



Looked After Children Policy

Responsibility of:
Date of Approval:
Review Cycle:

Assistant Principal: Achievement and Support
24/5/2018
Every 3 years

New Collaborative Learning Trust's (NCLT) policy for supporting Looked After Children takes into account statutory guidance provided by the Department of Education. These duties and responsibilities, as set out within the Education Act 2002 section 175 (Duties of LEAs and governing bodies in relation to the welfare of children), the Role and Responsibility of the Designated Teacher – Statutory Guidance for School Governors (2009), DfE Statutory Guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education 2016, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2017 and Promoting the Education of Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children 2018.

Definition

A child in need is defined under the Children Act 1989 as a child who is unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable level of health or development, or whose health and development is likely to be significantly or further impaired, without the provision of services; or a child who is disabled. Local authorities are required to provide services for children in need for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting their welfare. Children in need may be assessed under section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

Background

Children looked after by the local authority experience a number of interlocking educational disadvantages. Some are “external” – the experience of frequently disrupted schooling, the lack of opportunities to acquire basic skills. Others are “emotional” – experience of trauma, low self-esteem, attachment issues.

Without additional support and interventions Looked After Children may experience;

- Poor exam success rates in comparison with the general population.
- Poorer attendance and higher exclusion rates.
- A high level of disruption and change in educational placements.
- Lack of involvement in extra curricular activities.
- Inconsistent or no attention paid to Directed Independent Learning.
- Underachievement in further and higher education.

It is therefore essential the trust promotes the achievement and wellbeing of such vulnerable children, who may also face additional barriers due to their race, ethnicity, religion and beliefs, sexual orientation or because they are disabled.

Definitions around Children Looked After by the Local Authority

The Children Act 1989, as amended by the Children and Families Act 2014, introduced changes in terminology.

The term “in care” now refers solely to children who are subject to Care Orders. Children who are cared for on a voluntary basis are “accommodated” by the local authority. Both these groups are said to be “Looked After Children” (LAC).

Accommodated children also include those in receipt of respite care – if it exceeds 20 days on one episode or over 120 days a year.

It is important not to confuse a young person's legal status with their living arrangements.

For example a child on a Care Order can be living with:

- Foster carers.
- In a children's home.
- In a residential school.
- With relatives or even with parents – under supervision of Children's Services.

Similarly, an "accommodated" child can be living:

- In foster care.
- In a children's home.
- In a residential school.

A private foster carer is someone other than a parent or a close relative who cares for a child for a period of 28 days or more, in agreement with the child's parent. It applies only to children under 16 years, or under 18 if they are disabled. A private fostering arrangement is not when a child is looked after by the local authority or placed in any residential home, hospital or school.

If students are subject to a private fostering arrangement they are not recorded as looked after within the trust, they will be viewed as potentially vulnerable by virtue of their living arrangements and will be monitored in the same way as other vulnerable children.

More information relating to private fostering for both West Yorkshire and South Yorkshire can be viewed via the links below.

West Yorkshire

<http://www.wakefield.gov.uk/Documents/schools-children/fostering/private-fostering.pdf#search=private%20fostering>

South Yorkshire

<http://www.dscb.co.uk/private-fostering-2>

Previously Looked After Children

Previously looked-after children are:

An 'eligible' child is a child who is looked-after, aged 16 or 17 and has been looked after by a local authority for a period of 13 weeks or periods amounting in total to 13 weeks, which began after they reached 14 and ended after they reached 16.

Were adopted from 'state care' outside England and Wales. 'state care' is care provided by a public authority, a religious organisation, or any other organisation whose sole or main purpose is to benefit society.

It is important to recognise that children who are post-LAC may have similar needs to those of a Looked After Child. Although the statutory framework with social care may not be in place, the trust and its colleges recognise the need for additional support and will review each case individually and ensure support is available.

The Role of the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children

(parts taken from the designated teacher for looked after and previously looked after children 2018). Full guidance can be obtained from

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683561/The_designated_teacher_for_looked-after_and_previously_looked-after_children.pdf

Every school/college must have a Designated Teacher for Looked After Children.

