

An Evaluation of the LEAPlets
programme – an Interagency School
Readiness Programme for Children
who are Looked After Based on the
Building Underdeveloped
Sensorimotor Systems Model
(BUSS).

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Introduction

Literature review/background

LAC educational outcomes

Looked After Children (LAC) have been shown to have poorer educational attainment levels than other children (Bettencourt et.al., 2019). This ‘attainment gap’ increases with the child’s age, intimating the importance of early intervention (Mathers et al., 2016).

There are many reasons why LAC may have less favourable educational outcomes.

Early childhood trauma experienced may contribute; via formation of insecure/disorganised attachments which make it more difficult to access education through safe staff relationships (Steele & Siever, 2010). This may be compounded by short-term foster care placements, leading to LAC frequently moving between schools and localities and disrupting education (Pears et al., 2015). A further contributing factor to LAC’s poor educational attainment may be poor sensory integration.

Sensory integration and trauma

Traumatised children may experience poor sensory integration; in part due to the impact of adversity on their brain development (Fraser et al., 2017). Children who grow up in chronic states of fight/flight/freeze are less aware of sensory information and are more likely to miss opportunities to process it, effecting bodily and emotional regulation (Fraser et al., 2017; Perry, 2009). Subsequently, some sensory-based interventions have been proposed to help children improve these difficulties, through use of games/activities and ‘safe spaces’ (Fraser et al., 2017). May-Benson & Koomar’s (2010) systematic review, suggested that working in a sensory way with children could improve aspects of sensorimotor and social skill, alongside behaviour control and attention. However, this was based on small sample sizes. Further, the evidence base for the efficacy of sensory integration therapy (SIT) interventions has not been substantiated (Leong & Carter, 2008).

The Building Underdeveloped Sensorimotor Systems (BUSS) model

The BUSS model is based on Sensory Integration Theory and the Neuro-sequential Model of Therapeutics (NMT) (Lloyd, 2020). It was developed to support traumatised children to build their understanding and sense of their own bodies through specific movements, activities/games in conjunction with a sensitively attuned carer. (Lloyd, 2020).

Underpinning the model are the child's four foundation sensorimotor systems (Lloyd, 2020). The Proprioceptive System is responsible for how muscles move and organising the pressure applied within movements; children with underdeveloped proprioceptive systems may be less attuned to their bodies and show fewer smooth movements (Lloyd, 2020). The Vestibular System creates stability, core-strength and gravitational security (e.g. jumping); children with underdeveloped vestibular systems might have less coordination or find balancing difficult (Lloyd, 2020). The Limbic system is responsible for managing stress levels; children stuck in 'survival mode' are more likely to struggle with uncertainty or lack of control (Lloyd, 2020). The Tactile System develops once children have enough nurturing experiences that they no longer feel the need to self-protect and can explore the world; consequently, children who have experienced maltreatment may not develop strong tactile systems (Lloyd, 2020).

What this means for learning

If sensory processing is impaired, children may have difficulty interacting with the world and find aspects of functioning difficult (Stephens, 2018). Furthermore, according to Williams & Shellenberger's (1996) 'Pyramid of learning', without the foundations in place at the pyramid's base (in the central nervous system and seven sensory systems), children are unable to build and develop their awareness of their bodies, gross/fine motor skills or latterly, their cognitive skills.

Practice-based evidence has been collated to demonstrate that outcomes can be improved for children if their needs are viewed holistically (considering academic, emotional and social needs) (Carroll and Cameron, 2017). Factors such as attachment and physiological needs contribute to the child's sense of readiness to start school (Mathers et al., 2016). Furthermore, fundamental to redressing the 'attainment gap' is intervening at the earliest available opportunity (Mathers et al., 2016). Subsequently, using models like BUSS to address sensory integration and attachment needs, may support children's abilities to access education more readily (by improving abilities to sit down, concentrate and building motor skills to support writing) (Lloyd, 2021).

The current National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE, 2021) guidance reflects the lack of quality evidence in the UK in respect of primary developmental outcomes. It also highlights the difficulty in obtaining and linking secondary outcomes such as positive behavioural, emotional, social and cognitive outcomes to 'school readiness' which is also reflected in the scarce evidence base (NICE, 2021). Despite the availability of several therapeutic models, outcomes for LAC are still problematic and thus it is important to consider the creative use of other models (e.g. BUSS) to build upon the evidence base.

Service Context

Leeds Therapeutic Social Work Team (LTSWT) is a specialist team comprised of Social Work and Clinical Psychology staff working with LAC (up to age 18) and Care Leavers (up to age 25). These staff work to promote the emotional wellbeing of those who are Looked After or are subject of Supervision Orders, Child Protections Plans or Kinship Care.

The LEAPlets group

The Leeds Virtual School piloted the LEAPlets school readiness programme (SRP) with LTSWT to support foster children in preparation for starting school. Virtual schools are

dedicated teams with responsibility for ensuring LAC can meet their educational potential (Leeds for Learning, 2022).

LEAPlets is a twice-weekly programme attended by children alongside their foster carers. LTSWT and Leeds Gymnastics Club staff run the programme, structured as follows:

- A 'hello' song incorporating tummy-time
- Shared story-time
- Specific activities/skills practice based upon the BUSS model

Information from the group is shared with the child's school prior to their start date.

Commissioning

The project was commissioned by Sarah Lloyd, Specialist Occupational Therapist at LTSWT. Sarah is also the author of the BUSS model which underpins the LEAPlets group.

Aims

Given the paucity of research, it is hoped this SEP will contribute to the evidence base. This SEP aimed to evaluate the LEAPlets SRP and explore foster carers' experiences of attending the group, including the impact and significance on their foster children's development.

Method

Design

A qualitative research design was chosen above quantitative methods given the research question's focus on foster carers' experience of the LEAPlets group (Hammarberg et al., 2016). Whilst a questionnaire may have provided information about foster carers' experiences, given the relative infancy of the group and lack of previous research, an exploratory focus was deemed most appropriate. This would provide a grounding of information about the programme that could be explored further in due course and shape future groups (Hammarberg et al., 2016). The original design intended to supplement interviews with secondary analysis of grouped, anonymised Boxall measures (normed emotional, social and behavioural psychosocial measures that support professionals in planning how to meet children's specific needs and challenges when they start school) (Nurture UK, 2019). This was intended to provide a richer dataset; however, this did not take place due to Covid-19 and a lack of available data to analyse.

Participants

Sample

The proposed sample size was 6-10 foster carers. In total, 13 foster carers were approached to participate and nine consented to take part. One foster carer subsequently withdrew due to placement breakdown, leaving eight who progressed to interview. Foster carers were purposefully approached, based upon their attendance at the LEAPlets group.

Procedure

Recruitment

Participants were identified with help from the commissioner working in the LTSWT.

Current group members

The commissioner approached members of the current LEAPlets group (December 2019 on an ongoing basis) to gather consent for the evaluator to attend and observe the group. The evaluator attended and met potential participants, providing an overview of the SEP and participant information sheets (PIS) (Appendix B). The evaluator answered questions and obtained preferred contact details. The evaluator contacted all interested participants to arrange an interview. Consent was obtained prior to interviews taking place. Participants were given a choice of ways to return their consent form (Appendix C).

Past group members

The commissioner sent an e-mailed cover letter (Appendix D) to older cohorts who had completed the LEAPlets programme (March – December 2019), attaching The PIS and consent form. Interested parties were asked to contact the evaluator/commissioner. Once a potential participant provided contact details, the evaluator made contact to discuss the evaluation, answer questions and arrange an interview.

Records were not accessible by the evaluator and information was provided by the commissioner when required. All telephone calls were made on withheld number in confidential space.

Data Collection

All foster carers were asked to complete a 30-60 minute interview with the evaluator. Participants were offered to undertake interviews face to face, by phone or virtually via (e.g. Microsoft teams). All participants elected to have telephone interviews. Interviews were arranged flexibly in accordance with foster carer availability and with childcare arrangements in mind. The topic guide was designed collaboratively with the commissioner to ensure it captured areas of interest for the evaluation (Appendix A). All

interviews were audio-recorded utilising laptop recording and were subsequently transcribed and anonymised by the evaluator.

