yeah, yeah absolutely. So that they don't go down those bad paths.</p> <p>Yeah, that's it.</p>
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	Jim Bob	<p>What do you think might help them to succeed at school? Think of school work. Think of school work okay. Anything else that might help them to succeed? Let it go for a little bit and then do school work and come back to it at break time or something. Okay so sometimes just leaving it and then coming back to it at another time? Anything else that might help them to succeed? Do something to keep you happy and satisfied. Yeah good one. Anything else? No? Okay. What do you think might help them to get a job when they finish school? What sort of things do you think might help them to succeed after they finish? Putting their differences to the side to help other people.</p>
	Thomas	<p>What do you think might help them to succeed at school? Just don't think, just don't think about anything. Just don't skive and all that. If you get into like bad groups just say no I'm not hanging around with you. Go and mix with another group, a good group. Yes. Just don't mix in bad groups like I did. Yes. Yes. And what do you think might help them to get a job when they finish school? Get a good education and all that. Get good grades. Don't be like me. 2 C's, in year 8 I got 2 C, in science I got 7 C in year 7. So get good grades, stay in school and be good. Okay. Best way to do it.</p>
Key Stage Four	Emily	<p>What do you think might help them to succeed at school? Don't know. No? Well that's all right. Is there anything that you think that might help them if they've got tough lives. What do you think might help? Speak to someone and explain their problems. And what about – what do you think might help them to get a job when they've finished school? What sort of things do you think they need to do to get a job after? Get good grades.</p>

	Jeanette	<p>What do you think might help them to succeed at school? Just try and ignore what happened because the past is the past, just leave it alone, and if the past keeps coming back at you then it's just going to hurt more, so just ignore it, and allow it to fade away and just try to get on with your studies.</p> <p>Yes, good advice. What do you think might help them to get a job when they've finished school? Google something, or write a CV for a particular career, and try and aim for the high ones, so then you can get a good family and house and all that.</p>
	Jessica	<p>What do you think might help them to succeed at school? Talking to people.</p> <p>Yeah, anything else that you think might help them? Having friends around you.</p> <p>Yeah, so having friends helps. Brilliant ok, now what do you think might help them to get a job when they have finished school so after they have left school and they are out in world. Have a good personality, don't have a low confidence.</p> <p>Yep, good ok so personality and confidence, brilliant ok.</p> <p>Anything else that you can think of? No. Politeness.</p>

	Sophie	<p>Thinking in general now, so not specifically to yourself about young people who have tough lives, what do you think might help them to succeed at school?</p> <p>I don't know.</p> <p>No, is there anything that you can remember that helped you to get through your schooling?</p> <p>I don't know, I just went.</p> <p>So you relied more on yourself?</p> <p>Yeah.</p> <p>So what sort of things did you do then to keep going at school that would help another person?</p> <p>I don't know.</p> <p>Ok, that is fine. Can you think of anything that might help a person who has had a tough life get a job when they finish school, what sort of advice would you give them?</p> <p>I don't know, because I have never had a job, but I don't know.</p> <p>No, but what do you think they would need in order to be able to either get a job or to guess to succeed once they have finished school, it could be even to go onto college or to go onto something else, what do you think they would?</p> <p>Exams and that innit?</p> <p>So to work hard for their exams do you think, yeah?</p> <p>Yeah.</p> <p>A lot of young people I have spoken to have said that you know when they tried to work hard and things they might like get memories of things that have happened to them and then that sort of prevents them I guess from being able to work and stuff so what sort of, I mean does that ever happen to you and did you know how you were able to react to that?</p> <p>No, I just I don't know like I just, if I was I don't know, I just didn't do it like because if I was thinking about something else like, it's constantly on my mind so like if I went into school with on my mind then I would just play up all day, like I would end up getting like sent home and that.</p>
	Harry	<p>Okay, thinking in general about young people who have tough lives, what do you think might help them to succeed at school?</p> <p>Like if they're at a new carers and that, and they're really helpful, they help you more to succeed better.</p> <p>Yes, and what do you think might help a person who has a tough life to get a job when they've finished school?</p> <p>Ask somebody to help them, like if you had bad grades, to help them to find somewhere to go to do work.</p>

