

Education of Children and Young People in Care (Supported by the Local Authority) Procedure

Guidance on Children in Care (CiC)

This guidance procedure sets out the key problems and challenges that looked-after children, schools and the governing body may face. It offers practical advice that will be inclusive of looked-after children and ensure they will fulfil their potential.

Who is a 'child in care'?

Under the Children Act 1989, a child is looked after by the Local Authority if he or she is in their care or is provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the authority. They can be subject to a full care order or accommodated by the LA under a voluntary agreement with their parents.

Looked-after children and schools

Looked-after children deserve the same life chances as any other child: to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution to society and achieve economic well-being. That is why LAs have a duty under section 52 of the Children Act 2004 to promote the educational achievement of the children in their care. All looked-after children have distinct backgrounds, identities, aspirations and particular needs.

However, they will only be able to achieve this with the active cooperation of schools. Looked-after children as a group are no less able than their peers. Their lives are often characterised by instability and many spend too much time out of school. As a result, they often underachieve, fall behind with school work and often do not receive the help and support they need to catch up.

School governors have an important role to play in championing the needs of looked-after children on their school's roll. They can:

- Ensure that designated teachers for this vulnerable group (and other relevant staff) understand how they can actively support LAs to discharge their duty under the Children Act 2004.
- Help ensure that the needs of looked-after children are reflected in the school's development plan and self-evaluation including:
 - planning
 - the role of designated teachers
 - school admissions
 - record-keeping and transfer
 - pastoral and study support
 - out-of-school-hours learning

Personal Education Plans for Children And Young People In Public Care

Every Child and Young person in public care needs a Personal Education Plan which ensures access to services and support; contributes to stability, minimises disruption and broken schooling; signals particular and special needs; establishes clear goals and acts as a record of progress and achievement.

DfE Guidance requires local authorities to provide all young people with a Personal Education Plan (PEP) This requirement has been given statutory force. The PEP should be an integral part of the Care Plan.

The PEP covers four areas: an achievement record, identification of developmental and educational needs, short term targets and long term plans.

If a child has Special Educational Needs the PEP should detail their needs and the support already provided. The child will have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and this should be discussed and attached to the PEP. The meeting will also need to record the actions to be taken by other corporate parents to support the IEP and the child's education.

Timing

When a child enters public care the social worker will inform the school and the Education Coordinator for Children in Care.

The first PEP should be prepared within 20 days i.e. in time for the first review (the 28 day review).

The PEP will normally be reviewed concurrently with the Care Plan, i.e. within 28 days, 3 months, 6 months, etc. However reviews can take place anytime in response to need.

The PEP can be done as part of the CiC review, immediately before it or at other times if more appropriate. The timing should be discussed with the Reviewing Officer.

Roles

The social worker is responsible for initiating the PEP in partnership with the child or young person, designated teacher, parent or family member, carer and any other person who may be relevant.

The Designated Portfolio Holder will be expected to provide information and contribute to the PEP meeting and assume management at school level. In the case of a young person without a school place the social worker should liaise with the Education Coordinator on the PEP. The Social Inclusion Officer of the LA should be invited to the PEP meeting.

In the case of a child who is being offered a placement at one of the Pupil Referral units, PEP's should be completed with the teacher in charge at the admission meeting and subsequent review meetings at the unit. Foster carers will attend and contribute to PEP meetings and have a key role in monitoring to ensure that the actions outlined in the PEP are carried out.

Designated Teacher/Portfolio Holders

Act as a resource and advocate for children and young people in public care. Children's Services should coordinate suitable training for designated teachers. At Carisbrooke we have a dedicated portfolio holder who is our advocate for young people in public care, who understands about care and the impact of care on education. In school, this person is critical to accessing services and support and ensuring that the school shares and supports high expectations of students and supportive agencies. The designated portfolio holder will provide information on test results, attendance and academic progress for the education planning meeting

The designated portfolio holder should also ensure speedy transfer of education information between agencies and individuals and that each child has a Personal Education Plan. It will also be ensured that the primary carer has any home school agreements and will act as a point of contact for the carer.

Pupils need careful induction in new schools and teachers need to be diligent to ensure no one is isolated or bullied. The school's designated portfolio holder has an important role in supervising the smooth induction of young people in public care, treading a path between the child's need for confidentiality and making a child feel welcome.

The Personal Education Plan requires an adult to sit with the child and review progress. If a child or young person has special educational needs they should be known to the Coordinator of Learning Support. Their PEP should detail their needs and the support already provided. Action should be taken according to the code of practice and strictly within the timescales prescribed. Designated portfolio holder should alert the senior officer for children with AEN and the Education coordinator for Looked after Children/Children in Care of any delays.

The Education Coordinator For Looked After Children

The Education Coordinator will audit progress with the PEPs system and offer induction training and multi agency workshops. Information, advice and the Viewpoint software will be made available at the LACES Drop In Education Centre (Looked After Children's Education Service). The Education coordinator will attend regional meetings and conferences to benchmark the progress on the Isle of Wight. The LACES team will also consult with children and young people. LACES education assistants will act as advocates for children and young people at PEP meetings if they request this. N.B. Pupils managed by Off Island Social Services teams are not currently eligible for support by the Island based LACES Drop In Education Centre or to access support from the LACES team even though these students' needs are similar to those of Island based students. School is cognoscente of their needs and they are supported by the portfolio holder through meetings, monitoring and provision through the Lin Sheffrin Student Support Centre. The Education Coordinator will audit the PEPs system monthly. When individual cases are complex the Education coordinator can offer advice and information to assist social workers and teachers with the PEP process. If there are serious difficulties accessing provision (and when time allows) the education coordinator will also chair these PEP meetings.

Children's Participation

Young people will be given a copy of the DfE Young Peoples' Guide when they come into care and copies are available at the LACES Drop-In centre. Children and young people will be able to give their views on Viewpoint available on computers at the LACES Education Drop-In Centre and on lap top computers with the Social Services Children in Care team (0-16)

Teachers should ask if they wish to express their views on the form provided (Pupil View) and take this form to the PEP meeting.

Social workers should remind children and young people that they can take a friend or advocate to the PEP meeting.

The PEP meeting should support the child or young person to give their views. The meeting will be child friendly and consider ways that corporate parents can support the child or young person.

Social workers are responsible for ensuring that the child or young person has a copy of the completed PEP to keep and refer to. The reviewing officers will check that are being sent copies.

Monitoring in School

Clear monitoring and assessment procedures in keeping with those used for all students within school will be followed. The PAL (Progress and Achievement Leader) and portfolio holder for CiC will take responsibility for overseeing the monitoring process, and informing the Parents and Carers of the student's progress, in keeping with school practices.

Information Management in Schools Data Collection and Dissemination

Fair Processing Notice (FPN) for children in need and children looked after:

Personal data about children in need are held by local authorities (LAs) providing services to them.

From April 2009 onwards, this data will be passed on to the DfE in the new annual Children in Need (CIN) Census. Data on children looked after are already passed on to the DfE on an annual basis (Children Looked After SDA903 return).

The guidance notes on the preparation and issue of a Fair Processing Notice provide suggested text for LAs to include when sending notices to children in need or children looked after and/or their parents or carers. This text sets out in general terms what the DfE does with the data.

The FPN guidance has been drafted to reflect the law at the date of publication. This is DfE's interpretation of the law; the guidance is not intended as a substitute for legal advice, and the point of contact for LAs for such advice will remain the LA's legal department or relevant legal adviser.

The portfolio holder for CiC will log data onto the SIMs system in accordance with Information Management in Schools Data Collection and Dissemination