Data Analysis

To understand the nature of any physical and psychological changes from attending the group, foster carers were asked questions about their foster child's skills before and after the programme. These questions were positioned in line with core tenets of the BUSS model (oral strength, core-strength, gravitational security, balance and coordination, relationships and attunement to body). To analyse this data, manifest Content Analysis was used (in which specific skills were coded and counted if the foster carer mentioned that their foster child was able to do these before and after the programme) (Kondracki et al., 2002). It was felt quantitative Content Analysis would sufficiently supplement the data provided by the Thematic Analysis and thus it was unnecessary to undertake further qualitative latent interpretations of the Content Analysis (Kondracki et al., 2002). However, it is acknowledged that this analysis is simplistic (Kondracki et al., 2002).

To support analysis of the remaining data, Braun and Clarke's (2006) 'six stage' thematic analysis was used. This was selected in line with the exploratory research question and due to its flexibility in application and atheoretical stance (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Credibility Checking

The evaluator's initial coding and themes were credibility checked by a peer on the Doctorate in Clinical Psychology (DClin) programme prior to review and consolidation. These were subsequently triangulated via meetings with the SEP commissioner and the evaluator's DClin Academic Tutor.

Ethics

This evaluation was afforded ethical approval on 25th February 2021 via the University of Leeds School of Medicine Ethics Committee (Reference number DCLinREC 20-006). Consent to complete the evaluation was also granted by the LTSWT manager.

Reflexivity

To increase this SEP's rigour, I have reflected on my own experiences and assumptions (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme, 2018). I have interest and experience of working with LAC which attracted me to the project. I also have a positive view of working preventatively (during the early years) and co-working with other professional disciplines to address experiences of trauma. To ensure my views did not bias the results, I discussed these in supervision and undertook credibility checks.

Results

Route to Referral and Demographic information

Eight foster carers were interviewed in total. All respondents were female. One foster carer discussed three children who had attended the programme (therefore the maximum number of children mentioned is ten).

Six of the referrals to the programme came from the child's social worker, one came from the child's adoption team and one foster carer was unsure.

Content Analysis

Each carer was asked whether their foster child had specific skills or deficits that are targeted within the programme. Content Analysis was used to analyse data about children's skills/deficits before and after the group (Tables 1 & 2). The total number of children discussed was 10, therefore there is a maximum score of 10 for each category.

Skills

Improvement is indicated by an increase in a skill.

Table 1. Children's skills reported by Foster Carers before and after the LEAPlets programme

Area from BUSS	Before LEAPlets	After LEAPlets
<i>Oral Strength</i>		
Child is eating/chewing without difficulty	4	8
Child tries different foods	0	3
Child can blow	0	8
Child can suck	3	8
<i>Core Strength and Stability</i>		
Child can sit up	5	4
Child can sit at a table without effort/leaning	0	2
Child can commando crawl	1	8
Child can regular crawl	6	6
Child engages in tummy time	1	10
<i>Gravitational Security</i>		
Child jumps appropriately (upright)	0	6
<i>Balance and Coordination</i>		
Child walks appropriately	3	5
Child runs appropriately	1	7
Child can climb	2	7
Child can climb stairs	5	7
Child can use cutlery	3	8
Child can draw	4	7
Child can ride a bike	0	3
Child can use fine motor skills for play e.g. play doh/cars	0	4
<i>Relationships</i>		
Child relates to you (foster carer)	3	9
Child relates to others	0	4
Child can manage their	0	6

feelings		
Child can use you (foster carer) to regulate	1	6
Child can share	0	2
Child can take turns	0	2
Child shows empathy	0	2
<i>Attunement to body</i>		
Child can identify being hungry	0	5
Child can identify being tired	0	2
Child can identify needing the toilet	0	4
Child can identify being hot/cold	0	1

Deficits

Improvement is indicated by a reduction in a deficit.

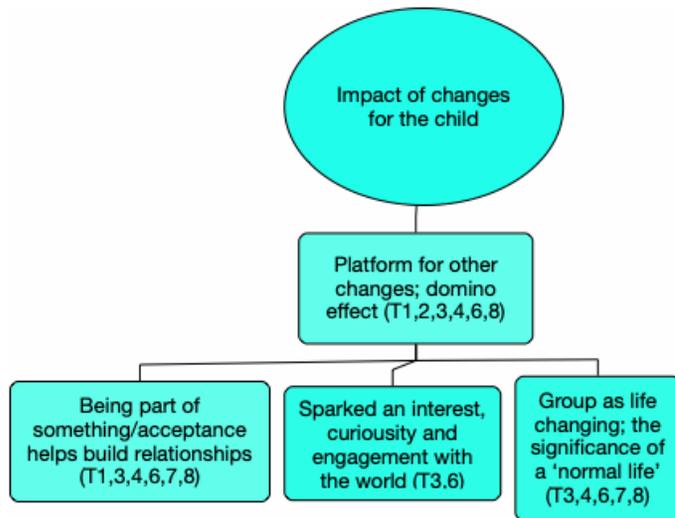
Table 2. Children's skill deficits reported by Foster Carers before and after the LEAPlets programme

Area from BUSS	Before LEAPlets	After LEAPlets
<i>Oral Strength</i>		
Child is dribbling excessively	3	0
Child's language is not understandable	8	4
<i>Gravitational Security</i>		
Child prefers to keep feet on the ground	7	2
Child leans forward to jump	7	0
<i>Balance and Coordination</i>		
Child watches feet whilst doing things	4	0
Child falls or is unsteady on their feet	5	1

<i>Relationships</i>		
Child has no sense of danger	2	0

Thematic Analysis

Three overarching themes were identified within the Thematic Analysis. Within this analysis, each theme and subtheme are presented in turn, supported by participant quotes (see Appendix E for additional quotes). Figure 1 visually presents all themes and subthemes.