	The Invincible	<p>What do you think might help them to succeed at school? Not sure. Not sure? No? Can you think of anything that might help them to get a job when they finish school if they've had a tough life. What sort of ... Going to college, get qualifications.</p>
	Joshua	<p>What do you think might help them to succeed at school? Sort of, like if they're having bad problems at home then they could sort of try and forget about it because that might get them down and sort of. They might lose their concentration because they keep thinking about bad problems. And try and find friends and that. Cos they'll help you won't they, so. Friends helped me. They certainly helped me so. What do you think might help a person who has had a tough life get a job when they've finished school? I'm not sure really. I can't think of anything. I'm not sure.</p>
	Oliver	<p>What do you think might help them to succeed at school? Positive thinking. Don't let anything downward you really. Yeah. Okay. What do you think might help them to get a job when they've finished school Anything that you're interested in. Anything that you're good at.</p>
Post 16	Chloe	<p>So thinking in general about young people who have tough lives. What do you think might help them to succeed at school? What sort of things. Help. From teachers? Individual help. Individual help, yeah, okay. What do you think might help them to get a job when they finish school? Support. Again, from a school or outside school or where? I think everyone.</p>
	Charlie	<p>The biggest thing they can do for themselves is what one of the main thing that helps to do really is I know everybody says it and nobody, you don't really pay attention when you're at school because I didn't but the best thing to do really is if you want to do it yourself when you're at school and things like that is just think about everything, everything before you do anything just take a couple of minutes, I dunno it's like if you are thinking about something if you start thinking about things you can do it so well like you can do it and it feels like you are thinking forever but it is only like a couple of seconds and you can make a decision now and right then and if you want to do that or not so if it is tough everyone is going to expect you to</p>

		<p>come out in that certain way and they expect you to if you actually just think about it before you do it and think about what's expected of you but what you can actually achieve then you can change anything.</p> <p>Yeah, okay and so that was you know about succeeding at school, what do you think might help a person who has a tough life get a job when they finish school, is there any sort of things that you think might be useful or helpful?</p> <p>I dunno I ain't got a job.</p> <p>No</p> <p>I just went to college because that's what I wanted to do I dunno just if you want to do something don't be lazy and go out of your way to sort it out for yourself and don't rely on others to do it for you.</p> <p>Do you think that it's important though for others to support young people with tough lives?</p> <p>It is important for people to support you but you can't rely on other people, there's only so many people that you can rely on and them people are usually like family or some of the people you are just really close with but you shouldn't really rely on sort of friends and just people you don't know really there's yeah like people should support you but you should think about yourself first like.</p> <p>Okay, you said that you know obviously that the people that you rely on is your family so do you think that perhaps if people were offering support instead of just maybe focusing on the individual person that perhaps it should be about the family and how they can help the family would that be better so that the family could then help that young person to be better or to do well and succeed, do you think that would work better?</p> <p>Well yeah, yeah it could be but they're both important really you know both should be taken into consideration because I mean nothing can really go and there's no harm in doing both is there?</p> <p>No, no</p> <p>And it is that extra bit of help.</p>
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	Daniel	<p>What do you think might help them to succeed at school?</p> <p>To succeed at school? You don't really know because different teenagers come across in different ways. You can turn around and say, I'll give you £20 at the end of the week if you go to school all week and one kid will be fine with that, whereas another one he'd just not go for anything 'cause there could be different situations at the school where they don't wanna go or there could just be different people in themselves, some are up for it, some ain't up for it. So it's a hard one to actually turn around and say what every kid would do.</p> <p>No, no. But are there certain things that make it easier for I mean we're talking about a specific, not a specific group, but I guess children or young people that are going through quite a bit in their lives, you know, have got it tough basically. Is there any sort of support I guess that could be put in place that would help them or do you think that it has to be that specific to the individual, there's no sort of general</p> <p>No, you can put in peers and all of that into schools and they're always going to be there just in case the kids need to go in and chat to them or have problems of their own and that and that could be something for the school because if they want to get away from home and have someone to talk to then they can escape to school and go and talk to their peers about what's going on and their problems.</p> <p>OK, so having that support group at school like that would be something that would help them to succeed. Yeah, brilliant.</p> <p>And then what do you think might help them to get a job when they finish school? Is there any sort of support or anything that would help them then after they finish school?</p> <p>Yeah, you've got Connexions and that type of stuff, go to them, they'll help you through it and where you're in foster care anyway, you'll get your Social Worker coming out and giving you loads of different options to what to do, giving her support, the foster carer's support and everything. So you've got a lot of people helping you out wanting you to do good for yourself.</p>
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APPENDIX W: EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS OF THE FACTORS

