2.6. Knowledge of looked-after children and young people

- An ability to draw on knowledge that looked-after children/young people are over-represented in the inpatient population

- An ability to draw on knowledge that a looked-after child is defined as a child/young person who:
  - has been in the care of their local authority for more than 24 hours
  - is living with foster parents, in a residential children's home or a residential setting (e.g. a school or secure unit)

- An ability to draw on knowledge that children/young people enter care for a number of reasons, e.g.:
  - with the agreement of parents (e.g. who are too unwell to look after their child, or if the child/young person needs respite care)
  - where services have intervened because they felt the child/young person was at significant risk of harm (and where the child/young person is usually the subject of a court order)
  - where the child/young person is an unaccompanied asylum seeker, with no responsible adult to care for them

- An ability to draw on knowledge that a child/young person stops being looked after when they are adopted, return home or are 18 years old (though local authorities are required to support young people leaving care at 18 until they are at least 21)

- An ability to draw on knowledge that:
  - most children/young people who become looked after do so because of abuse, neglect or family dysfunction
  - entry into care is often traumatic and accompanied by a significant sense of loss

- An ability to draw on knowledge that looked-after children/young people:
  - are between four and five times more likely to self-harm in adulthood
  - are five times more likely to be at risk of mental, emotional and behavioural problems
  - are six to seven times more likely to have conduct disorders

- An ability to draw on knowledge that children/young people who enter care because of violence, abuse and neglect:
  - will usually have complex emotional and mental health needs
  - may display behaviour that challenges
  - have problems forming secure and positive relationships with adults and peers
  - may not feel safe even in safe places, and so struggle to engage with support

Transitions in and out of care with looked-after children/young people

- An ability to draw on knowledge that there is a significant impact on emotional wellbeing and mental health when children/young people move repeatedly in and out of care and/or experience frequent placement breakdowns, and this will impact on their reactions to transitions into and from the inpatient context

- An ability to draw on knowledge that while returning home from care is often the best outcome, for some this can result in further abuse or neglect, and to a cycle of entering and leaving care; and an ability to assess:
  - the risks the family/carers could pose to the child/young person
  - how much the family/carers are able to change
- The family/carers' ability to protect the child/young person from harm, taking into account their history and current situation

- Where a return to home is possible, an ability to work with the child/young person and their family/carers to help strengthen their relationship
- An ability to agree with the parents/carers what needs to happen before and after the child/young person returns home

- An ability to liaise with relevant agencies and services, to:
  - share understanding and information
  - put in place support for the child/young person and their family/carers before and after the return home
  - return the child/young person home gradually, and plan for what will happen if the return is not going well
  - monitor how the child/young person and their family/carers are managing