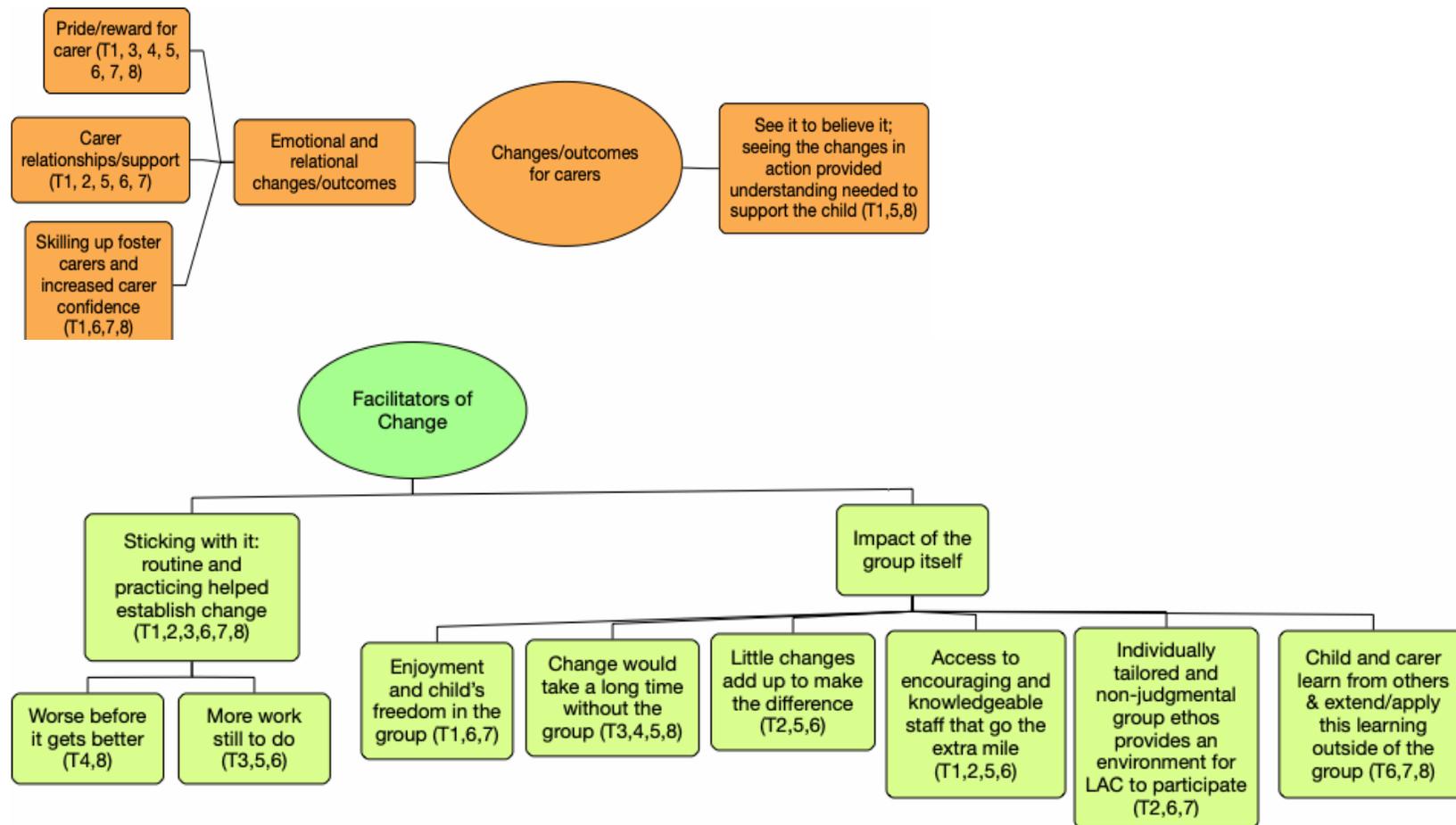


Figure 1. Thematic map of themes and sub-themes derived from Foster Carers' interviews

Theme 1: Impact of changes for the child

The LEAPlets programme was felt to bring about changes for the child with a far-reaching impact. Within this theme, there is one subtheme with three further subthemes.

Subtheme 1: Platform for other changes; a domino effect

Foster carers described how the group exercises created a platform/foundation for the child's learning and moving on. This might mean that through using BUSS and strengthening the child's sensorimotor system, the child was able to fulfil their potential in other areas of their life.

“From a child development perspective if they miss out points of development, it does impact later on so now that he has worked on those skills it could allow him to develop further down the line. Now his emotions are in check, he is going to be able to access learning better” (Participant 4).

“LEAPlets might have softened his anger...it was frustration because he wanted to do what they were doing and couldn't, so he couldn't even start to make friends or play together...when he could do some of those things...he could make friends and...the pressure was off so he could then open up to learning... so the anger sort of went because he could communicate with the others and do what they were doing without feeling embarrassed” (Participant 8).

There was variability in foster carers' views about what changes were unlocked for the child from attending the LEAPlets group, outlined within the sub-subthemes below.

Subtheme 1a: Being part of something/acceptance helps build relationships

Some foster carers described how the child feeling accepted or part of a group helped them to build meaningful relationships.

“Being a part of something was really important as she has never been part of anything. For her to be accepted it brought out a different child” (Participant 1).

“He can interact now...He’s gone from no play skills whatsoever, to being able to play alongside children but now he can play with children and not just children he knows... for him that’s absolutely huge for building relationships” (Participant 3).

Subtheme 1b: Sparked an interest, curiosity and engagement with the world

Foster carers described the group as affording the child with skills. Being able to do more things was felt to open the child’s eyes to the world and increase their engagement with it.

“...Shown him what he can do, and with encouragement from us and other people. It’s a big world out there and he didn’t see that... it made him aware that’s there more and it’s available to him. He can run around and he can get things, giving him different things to try. He will touch things in the garden, he’s gentle with bugs and ladybirds and feeds birds with my husband” (Participant 6).

Subtheme 1c: Group as life-changing; the significance of a ‘normal life’

Foster carers reported that the group provided a life-changing opportunity for LAC to live a normal life which was hugely significant for them.

“All foster children want to feel normal, and he says it; he feels normal” (Participant 8).

“It just blows me away completely; it’s absolutely changed this little boy’s life completely” (Participant 3).

Theme 2: Changes/outcomes for carers

Foster carers described several positive outcomes for themselves from attending the group. Within this theme there are two subthemes; one of which has three further subthemes.

Subtheme 1: Emotional and relational changes/outcomes

Notably foster carers reported several emotional and relational outcomes for themselves.

Subtheme 1a: Pride/reward for carer

Foster carers experienced a feeling of pride in seeing the child's progress following the group.

"It's nice to see. I could cry sometimes when I think how far he has come" (Participant 5).

"For me to see this huge change in him, I honestly could not be more proud" (Participant 3).

Subtheme 1b: Carer relationships/support

Foster carers described the group as providing a support network for themselves. This might mean that they build their own support networks which they can access after the group and may feel more resourced to support their foster child's difficulties.

"Something like this is unique. I've never heard of anything out there like this before and the support we get from it" (Participant 2).

Subtheme 1c: Skilling up foster carers and increased carer confidence

Foster carers described feeling supported and more knowledgeable following the group. They felt their confidence was enhanced and they had developed additional skills and understanding of their foster child which helped to support them better. This might mean that carers increase their knowledge base and can share their learning from the group with others. Foster carers may also feel more confident applying these skills with other foster children they have in placement.

“It gave me a sense of enlightenment and I thought actually I can do this, it’s not that hard, I can help him with this. It makes you feel enabled...these things are not that hard if you understand them and even if you don’t understand them, if you follow them, you can see the change and it might take a little bit, but you did that; I did that” (Participant 8).

Subtheme 2: See it to believe it; seeing the changes in action provided understanding needed to support the child

Foster carers needed to see the changes for themselves to facilitate understanding and support of their foster child. This might suggest that theoretical understanding of a child only goes part of the way to facilitate understanding of a child’s difficulties.

“I didn’t fully understand it in the meeting, but I probably needed to see it in progress first to understand it, so that development grows, so you don’t notice it yourself and you don’t realise that has to happen to the extent it did – you see it, you see the difference” (Participant 1).

Theme 3: Facilitators of change

This theme encapsulates the mechanisms of change that foster carers discussed. Within this theme there are two subthemes; one with two further subthemes and one with six further subthemes.

Subtheme 1: Sticking with it: routine and practicing helped establish change

Foster carers noted that persisting with a routine and doing the group exercises at home were key mechanisms of change. This suggests that the group itself offers a platform for change, but that practice and persistence were key to eliciting lasting change for the child.

“It became routine which helped. Sticking to it really helped and we did the practice at home” (Participant 8).

Subtheme 1a: Worse before it gets better

There was a sense from foster carers that children’s difficulties got worse before they got better. This might indicate that foster carers will require encouragement to persist with their attendance at the group and engaging with exercises at home.

“It got worse before it got better” (Participant 8).

“We had some meltdowns at the beginning, I felt terrible, but within a month, it became routine which helped” (Participant 4).

Subtheme 1b: More work still to do

Carers reported some difficulties remained for the child after the group had concluded.

“There hasn’t been much change socially because he doesn’t fit with his peers and struggles. He can’t communicate” (Participant 5).

Subtheme 2: Impact of the group itself

Foster carers reported aspects of the group itself as impacting upon change. There was variation in how the group itself was helpful, outlined by the sub-subthemes below.

Subtheme 2a: Enjoyment and child's freedom in the group

The child's enjoyment of the group and freedom within it were important facets of the group.

"Seeing the children do these activities that they really enjoy. They don't see it as a programme or doing work as such, they just see it as a fun activity" (Participant 7).

"He was free to run around" (Participant 6).