MEDIATING POOR VOCATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

Key Stage	Name	Factors that contribute to poor educational and vocational outcomes
Key Stage Three	Grace	<p>Yeah. Thinking about young people who have tough lives, why do you think they might fail at school? Because they don't, they think that they are not normal and that they are different from everyone else. Yeah. What sort of things happen that make them not do well? Like parents separating or something, death and that sort of thing. Now think about why they may not be able to get a job when they finish school. What sort of barriers do you think there might be for them then succeeding when they finish school and getting a job? I don't know about that.</p>
	Jim Bob Junior	<p>Still thinking in general about young people who have tough lives, why do you think then that they might fail at school? Because I don't think they are really thinking about school, I think they're thinking 'oh dear, what's gonna happen when I get home' or 'oh dear, what's gonna happen when I get out of school and I think it's really hard to focus at school. And so then, you know, they've not done well at school. Fast forward to when they finish school, what do you think might act as a barrier or prevent them from getting a job or succeeding in other ways after they finish school? Well, if you don't do well at school you won't really get a good job 'cause you don't have the qualification, you don't have the knowledge. So probably like you're barring yourself from getting a job. Yeah, and is there anything that someone might be able to do to stop these barriers being created for these people? Well, I think they should like sort out the problem so the kids can actually focus. It just makes life a whole lot easier for the kids or the job applicants or the people looking at the jobs. Yeah, it would just make life like a bit easier.</p>

