Response from Circle

I appreciate the opportunity to offer my views on contributing to a possible solution with regard to the educational attainment of looked after children. Circle (formerly Family Services Unit/FSU) has for 70 years embraced the same approach; having one skilled family support worker working in the family home. At the heart of this work is knowledgeable staff establishing trusting relationships with all the family members, being available to them and being prepared to invest time and flexible working arrangements which will include providing direct support in the home, school and community. Circle identifies issues which would benefit from being referred to other relevant professionals and where appropriate takes family members to appointments. Circle works with the most hard to reach families and frequently supports families through the Children’s Hearings System. Throughout central Scotland Circle has the following teams; Families Affected by Imprisonment, Families Affected by Substance Misuse, Early Years, Fathers’ Work, Practice Development, (we have 40 social work students per annum), School Liaison and an Inter School Social Education Project (ISSEP) which has run for many years in Pilton and provides an opportunity for older secondary school pupils undertaking relevant study or Duke of Edinburgh Awards to provide direct, supervised support to children on a voluntary basis. Several of Edinburgh’s best schools have sent their senior pupils to work at ISSEP. Where there is disadvantage Circle is committed to intervening in a child and family’s life as early as possible while encouraging a philanthropic spirit in those who are more fortunate.

Circle is accustomed to having the work being externally evaluated and is also accustomed to working toward outcomes which are agreed between funders and the organisation. Circle provides outreach support from teams which are based at the heart of communities where disadvantage is located. This encourages accessibility and familiarity. Circle staff are also accustomed to co-locating with other agency teams which makes us fast and flexible when it comes to providing a service.

To provide support for Circle’s model being considered as part of the solution I ask you to consider the following: New Philanthropy Capital undertook research on ‘Truancy and Exclusion’ and described Circle thus; ‘FSU identifies the root causes of children’s school difficulties, such as substance abuse in the home, and works directly with families and other agencies to create a sustainable change in quality of life. The research can be found here: http://www.philanthropycapital.org/download/default.aspx?id=54.