Subtheme 2b: Change would take a long time without the group

Carers attributed change to the group and felt change would have taken longer to achieve without it.

"I don't think there would have been any changes (without the group) or if there had have been, it would have taken maybe years and he would probably resent the changes I was trying to make" (Participant 5).

"It would have eventually come but it was just more focused. This new little boy came on in such a short time, from not speaking to being able to read a story" (Participant 8).

Subtheme 2c: Little changes add up to make the difference

Foster carers discussed how little changes added up to make a big difference for the child.

“I just think the programme is amazing... You take things for granted and these little things you wouldn't believe made so much difference... you didn't think would matter but of course they matter! They all help to change and make the body work better” (Participant 5).

Subtheme 2d: Access to encouraging and knowledgeable staff that go the extra mile

Foster carers felt staff in the group were knowledgeable, encouraging and promoted access to additional staff/services as needed.

“The people who are there are in the know...and are willing to give you that support and advice, and if they can't, they will refer to someone else and they come to you” (Participant 2).

Subtheme 2e: Individually tailored and non-judgmental group ethos provides an environment for LAC to participate

Foster carers thought the group offered a place for LAC which is tailored for their needs. This might suggest that foster carers feel there is a lack of available groups for LAC that meet their needs.

“Lots of play places out there are so busy, this is more tailored to what these children need” (Participant 2).

“Staff went out of way to be make everybody feel comfortable and welcome. If your child did something where you were like ‘oh no’ it didn't matter” (Participant 6).

Subtheme 2f: Child and carer learn from others and extend/apply this learning outside of the group

Foster carers reported that children and carers experienced indirect learning through seeing others in the group. Furthermore, they were able to extend this learning outside of the group or to future foster children in placement.

“Watching the other children was good for him. If another child cried, he would scream but he learnt over time, watching other children be comforted by other carers like we did for him and I think that helped him” (Participant 6).

“I will probably do a lot of the LEAPlets stuff at home on my own with other foster children” (Participant 8).

Additional feedback

There was additional important feedback that could not be encapsulated within the themes. Four Foster Carers expressed that they would recommend the group to others.

“The programme as a whole is fantastic. I sell LEAPlets to anybody and everyone and tell other foster carers about it. I do think it’s a really good resource to have (Participant 7).

Three foster carers voiced their hope about the group continuing or being extended to others.

“The only regret I have got about the programme is that it’s only available in Leeds. We need it literally nationwide and in schools... I would go on the road and advocate (the programme) to everyone” (Participant 3).

Some Foster Carers had some negative perspectives of the group, but these were not convergent to include within themes. Two foster carers discussed that having several adults in the group impacted upon their foster child's ability to engage. Furthermore, three foster carers noted that they would like more contextual information about the activities and how they related to their foster child's needs, alongside feedback about progress.

Discussion

Summary of Findings

The data showed three main themes: (1) Impact of changes for the child, (2) Changes/outcomes for carers and (3) Facilitators of change.

Content Analysis showed that children's skills improved following attendance at the group. Foster carers noted a huge impact of these changes for foster children, indicating that they found attending the group beneficial. They talked about the group providing a "platform for other changes." This is aligned with Bruce Perry's NMT (Perry, 2006), intimating that BUSS works at the Limbic level of a traumatised child's brain. This suggests that when children in the LEAPlets group practiced BUSS activities and achieved sensory reintegration, they were able to build upon this to develop skills in emotional regulation, socialisation and learning. This is also supported by research that suggests therapeutic pre-schools underpinned by the NMT model can improve emotional, social and behavioural outcomes for traumatised children, thus improving school readiness (Barfield et al., 2012).

These findings are especially pertinent given the lack of literature and long-established notion that LAC outcomes remain poorer than for non-LAC children (Bettencourt et al., 2019). This has implications for the field to promote innovative practice which might enable non-LAC children to 'catch-up' developmentally and bridge the gap between LAC and non-LAC, aligned with policy to work preventatively within the early years before the 'attainment gap' becomes too great (Mathers et al., 2016). However, it should also be considered that existing evidence about SIT does not fully support the findings of this SEP having questioned the efficacy of such approaches (Leong & Carter, 2008).

Foster carers had a real sense that children became more curious about the world through attending the group. This might be explained by the Circle of Security Model based on

Attachment Theory principles (Marvin et al., 2002). As children gained a sense of containment and belonging, they developed a safe relational base with their foster carer which allowed them to explore the world. This further highlights the importance of the relationship between staff and foster carers; establishing the safe base for the foster carers to allow them to be the safe base for the child (Marvin et al., 2002). This is an important finding as BUSS is set apart from both NMT and SIT in its attempts to incorporate attachment principles alongside sensory reintegration (Lloyd, 2020). This SEP's findings suggest that the LEAPlets group may offer means of improving both underdeveloped sensorimotor systems and attachment difficulties.

Foster carers highlighted some specific outcomes for themselves, building upon their own sources of support and confidence levels which indicates benefits to attending the group that extended beyond the child. The risk of placement breakdown may be mitigated by children's attendance at pre-school (Mathers et al., 2016). It could be argued that the LEAPlets group ensures foster carers feel more resourced by increasing access to supportive staff/peers, which in turn may increase placement stability. This has been suggested to be a crucial factor in educational attainment (Sebba et al., 2015). Furthermore, research suggests that 'stability' is even more important to LAC than other groups of children (Mathers et al., 2016).

Finally, foster carers talked about factors they felt facilitated changes for their foster child, with reference to perseverance and elements of the group itself that promoted change. Fundamental to the group was a sense that it provided a place for LAC which met their needs and was free from judgment. This might be corroborated by literature that suggests uptake of early education for LAC is lower than non-LAC (Mathers et al., 2016). This intimates that LEAPlets offers a more 'specialist' group which meets the needs of these children and increases the likelihood that they will be able to access more mainstream education thereafter.

Limitations

There are some limitations of this evaluation to consider. The SEP commissioner led the LEAPlets group and is also the author of the BUSS model which underpins it. Whilst, the codes and themes were collaboratively discussed with the commissioner, themes were credibility checked through independent parties first (a peer and an academic supervisor on the Dclin course). Thus, this was not considered to bias results.

Participants were self-selecting in that they volunteered to participate in this research. It is likely that they were motivated to participate due to positive experiences of attending the group or positive working relationships with group staff. Thus, the results may not represent the experiences of all group members, notably of those who chose not to participate. As telephone interviews were undertaken, the evaluator did not have opportunity to read non-verbal communication to know when to utilise prompts; this may have impacted upon the data obtained. Whilst the evaluator was able to establish a good rapport with carers, this may have been enhanced if participants could have been visibly seen. However, face-to-face appointments were minimised due to Covid-19. Participants were also given the choice to use video-conferencing facilities, however all selected telephone interviews.

Participants attended one of two cohorts of the LEAPlets group; the second cohort was disrupted by the Covid-19 lockdowns which may have affected their experience (participants may also have practiced skills at home more/less). However, this is more likely to have impacted Content Analysis results. Attempts were made to combat this by using interview schedule prompts to focus discussions about the skills learnt and the impact/significance of these. Nonetheless, findings should be viewed with this in mind.

Whilst the interview schedule prompted about educational outcomes, asking specific questions about how carers felt the programme impacted on school readiness would have been useful. Obtaining school staff's opinions on their involvement with the programme for follow-up would also have been beneficial. Furthermore, more critical questioning within the interview schedule may have highlighted further areas for improvement, specifically around possible negative outcomes from attending the group.

Due to the simplicity of the Content Analysis adopted, only improvements mentioned by foster carers were coded; this may mean some children's improvements were not captured.

Subsequently, giving carers a pre/post group questionnaire may have been helpful. However, carers identified they were not always aware of the extent of foster children's difficulties before the group and so may have over-emphasised their skills. The lack of available Boxall data due to Covid-19 meant that the original SEP design was not undertaken. Analysis of Boxall data pre/post group would have complemented and strengthened the data analysis.