	Olivia	<p>OK, so still thinking in general about young people who have tough lives, why do you think they might fail at school? Because sometimes you might be afraid to ask for help. What sort of things might happen that you know, leads them into not doing well at school if they've had a tough life? I don't know. Not sure? That's OK. And can you think of anything that might act as a barrier OK or that might prevent someone who has had a tough life from maybe getting a job when they finish school or, you know, do any further study when they finish school. Can you think of anything that might stop them or what might, you know, sort of act against them if they want to try and do well? By not choosing the right subjects. If they don't know what subjects to choose for that subject that they wanted to do then it won't help 'cause they didn't choose the right subject.</p>
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	Petal	<p>Again thinking about young people who have tough lives in general, why do you think they might fail at school</p> <p>Because they got too much to worry about. Example – the doctor says the man’s going to live like five years or something.</p> <p>Yeah.</p> <p>And they might like be doing that and they might be not concentrate on their work as much and they’re like this. And then when the teacher goes five minutes to write that. And then they don’t care what they write on the piece of paper. And sometimes they just like doodle draw on it. Because they feel like overwhelmed. It’s like, I know this is a completely different subject but in like “Eastenders” Brittany doesn’t want to do her exam paper. The reason why I think she doesn’t want to do it is cos her mum. She just feels like “Oh no one’s listening to me and stuff. Can’t someone come out and help me”. So</p> <p>Yeah, yeah. That’s a good example. Yeah. So, these are things that maybe make them not do well at school. Fast forward, they’ve finished school, okay. What do you think might act as a barrier to them getting a job in later life?</p> <p>What does that mean?</p> <p>So what might prevent from getting a job. So they’ve had You know “prevent” does that mean get a job or not?</p> <p>Not. Not get a job. So they’ve not done really well at school cos of all these things that you’ve said has happened to them. And now they have to get a job cos they’ve finished school. What would stop them from getting a job? What sort of things?</p> <p>Their qualification.</p> <p>Okay.</p> <p>Their results on the paper. Because they might say they haven’t got a good education so we don’t want you. You don’t know what you’re doing and stuff. And they might feel like really down. But there again but if they calm things down just a bit more and let someone else come into the house. And then let them just unwind a little bit and relax and just concentrate. And then the person at home she could or he could rely on and not like them to go to social services or something. So rely.</p>
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	Ruby	<p>Okay, thinking about young people who have tough lives, why do you think they might fail at school? What sort of things might prevent them from succeeding?</p> <p>Like they can probably like have memories back from like the past and then they're not concentrating on their work and they might fail their exams and then I don't know really.</p> <p>Yep, yep, that's a good point.</p> <p>It's like they can like listen a bit and then the next second they'll have flashbacks from their past and then they're just thinking of that and not their work and then the next week they'll have their tests like a few weeks later and then they can't, then they fail.</p> <p>They won't know what they have to do?</p> <p>And say if they're like in year 11 and they fail their GCSEs well they'll just get a really low grade. I've never got a really low grade, the lowest I've got is probably about a 3. The highest I've got is probably about a 6.</p> <p>Brilliant, yeah, that's good.</p> <p>'cos I'm higher than my sister and she's like two years older than me.</p> <p>Is she (laughter) well some people do better at school than others, isn't it?</p> <p>Yeah, it's like, she probably isn't listening, well she needs help in maths so, that's alright [8:56].</p> <p>Okay, we've talked about what might happen to make them not do well. Now think about why they might not be able to get a job when they finish school, what sort of things might act as a barrier to them, you know, they've had tough lives, then maybe not done well in school, what then acts as a barrier to them getting a job once they've finished school?</p> <p>Like they really wanted to be something and they needed some subjects that they're really good at and they failed on them they're not going to be able to do it.</p> <p>Yeah.</p> <p>They're not going to know what to do.</p>
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	Jack	<p>Right so now thinking about what might happen to make them fail, what do you think makes a young person with a tough life fail at school, what things happen that make them not do well? Sometimes it can be bullying, sometimes it's just well yeah being a bit stubborn and not wanting to do anything because well it's just it's like when that happens and you find out like when as you get older it starts to hit you a bit more and it makes, it gets you a lot more upset and so you think you think about it more yeah and you start feeling like different and you just, yeah just being stubborn a lot. I think that's it anyway.</p> <p>...What do you think then stops them from doing well after they have left school?</p> <p>What, what makes so they have done bad at school and they are still going on bad or are they start, they turn over a new leaf and?</p> <p>No, they are still continuing ... What do you think, what sort of happens to them, why do they not succeed after they have finished school?</p> <p>Might because, I know it sounds this is a bit more what everyone thinks of like people around the age of fifteen and sixteen being like always getting into trouble and vandalising things but not everyone is like that, but the people who are, as they grow up if they don't change what they are being like when they get like to college or University then that will carry on and get worse when they might get involved in drugs or something.</p> <p>Yeah, yeah.</p> <p>Or they can end up just not getting a job because maybe they are not exactly the best person at dealing with other people or maybe they didn't get any qualifications or anything so they can't really get one.</p>
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	Jim Bob	<p>Alright still thinking in general about young people who have tough lives, why do you think they might fail at school? What things might happen that might make them not do well?</p> <p>They might have too much on their mind.</p> <p>Yes. Anything else?</p> <p>Like they're thinking of something that happened in the past and they can't let it go. Beats me.</p> <p>These are two good ideas. Brilliant. Okay and now thinking about how they do after they finish school what do you think might make a young person who has had a tough life not succeed after they finish school and perhaps what acts as a barrier maybe to them getting a job or doing something else after school?</p> <p>Have too much emotions.</p> <p>Yes.</p> <p>And can't let anything go so they won't, they get anger issues</p> <p>They get what, sorry?</p> <p>Anger issues. Yes and then they won't be able to get a decent job.</p>
	Thomas	<p>Why do you think they might fail at school? What things might happen that make them not do well?</p> <p>They've probably got loads of stuff on their mind, like I did.</p> <p>Because if you've got loads of stuff on your mind talk to someone about it. Get your feelings out.</p> <p>Yes.</p> <p>That's the best thing.</p> <p>Yes that's good advice.</p> <p>Get your feelings out and then crack on with your work.</p> <p>Yes. Okay. Now think about why a person who has had a tough life might not be able to get a job when they finish school. What sort of things act as a barrier to stop them from succeeding after they've finished school?</p> <p>Well after they've finished school they might be like, things they've got to like cope with like say like me and my brother's in prison, like when I move school, I might like if he's still in prison, I might want to like go and see him and all that. I might not be able to get a job that quick and there's like barriers in like my way. Sometimes you can, but sometimes you can't.</p>

Key Stage Four	Emily	<p>what do you think makes them fail at school. Why might they fail?</p> <p>Having problems at home. Not concentrating and listening.</p> <p>Yeah, yeah.</p> <p>Being bullied.</p> <p>Being bullied. Yeah, anything else?</p> <p>No.</p> <p>And what then, okay so they've not done well at school because of these things that you said. After they finish school what do you think might act as a barrier to prevent them or stop them from getting a job later on. What sort of things act against them I guess. Because they've had, you know, tough lives. They've not done well at school. What sort of things stop from succeeding in life later on?</p> <p>Um, thoughts of like the past</p> <p>Yeah, yeah thoughts about the past. Yeah, Yeah. And then they're back in that.</p> <p>Yeah. And then they start misbehaving, getting into trouble.</p>
	Jeanette	<p>All right, so still thinking in general about young people who have tough lives, why do you think they might fail at school, what sort of things can happen to make them not do well?</p> <p>Because they probably feel insecure about things, they think the whole world hates them, so they just keep bullying themselves to things that they don't really do, so they just fly back at things that aren't really there, so they just make a fool of themselves for not doing anything.</p> <p>Yes, okay, and fast forward now to when they finish school, what do you think prevents them from succeeding after they've finished, prevents them from getting a job perhaps or going to college or going to University?</p> <p>They've always have low self-esteem, they probably haven't got confidence to get interviewed and ask, answer difficult questions or they just don't have the confidence to stand-up to people and talk about things in their life.</p>