Conclusions and recommendations

This evaluation aimed to understand foster carers' experiences of attending the LEAPlets SRP and the impact and significance upon foster children's development.

Aligned with the SEP aims, three overarching themes were identified by using Content Analysis and Thematic Analysis to collate foster carers' experiences. The group received positive feedback from those interviewed, suggesting that the group is a valuable resource for LAC. Furthermore, the feedback obtained provides some evidence that the group improves certain skills linked with improved child development.

The following recommendations are made, incorporating specific feedback from foster carers (see Table 1).

Table 3. SEP Recommendations

1. If possible, **continue and work to extend the group**. Feedback from foster carers was exceptionally positive, suggesting that this group provides an individually tailored resource and fills a gap in provision for LAC. There is a strong argument to extend the group to other foster carers. This would provide an economical model as once knowledge offered in the group is acquired, carers will be able to notice difficulties with subsequent foster children placed in their care. They will be more resourced to complete exercises at home and feel more confident about this.
2. As foster carers emphasised the importance of relationships with staff, it is important that **staff members are consistent within the group**. This

will provide familiar faces to foster carers and children and create the safe relational base for the group. Furthermore, foster carers found the number of staff intimidating at times and felt this impacted upon children's engagement with the group. Consequently, it is recommended that **as few adults as needed to run and sustain the group should be present.**

3. Foster carers talked about the group being a springboard for more work to do. **Emphasis and forewarning within the initial briefing** that it may feel worse before it gets better will be important, alongside emphasis that foster carers will need to practice skills outside the group, persevere when things feel difficult and that they may need to see exercises in action before the model is fully understood. This can be incorporated into the information provided to foster carers following referral.
4. Some foster carers discussed a lack of context for the group and a preference for some individualised 1:1 support. Further, some foster carers discussed not receiving feedback about their foster child's progress. It is recommended that **staff offer feedback reports to foster carers.** Additionally, **where possible a 1:1 consultation before the group** may help to support carers to apply understanding of how the group will help individual children and what specific skills the group is targeting.
5. It may be useful for the LTSWT to **develop a questionnaire based upon the BUSS skills** that they give to foster carers before and after the group to gauge which skills have specifically improved from attending. This will help to identify if any skills hoped to be targeted were less likely to change and support adaptations to the exercises in the programme.

6. **Further research** would be beneficial to strengthen the evidence base around this group. It is recommended that further evaluations are commissioned in which social workers and education staff are interviewed about their experiences of LEAPlets. Interviewing foster carers on how they apply their learning from the group to their subsequent foster children would also be beneficial.

Dissemination of Findings

Preliminary findings were discussed with commissioners prior to writing this report. These results will be shared at the SEP conference in October 2022 and will also be disseminated to the LTSWT at a team meeting.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Topic Guide

Interview topic guide v3 10-01-21

Introduction

- Welcome and consent
- Confidentiality statement
- Invite to ask questions or ask for a break

Topics/questions

1) Background information

- Context – how came across BUSS programme, route to referral (did foster carer or professional suggest the referral), bit about child's difficulties pre programme (had the foster carer noticed things that the child couldn't do physically / had any concerns pre programme)

2) Tell me about the programme and physical activities

- How would you describe the programme? What did it involve? What did you understand of why you were doing the things that you were doing? Did you get enough information about BUSS to help you understand the programme? Was there anything the programme/staff could have done better?

3) What could child do before programme?

1. Oral strength – how were they in terms of eating – were they able to manage food that needed a bit of effort / chewing? Were they dribbly? What was their language like? Could they be easily understood by someone who didn't know them well? Were they able to blow and suck?
2. Core strength and stability – were they able to sit up? Were they able to sit at a table or in a chair without seeming to get tired quickly or needing to prop themselves up? Could they commando crawl? Could they do a regular crawl (with left leg moving with the right arm and vice versa)?
3. Gravitational Security – how were they when their feet were off the ground? Did they like jumping or did they try and keep their feet quite close to the ground? Did they lean forward to jump or were they able to stand upright and jump?

4. Balance and co-ordination – how were they at running? What was climbing like? How did they manage stairs? Did they ever have to watch their feet when they were walking or doing anything? Could they use cutlery or were they interested in starting to draw?

5. How did they relate to you? And to other people? How would you say they were able to manage when they were feeling happy or upset?

4) What can child do after programme?

1. Oral strength – how are they in terms of eating – are they able to manage food that needs a bit of effort / chewing? Are they dribbly? Has there been any change in this do you think? What is their language like? Could they be easily understood by someone who doesn't know them well? Do you think this has changed? Are they able to blow and suck?

2. Core strength and stability – have you noticed any changes here – e.g. being able to sit up? Are they more able to sit at a table or in a chair without seeming to get tired quickly or needing to prop themselves up? Are they happier to spend time on their tummy? What have you noticed? Can they commando crawl? Can they do a regular crawl (with left leg moving with the right arm and vice versa)?

3. Gravitational Security – how are they when their feet are off the ground? Are they more comfortable jumping or climbing or do they try and keep their feet quite close to the ground?

4. Balance and co-ordination – how are they now at walking and at running? Have you noticed any change? What is climbing like? (Both in terms of how well they're able to do it but also how much fun they have?) How do they manage stairs? Do they ever have to watch their feet when they are walking or doing anything? Has there been any shift with fine motor skills – e.g. cutlery, play doh, playing with cars, using crayons or pencils?

5. How do they relate to you? And to other people? Have you noticed any changes in how they seem on an emotional level or in how they're able to regulate themselves or use you to regulate?

And finally have you noticed any change in the child being able to tune into their body? E.g. knowing when they're hungry or full? Needing to go to the toilet? Hot or cold? Tired? Any other changes?

5) Reasons for changes – foster carer perspective (Based upon Change interview framework)

- What do you think has brought about these changes?
- How much did you expect these changes?
- How likely would these changes have been without the LEAPlets programme?

6) Impact/significance of changes Based upon Change interview framework)

- socially, emotionally, physically, educationally
- How significant are these changes for you and your foster child?
- Why this is significant

7) Ending and signposting

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet



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Participant Information Sheet: Foster Carers (v5)**An Evaluation of the LEAPlets programme – an interagency school readiness programme for children who are looked after based on the BUSS model (Building underdeveloped sensorimotor systems)**

You are invited to take part in a project that looks at your experiences of the LEAPlets programme and how this has impacted upon your foster child's readiness to start school. Before you decide if you would like to take part, it is important that you know why the evaluation is being conducted and what you would be asked to do. Please read this information sheet carefully and feel free to ask any questions before deciding if you would like to take part.

What is the purpose of the study?

We want to try and understand how effective the LEAPlets programme is at preparing looked after children for starting school. If you decide to take part, you will help us to understand how LEAPlets may have impacted upon your foster child and what changes you have noticed.

Why have I been invited?

We are inviting everyone who has recently attended the LEAPlets programme if they would be interested in taking part in this project. **You have been invited to take part as you have recently attended the programme.**

Do I have to take part?

No. It is entirely your choice whether to take part or not. If you agree to take part, you will be asked to sign a separate consent form. You are free to withdraw your data up to 1 week after the interviews have taken place. After this time, transcription will have begun and it would not be possible to withdraw your data. Withdrawing your data will not affect your foster child's care.

What will be involved if I take part?

If you agree to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form. We will then ask you to attend an interview at a place convenient to you (either face to face or arranged by video-technology). This interview will last between 30 mins and 1 hour. We will ask you to tell us about your experiences of being on

the LEAPlets programme. The interviews will be audio recorded so that what you say can be remembered and analysed later.

Will my information be confidential?

If you give your consent to participate you will be given a unique number/name so **you will be anonymous**. Your foster child will also be given a unique number/name to protect their identity. **The only exception to this confidentiality is if we have concerns about risk of harm to you or someone else**. If confidentiality needed to be broken in these instances, we will always try and discuss this with you first where possible. **Quotes from your interview will be used within the written report** of the evaluation. However, all identifying information contained in the quotes will be excluded.

How will my data be stored?

Your information will be stored confidentially, in accordance with the Data Protection Act (2018) and GDPR (2018), any information that could identify you will be stored separately from the answers you give during the interview. Your data that you give us will be kept for 3 years and then securely destroyed. Audio recordings will be destroyed at the end of the study. A link to the university of Leeds privacy policy is included here: <https://dataprotection.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/48/2019/02/Research-Privacy-Notice.pdf>. Please also see attached version of the privacy policy.

What are the benefits of taking part?

There may not be any immediate benefits to you of taking part. You may find that sharing your experiences is a positive experience, especially if what you tell us can help make changes for other looked after children. You may also find having the time and space to talk about your experience helps you to implement any learning from the programme. The Therapeutic Social Work Team will also benefit from the evaluation and will use the findings to improve the LEAPlets programme.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?

We will ask you questions about the LEAPlets programme, which you may find personal, although you do not need to answer any questions that you do not want to. We do not anticipate that you will find the questions distressing.

We recognise that some people may be concerned about taking part in the evaluation for all sorts of reasons. We are always very happy to have a

discussion about your concerns and think about how best to involve you whilst protecting your safety and confidentiality.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The results of this study are likely to be published as presentations, reports and as an academic publication. We will not use any identifying information about you (unless you want to be identified). In this instance, please speak to the evaluator about this. We will contact you to share the results of the service evaluation project.

Who is organising the study?

The study is led by The University of Leeds. It has been organised by Natalie Jones, Trainee Clinical Psychologist and evaluator, Ciara Masterson, Academic Director on the Doctorate in Clinical Psychology (DClin) course and Sarah Lloyd who wrote the BUSS model.

Who has reviewed the study?

This project has been approved by the School of Medicine Ethics Committee (reference number: DClinREC 20-006).

Contact for further information:

Natalie Jones (Trainee Clinical Psychologist and evaluator), Clinical Psychology Training Programme, University of Leeds. Email: ps06n2k@leeds.ac.uk

Dr Ciara Masterson, Academic Director, Clinical Psychology Training Programme, University of Leeds. Email: c.masterson@leeds.ac.uk

Sarah Lloyd, Specialist Occupational Therapist and Play Therapist. Email: sarah.lloyd@leeds.gov.uk

Dr Martha Pearson, Senior Clinical Psychologist. Email: martha.pearson@leeds.gov.uk

What if there is a problem?

If you have any concerns about the study, you can ask to speak to the evaluators who will do their best to answer your questions. **If you are unhappy about the project and would like to make a formal complaint, you can do this by contacting:**

Dr Gary Latchford, Joint Programme Director, Clinical Psychology Training Programme, University of Leeds; Email: g.latchford@leeds.ac.uk .You will be

given one copy of this information sheet to keep with a safe for you to do so.



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Thank you very much for reading this information sheet.

Appendix C: Consent form

ID:

Version number 2

CONSENT FORM

Title of Service Evaluation Project: An Evaluation of the LEAPlets programme – an interagency school readiness programme for children who are looked after based on the BUSS model (Building underdeveloped sensorimotor systems)

Name of Evaluator: Natalie Jones, Trainee Clinical Psychologist

Please
tick
box

1. I confirm that I have read the Participant Information Sheet dated: _____, version _____ for the above project. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my foster child's medical care or legal rights being affected.
3. I understand that I can withdraw my data up to 1 week after the interviews have taken place. I understand that after this time, transcription will have begun and it would not be possible to withdraw my data.

4. I understand that if there are concerns about risks of danger to myself or others, that the SEP team may be obliged to break confidentiality. I understand that if confidentiality needs to be broken, this will be discussed with me in the first instance.
5. I agree that the anonymised data collected may be used to support relevant future research and/or training and may be shared anonymously with other evaluators.
6. I agree that anonymised quotations may be used in the write up of this project. I understand that my data will be included in the event that this evaluation is published.
7. I consent for the interviews to be audio-recorded, securely stored and deleted after they have been checked for accuracy as outlined in the Participant Information Sheet (in line with Data Protection Principles).
8. I consent to being contacted for the project's findings to be shared with me.
9. I agree to take part in the above project.

Name of Participant Date Signature

Name of Person taking consent Date Signature

Appendix D: Recruitment email sent to previous cohorts by the commissioner

Dear LEAPlets group attendee

I hope you are well? My name is Natalie Jones and I am a 2nd year Trainee Clinical Psychologist studying at University of Leeds.

I'm contacting you to see whether you would be interested in taking part in my service evaluation project about the LEAPlets group programme?

The project is interested in looking at your experiences of the LEAPlets programme and how this has impacted upon your foster child's readiness to start school. We are hoping that we will learn about your experiences of the programme and this may help the Therapeutic Social Work Team to improve the LEAPlets programme.

The project would involve you completing a 30-60 minute interview with me and I can be flexible about how this is delivered so this is convenient to you e.g. phone, online or face to face. Your participation is voluntary but if you are interested in taking part, I have attached an information sheet that gives you more information and a consent form to return. Should you have any questions about the study, please contact myself directly or Sarah Lloyd.

If you'd like to take part, you can complete the consent form virtually by following this link: (<https://leeds.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/participant-consent-form-2>) or return a password protected consent form to myself or Sarah by email. Alternatively, I can audio-record your consent if given to me verbally.

If you are interested in taking part, please contact Sarah Lloyd or Natalie Jones via email (ps06n2k@leeds.ac.uk). Please provide your preferred contact information and give consent for me to contact you. I will then contact you to arrange an interview at a convenient time for you.

The project has gained ethical approval by the School of Medicine Research Ethics Committee.

Warm Wishes,

Natalie Jones

Trainee Clinical Psychologist
University of Leeds

Themes	Data extract
<p>1) IMPACT OF CHANGES FOR THE CHILD</p> <p><u>Platform for other changes t1,2,3,4,5,8</u></p>	<p>Line 106 – “(the changes are) Significant as it’s a stepping stone in life – it’s changed her as she’s a somebody now”. t1</p> <p>Lines 26-27 – “They need to be connected to their body, to help them move onto other things” t2</p> <p>Line 116-117 – “without any of that and going back to that nurture, he wouldn’t have been able to do that.” t3</p> <p>Line 119 – “but he has the ability to learn now.” t3</p> <p>Line 130-131 – “Buss is brilliant but for some children it needs to be part of a puzzle alongside therapy etc. maybe this is going to get him in a good place so he can access other things.” T4</p> <p>Line 100 - 101 – “he almost became a child again. he is Fighting with siblings and has a more normal interaction with peers.” T4</p> <p>Line 110-112 – “From a child development perspective if they miss out points of development, it does impact later on so now that he has worked on those skills it could allow him to develop further down the line. Now his emotions are in check, he is going to be able to access learning better.” T4</p> <p>Lines 120-121 – “he has opportunity to learn in school and also have a positive outlook in life and have a good lifestyle, like career, be happy in his body. He can learn to his ability and make friends.” T4</p> <p>Lines 68- “Being able to sit at a table and actually eat a meal not being all over and dribbling everywhere.” T5</p> <p>Lines 68- 76 – “Leaplets might have softened his anger – there was lots of anger, it was frustration</p>