	Jessica	<p>Ok, now we are still thinking in general about young people who have tough lives and now I want you to think what might make them fail at school, what sort of things might happen that makes them not do well.</p> <p>Teachers putting them down.</p> <p>Yeah, teachers putting them down, anything else?</p> <p>Friends putting them down.</p> <p>Yeah, friends putting them down. Any other thing?</p> <p>People back stabbing you.</p> <p>Oh back stabbing yeah, yeah. That's not good either.</p> <p>Anything else *?</p> <p>No.</p> <p>No ok great. Now thinking about these people then that had had tough lives and now they have finished school and they are out in the real world, what do you think might stop them from succeeding after they have finished school? What do you think acts as a barrier to stop them from succeeding because after they have finished...</p> <p>Their confidence.</p> <p>Their confidence yeah, anything else that might stop them?</p> <p>Not really.</p>
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	Sophie	<p>Now thinking about young people who have tough lives again just in general, why do you, what do you think might make them fail at school, what sort of things make them not do well?</p> <p>Anything.</p> <p>What sort of acted against you, in terms of I mean you have done quite well because you are going off to college and you know you know what you want to do now, but when you were in school you were sort of describing that things didn't go so well, you had like you said behaviour difficulties and things like that so you know what sort of things were preventing you from doing well? It's hard to think back isn't it?</p> <p>What was preventing me from doing well?</p> <p>Yeah, what sort of things would happen like on a typical day where you know you said that you would play up sometimes and things like, you have already said that if something was on your mind then that was it, that was almost like a right off for you. What other things sort of you know would be you know like a that would you would come in and that would be it, you know like it could be like a reaction from someone or something that people said or?</p> <p>Yeah that happened quite a lot as well actually, things like that.</p> <p>So what, can you describe a situation or can you think of something when a time when that happened.</p> <p>I don't know, I don't know if I could think of something. I don't know, I can't think of nothing, but I know I have been in situations like that like when I have I've liked walked into class then someone has said to me then I just start going just going mad on them.</p> <p>Yeah, yeah. What would that be like, if they had a go at you perhaps or not even that, they have just said something?</p> <p>Sometimes not even that, yeah just said something.</p> <p>And it just didn't sit well with you?</p> <p>Yeah.</p>
	Harry	<p>So still thinking about young people who have tough lives, what do you think might make them fail at school?</p> <p>By thinking of their, like somebody who's not been nice to them will make them fail.</p> <p>And what things happen that make them not do well at school?</p> <p>Messing about.</p> <p>Yes. Now think about why they may not be able to get a job when they've finished school, what do you think...?</p> <p>If they didn't get a good grade, they wouldn't get a good job.</p>

	The Invincible	<p>Why do you think they might fail at school? What sort of things might get in the way or might happen to make them not do well?</p> <p>If they don't do their work, like it sets them back. And then they have to catch up and that could take time or weeks or months or something.</p> <p>Yeah, yeah. What would stop them from doing their work then? Why would they get behind in the first place.</p> <p>Depends. Like if someone has like passed away in their life and it hits them when they're in the lesson and they just walk out. They're missing that part of the lesson, what it might crucial for their GCSEs or something.</p> <p>Yeah, yeah. Right. Now I want you to think. Still thinking in general about young people who have tough lives, what do you think might stop them from getting a job when they finish school? So they've done their schooling. They're out in the real world. They're their own person. They're not relying on anyone. What do you think might act as a barrier or prevent them from doing well after they've finished school?</p> <p>Not going to college.</p> <p>Yeah?</p> <p>Cos at the moment, we're at the credit crunch and everything. People don't want young kids at the moment. Like they want them to get more qualification on the job or something.</p>
	Joshua	<p>Why do you think they might fail at school. What sort of things might get in the way of succeeding?</p> <p>Problems at home. Kids at school. May be they think the work's too hard so they just don't, dont' try. Stuff like that really.</p> <p>Yeah. Okay. Now thinking about their future and after they've finished school. What do you think might act as a barrier or prevent them from succeeding after they've left school and they're their own person and .. What sort of things might stop them from doing well after they've finished?</p> <p>Probably sort of peer pressure and that. Sort of thinking "I've had so problems and it hasn't got me anywhere" so they just might not bother trying later on in life.</p> <p>So what sort of effects might peer pressure have. Like what sort of things might happen there?</p> <p>Sort of getting all emotional and sort of . Sometime I've heard that it can lead to suicide. Apparently, that's what I heard.</p>