	<p>at him like he was a baby because he had to walk down one step at a time, so he could make friends and making friends meant the pressure was off so he could then open up to learning, be able to hold the pencil better because he had a bit of the core strength and grand motor and fine motor skills help, so the anger sort of went because he could communicate with the others and do what they were doing without feeling embarrassed.” T8</p>
<p><u>Group as life changing; the significance of a ‘normal life’</u>^{3,4,6,7,8}</p>	<p>Lines 101-102 – “He could access learning without any barriers – well there are always some barriers, but his resilience came up so much. He can access it without as much anger.” T8</p> <p>Line 83 – “Buss therapy has definitely been the thing that’s completely blown me away seeing difference in him from that alone.” T3</p> <p>Lines 88-89 – “but it just blows me away completely, it’s absolutely changed this little boy’s life completely.” T3</p> <p>Line 115 – “Honestly completely life changing for that little boy.” T3</p> <p>Line 127- 128 - “if you accept that help and grow and be with people and feel secure and enjoy that security it's just life changing.” T4</p> <p>Line 117- “For him, it’s given him a lease of life!” T6</p> <p>Lines 123-124 – “it’s a life experience for them that they wouldn’t have had without the programme – it’s really positive for them, what they learn whilst there.” T7</p> <p>Lines 125-129- “For the children, they need to know there is a different way of life – the things they have experienced in their lives isn’t what any child should experience and the experiences they get from the group are positive, for example children do ballet and gymnastics and LAC children don’t always get those experiences when they are living at home and I just think it’s a lovely thing for them</p>

	<p>to participate in, not knowing the underlying reason for it.” T7</p> <p>Lines 95-96 – “all foster children want to feel normal and he says it; he feels ‘normal.’” T8</p> <p>Line 94- “It’s life changing as he wasn’t able to be adopted.” T8</p> <p>“I’ve got a happy, boisterous, mischievous little x year old that can belly laugh and enjoy experiences and give back, he can smile and tease kids, and does it in play, he can give back now but before he was a closed off little boy. Now, he’s literally into everything and it’s absolutely perfect” (T3)</p> <p>“Emotionally he just used to be so closed and you just couldn’t get in, now you can’t get out.” (T3)</p>
<p><u>Sparked an interest, curiosity and engagement with the world t3,6</u></p>	<p>Line 112-115 – “because he can do things now he wants to try something else. Before wouldn’t entertain the hot tub, now can’t get him out has time of his life, screams gets out. Wouldn’t get shower, only have bath now runs in shower and screams when has to get out.” T3</p> <p>Line 94-99 – “Shown him what he can do and with encouragement from us and other people. it’s a big world out there and X didn’t see that – Made me confident and I think oh I will try that and I’ll look into things more, especially after reading Sarah’s book, ‘this sort of hits home.’ And sort of not cocooning him so much. It made him aware that’s there more and it’s available to him, he can run around and he can get things. Giving him different things to try. He will touch things in the garden, gentle with bugs and ladybirds, feeds birds with my husband.” T6</p> <p>Line 107 – “he will try things.” T6</p>
<p><u>Being part of something/acceptance helps build relationships (T1,3,4,6,7,8)</u></p>	<p>Line 77-78 - “Being a part of something was really important as she has never been part of anything, for her to be accepted it brought out a different child”. T1</p>

line 30-31 - “the social stuff was as important to her development as the physical work (to my foster child) and by the end, they came out holding hands... so that was her first relationship with another child really” t1

Line 101-102 – “Able to do things with other children and at school first 2 days, every one shouts bye to her, she is so popular and for her it must be lovely.” T1

Line 108- “she can participate in ‘foster’ family life – be ‘a big foster sister’”. T1

Line 105-107 – “he can interact now, he can play. He’s gone from no play skills whatsoever, to being able to play alongside children but now he can play with children and not just children he knows, he can interact with other children so for him that’s absolutely huge for building relationships.” T3

Line 108 -109 – “he’s now got a huge attachment, he knows who his primary caregiver is, he knows the pecking order of the house and built up cute relationships with the children.” t3

Lines 117-118 – “Now he is beginning to acknowledge other people, he has friends and individuals his size he can interact with to develop his social skills.” T4

Line 81 – “To be able to be part of something and join in.” t5

Line 80 – “It helps him fit in.” t5

Lines 100-102 – “so much more sociable with people, he would cower at first when we got him and I had to earn his trust, he was scared of me. I had to earn his trust. Don’t always play together but play side by side, seen siblings, he smiles.” T6

Line 90 – “Leaplets has helped a lot – especially socially.” T7

	<p>Line 98- “the social side as well is brilliant.” T7</p> <p>Lines 109-110 – “sometimes we would meet with them outside the group so children got to know each other that way as well.” T7</p> <p>Line 95 – “and the fact he is doing really well and has friends.” T8</p>
<p>2) FACILITATORS OF CHANGE</p> <p>Sticking with it: routine and practicing helped establish change (T1,2,3,6,7,8)</p>	<p>Lines 81-82 - “we did them at home, and she wanted to do them, we kept it up at home” (the exercises). T1</p> <p>Line 62 – “Continuity and repetitiveness – doing the same activities over and over again.” T2</p> <p>Lines 81-82 – “he struggled with it, struggles with change but it is getting easier for him and it is the same routine we are doing and I am there to support him and it’s familiar faces and hearing their voices.” T2</p> <p>Line 63 – “persevering (brought about changes).” T2</p> <p>Lines 81-82 – “routines, boundaries and structure have helped.” T3</p> <p>Line 123 – “I was so taken with it, I bought soft play things at home to continue at home.” t3</p> <p>Line 58 – “Buss programme and him taking part and wanting to change the way his arms and legs worked (brought about the changes).” T5</p> <p>Line 82 – “Consistency in interacting with him (brought about changes).” T6</p> <p>Line 16-17 – “We got a peanut ball at home and eventually he would go on his tummy.” T6</p> <p>Line 28- “Being repetitive with them and doing practice at home (brought about changes).” T7</p>

	<p>Line 92- “The things they do and I follow up at home, it is building on their confidence and ability to do things.” T7</p> <p>Line 83- 84- “it became routine which helped. Sticking to it really helped and we did the practice at home.” T8</p>
<p>Impact of the group itself</p> <p>- Change would take a long time without the group (T3,4,5,8)</p>	<p>Lines 94-96- “I think potentially some of them would have eventually happened, I don’t think in any way shape or form they’d have been as quick as it has been, I think the delays would have been far far longer than what they are.” T3</p> <p>Lines 97-99 – “It’s so simple, you feel would this have happened anyway? But we had him for 12 months with no improvement or changes so in some respect it could possibly have happened, but it has happened whilst we have been doing the group.” t4</p> <p>Lines 65-66 –“I don’t think there would have been any changes (without the group) or if there had have been, it would have taken maybe years and he would probably resent the changes I was trying to make.” T5</p> <p>Lines 89-91 – “It would have eventually came but it was just more focused. This new little boy, came on in such a short time, from not speaking to being able to read a story.” T8</p> <p>Lines 98-99 – “Without Leaplets it would have been a very very long road.” T3</p>
<p>- Little changes add up to make the difference (T2,5,6)</p>	<p>Line 66-67 - “Although only little steps, we are tipping in there...we are Tapping away but it is only a little tap.” T2</p> <p>Lines 68-70 - “he doesn’t look while Sarah reads the story but he’s looking at it in his own time but he’s sat there and he’s looking at the story and that’s a big step for him as he wouldn’t have done that</p>

	<p>before.” T2</p> <p>Lines 59-60 – “little things you didn’t think would matter but of course they matter! They all help to change and make the body work better.” T5</p> <p>Line 84-85 – “I just think the programme is amazing, something it doesn’t seem so big you take things for granted and these little things you wouldn’t believe made so much difference.” t5</p> <p>Lines 114-116 – “I can’t believe it. when he took first steps I just gasped and couldn’t believe he’s doing this. it’s such a big step for him, watching him jump like wow. A big big achievement for him and a big achievement for us to see him do that.” T6</p> <p>Lines 99-100 – “At first he went backwards – tantrums etc but it was an appropriate development rather than being the adult so he almost became a child again.” T4</p>
<p>- Enjoyment and child’s freedom in the group (T1,6,7)</p>	<p>Line 79 – “She really looked forward to it so was nice for her to have that.” T1</p> <p>Line 82 – “he was free to run around.” T6</p> <p>Lines 102-103 – “seeing the children do these activities that they really enjoy. They don’t see it as a programme or doing work as such, they just see it as a fun activity.” T7</p>
<p>- Access to encouraging and knowledgeable staff that go the extra mile (T1,2,5,6)</p>	<p>Line 110- “Involvement, help and support from Sarah – not just that ¾ of time of group, sending videos.” t1</p> <p>Line 75-76 “only have to ask the staff and they are there helping me”. T2</p> <p>Line 92-93 – “the staff there have an understanding of the children that need this sort of support.” T2</p>