	Oliver	<p>Thinking about young people who have tough lives, why do you think they might fail at school? Cos their mind ain't put onto school. Because their minds is not a put onto school and then ain't got the right mind to it really.</p> <p>So their mind's elsewhere. They're not thinking about the school. Yeah. Okay. And what things happen that make them not do well. What sort of things, you know, might they have on their mind then? A lot of things. Like their parent, family Yeah. Anything could happen. Yeah, yeah. Now think about why they might not get a job when they finish school. What sort of barriers do you think prevent them from doing well after they've left school and are adults and may be have other resources? Don't know.</p>
Post 16	Chloe	<p>So still thinking in general about young people who have tough lives, why do think they might fail at school. What sort of things might ... Might not turn up because they don't want to because they've just lost all hope anyway. Okay. What things might have happened to make them not do well? Their life in general. Okay. And thinking about their future, so they haven't done well at school. Why do you think they might not be able to get a job when they finish school. What sort of barriers do you think ... They didn't do their qualifications. Hm, hm. Anything else that may act as a barrier for people who have tough lives. Don't think they're good enough.</p>

	Charlie	<p>Anything can really if something like bad's just happened to them that could stop them from doing something and they may get that far behind and they can't catch up or something I dunno that's just like the question that's like 'cos that could happen to anybody it doesn't really have to be somebody who's had a tough life it is again what you choose to do depends on what you want it to be, you can like if you want to succeed and you actually try you'll succeed but if you just feel that you're not going to do it and stuff like you need to believe in yourself before anything, before anybody else, do you know what I mean?</p> <p>Yeah absolutely and I guess what I'm trying to get at is you are absolutely right it doesn't matter what position you are in, what background you come from if you have self belief... If you believe in yourself then you'll be able to do it, you could be the richest person in the world, like rich people and everybody expects them to just sort of people expect them to just be oh they're going to get everything all their life and stuff like that but that might be hard on them through being told that all the time and if they wanted to prove that they're not then they can they believe in themselves to do something different and make it for themselves it works both ways, it's just with everyone innit?</p> <p>Yeah that's true but do you think that you know for example someone who comes from a background where their parents have really stable jobs, they've had an education, they can help their children with their schoolwork and things like that and then compare it to perhaps someone from your neighbourhood whose parents perhaps might not have a job, might not have that education, they might want to really help their kids but might not be able to, what do you think you know do you not think that people in that situation might have more things against them than someone from a better off background?</p> <p>Well yeah they're going to have more things against them but if they stick to the straight and narrow stay at school i mean it's free to go to school and if you'd stay in school and prove that you're good at whatever you are doing whatever you want to do then if you're that good at it and you believe in yourself to be that good at it that you actually are then it will be free for you to go on to further education and things like that so it isn't I mean obviously it is easier like if you're minted you can fail and then just pay to re.. and stay and just do it again and over again as many times if you want but if you stayed on the straight and narrow if you ain't got no money and you concentrated really hard on what you want to do and not worry what other people think and what they want you to do you do what you want anyway.</p>
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	Daniel	<p>Alright, thinking about again young people have tough lives, what sort of things do you think make them fail or might make them fail at school?</p> <p>Just letting it get the better of them.</p> <p>OK, what do you mean by that?</p> <p>Things are going bad at home, arguments, they dwell on it for too long, start having fights because some kid said something about it or whatever. The motivation just goes down and starts lacking. You just let it get in the way.</p> <p>Ok, yeah. And thinking then, OK, fast forwarding to their futures and they've finished school, what sort of things might act as a barrier or prevent them from then succeeding after they've finished school. You know, during school obviously they're still dependent on somebody but once you've finished school, you're a young adult, you've got more things available to you. What sort of things act as barriers at that point when they're out in the real world I guess?</p> <p>It depends. You could say drugs, friends, kids.</p> <p>When you say friends and kids, what do you mean by that?</p> <p>Expand on that.</p> <p>Unexpected pregnancies, your friends they're all going off to do one thing so you might wanna stay with your friends or your friends are telling you not to do this because they think you'd do better in this.</p>
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