- **Individually tailored and non-judgmental group ethos provides an environment for LAC to participate (T2,6,7)**

Lines 94-96 – “and the people who are there are in the know and are there for advice and are willing to give you that support and advice and if they can’t, they will refer to someone else and they come to you.” T2

Lines 74-75 - “if it wasn’t for this group, I really don’t think my foster child would have had the support around him he has got now”. t2

Line 85-86 – “The support you get as well, I’ve had a lot of support as well.” T5

Line 13 – “Staff are so good at giving them attention and giving me tips – have you tried this?” T6

Line 17 – “eventually he would go on his tummy, with encouragement from sarah and staff.” T6

Lines 29-30 – “staff went out of way to be make everybody feel comfortable and welcome.” T6

Line 125 - “Sarah is fantastic, any questions she would answer them.” T6

Line 16 – “At leaplets, he started joining in more, watching what other children were doing.” T6

Line 73-74 - “Something like this is unique” – “I’ve never heard of anything out there like this before”. T2

Lines 91-92 – “lots of play places out there are so busy, this is more tailored to what these children need.” T2

Lines 29-30 – “staff went out of way to be make everybody feel comfortable and welcome – if your child did something where you were like’ oh no’ it didn’t matter.” T6

Lines 123-124 – “it’s a life experience for them that they wouldn’t have had without the programme –

	<p>it's really positive for them, what they learn whilst there." T7</p> <p>Lines 125-129- "For the children, they need to know there is a different way of life – the things they have experienced in their lives isn't what any child should experience and the experiences they get from the group are positive, for example children do ballet and gymnastics and LAC children don't always get those experiences when they are living at home and I just think it's a lovely thing for them to participate in, not knowing the underlying reason for it." T7</p>
<p>- Child and carer learn from others & extend/apply this learning outside of the group (T6,7,8)</p>	<p>Line 16 – "At leaplets, he started joining in more, watching what other children were doing."T6</p> <p>Lines 21-23 – "Watching the other children was good for him. If another child cried he would scream but he learnt over time, watching other children be comforted by other carers like we did for him and I think that helped him." T6</p> <p>Lines 84 –85 – "seeing other children and seeing what they are doing and what they are getting." T6</p> <p>Lines 105-108 – "they come into contact with children of a similar age. I wouldn't necessarily say they sit and engage with each other but they know that they are there, seeing other children around – not interacting but laid with adults and they can see other children around you know as we do." T7</p> <p>Lines 111-112 – "it's a different experience for them, done the world of good, some children show different emotions which shows them it's ok to show your emotions and adults will try and help." T7</p> <p>Line 88-89 - "I will probably do a lot of the leaplets stuff at home on my own with other foster children." T8</p>
<p>- More work still to do (T3,5,6)</p>	<p>Line 119- "and he is still delayed but he has the ability to learn now." T3</p>

	<p>Lines 70-71 – “Socially he still struggles, there hasn’t been much change socially because he doesn’t fit with his peers and struggles- he can't communicate.” T5</p> <p>Lines 72-73 – “I see that more at home and when he is accompanied but wish that was more outside.” T5</p> <p>Line 120 – “Yes he has some issues but so be it.” T6</p>
<p>- Worse before it gets better (T4,8)</p>	<p>Lines 82-84 – “We had some meltdowns at the beginning, I felt terrible, but within a month, it became routine which helped.” T4</p> <p>“It got worse before it got better.” T8</p>
<p>3) CHANGES FOR THE CARER</p> <p>Emotional and relational changes</p> <p>- Pride/reward for carer (T1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8)</p>	<p>Line 106-107 – “lovely for me to see her almost feels like she’s just grown up overnight.” T1</p> <p>Line 104 - “For me to see this huge change in him, I honestly could not be more proud”. T3</p> <p>Lines 81 – 82 – “it’s nice to see. I could cry sometimes when I think how far he has come.” T5</p> <p>Lines 27-28 – “Me and my little boy got so much out of it. To see him achieving these things you know, you know when he first came we weren’t sure he was going to achieve, and he has. He has.” T6</p> <p>Lines 118- 122 – “it’s very satisfying to see the change in the children and help them develop that,</p>

	<p>they've come from a background where they've been neglected so its lovely to see them experience and have enjoyment of something they don't realise is doing them the world of good; that there's a hidden meaning behind what they are doing but you just look at the excitement and the joy it is bringing them." T7</p> <p>Lines 103-104- "It helped me to see him and gives you a sense of pride that you've been involved in that." T8</p>
<p>- Carer relationships/support (T1, 2, 5, 6, 7)</p>	<p>Lines 10-11 "parents get to know each-other in a small group...quite good it was like that, we met the same ones each week." T1</p> <p>Line 14 – "I met up with another carer this week. that's something we keep ongoing." T1</p> <p>Line 73-74 - "Something like this is unique – I've never heard of anything out there like this before and the support we get from it". T2</p> <p>Line 72-73 – "I don't think they would (changes without the group) and I don't know how I would have managed it, I think I would have been struggling." T2</p> <p>Line 85-86 – "The support you get as well, I've had a lot of support as well." t5</p> <p>Line 13-14 – "and talking to other parents as well so we could give eachother tips as well." T6</p> <p>Lines 89-91 - "Some of them I wouldn't have even known, I thought she was running and jumping not observing she was leaning forward – something I wouldn't have taken on board. That really stood out when Sarah pointed out to me" t1</p> <p>Line 15 – "It gave me confidence." T6</p>

<p>- Skilling up foster carers and increased carer confidence (T1,6,7,8)</p>	<p>Lines 90-92 – “I wouldn’t have known about peanut balls, so would he have got tummy time? Certain things they use that, do you realise things haven’t been done with him in the past, don’t always get full information from social services, they don’t always know.” T6</p> <p>Line 90-91 – “Leaplets has helped a lot – especially socially, and for me personally, it has helped me (especially during covid), we have all benefitted from it.” T7</p> <p>Lines 101-102 – “It gave me a boost in caring for the children and knowing there was that support and help there for me.” T7</p> <p>Lines 106-110 – “it gave me a sense of enlightenment and I thought actually I can do this, it’s not that hard, I can help him with this. It makes you feel enabled. It made me feel like I could help him, these things are not that hard if you understand them and even if you don’t understand them if you follow them, you can see the change and it might take a little bit but you did that; I did that.” T8</p>
<p>- See it to believe it; seeing the changes in action provided understanding needed to support the child (T1,5,8)</p>	<p>Line 26-29 - “I didn’t fully understand it in the meeting but I probably needed to see it in progress first to understand it, so that development grows, so you don’t notice it yourself and you don’t realise that has to happen to the extent it did – you see it, you see the difference”. T1</p> <p>Line 80-81 - “Only when I saw her, did I realise how good it had been for her and how much it has brought her on”. T1</p> <p>Line 78 – “It has helped me understand the things he has missed and me being able to support that.” T5</p> <p>Lines 14-17 – “to be honest didn’t think what I was asked to do would make a difference, but when you actually start it you realise it does make a difference and things I took for granted myself, I didn’t realise he probably hadn’t had any of that, not until you actually get into it that you see the difference.”</p>

	<p>T5</p> <p>Lines 104-106 - "...and it helped me to understand him a bit more as well. Although I knew he was angry and I understood why he was angry, I didn't actually understand that physical activities would make any difference." T8</p> <p>Lines 33-34 - - "if someone definitely thinks it's ridiculous, it doesn't matter what you send them, it will still be ridiculous until it actually works" t8</p> <p>Lines 38-39 - "but still it made no sense to me until you see it in action." T8</p>
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