The Designated Teacher has a leadership role in promoting the educational achievement of every Looked After Child within each of the colleges. The culture of the trust and its colleges ensures that Looked After Children believe they can succeed and aspire to their next step should this be higher education, apprenticeships or employment.

The Designated Teacher for Looked After Children should have the lead responsibility for helping staff in college to understand the things which can affect how looked after children can learn and achieve.

Everyone involved in helping looked after children achieve should be supported by the Designated Teacher to;

- have high expectations of looked after childrens' involvement in learning and educational progress;
- be aware of the emotional, psychological and social effects of loss and separation from birth families, the reasons for the separation and that some children may find it difficult to build relationships of trust with adults because of their experiences;
- understand the reasons which may be behind a looked after child's behaviour, and why they may need more support than other children, however this should not be an excuse for lowering expectations of what the child is capable of achieving;
- understand how important it is to see looked after children as individuals rather than as a homogenous group and to not publicly treat them different to their peers;
- appreciate the importance of showing sensitivity about who else knows about a child's looked after status;
- appreciate the central importance of the child's Personal Education Plan (PEP) in helping to create a shared understanding between teachers, carers, social workers and most importantly, the child and what everyone needs to do to help in order for them to achieve their potential;
- have the level of understanding they need of the role of the social workers, virtual school in local authorities and how education and the function of the PEP fits into the wider care planning duties of the authority which looks after the child.

The Designated Teacher has a key role in making sure there is a central point of initial contact within the college who can manage the process of how the college engages with others (eg social services, virtual school heads), works in a joined up way and minimises the disruption to the child's education.

Role of the Board of Directors in Supporting Looked After Children

The appointment of a Designated Teacher in accordance with the regulations is a core function of the Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors should, in partnership with the Principals, ensure that through their training and development, the Designated Teacher has the opportunity to acquire and keep up to date the necessary skills, knowledge and training to understand and respond to the specific teaching and learning needs of Looked After Children.

The Designated Teacher should be given the appropriate level of support in order to fulfill their role. The Board of Directors and the college leadership teams should also make sure that the Designated Teacher role contributes to the deeper understanding of everyone within the trust who are likely to be involved in supporting Looked After Children to achieve.

The Board of Directors, in partnership with the Principal, is responsible for monitoring how well the role is working. Achievement will be monitored closely throughout the year and appropriate interventions will be put in place as required when a looked after child is not fully achieving their potential.

The Voice of a Looked After Child

The Designated Teacher for Looked After Children should act as an advocate for Looked After Children. The views of Looked After Children should be heard and opportunities should be provided for these to be voiced privately, via 1:1 meetings as well as informally. Looked After Children need to be clear that all staff will support them and act on any concerns as their advocate and be the link with outside agencies including their social worker and carer.

Looked after Children should always contribute to the PEP process and should attend review meetings wherever possible.

Exclusions and Looked After Children

Every college does its best to avoid excluding children and in the case of Looked After Children it is even more important. Designated Teachers in partnership with others in college and the Local Governing Body, as necessary should:

- be involved in any discussions related to decisions about potential exclusions of Looked After Children
- make sure the authority which looks after the child and the child's carer are involved in such a decision
- ensure all formal interventions have been implemented prior to an exclusion.

Data for exclusion rates within the colleges as a whole will be reviewed by the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children to identify any trends in respect of Looked After Children.

Additional Support

The Designated Teacher and SENCO should make sure that Looked After Children are prioritised in any selection of students who would benefit from interventions and that they will have access to academic focused study support.

Referrals to other agencies e.g. counselling services will be made with the child, carer and social worker.

Children, carers, social workers and the Virtual School will be involved in all SEND reviews, which if possible will be combined with PEP reviews.

Communication Around Looked After Children

It is important that all teaching staff within the college who are in contact with the child are aware that they are being looked after by the local authority. This will be done through notification of the "LAC Flag" on Cedar which once placed on, staff will receive a formal notification through email. This will be the responsibility of either the Designated Teacher or Safeguarding Lead.

Good communication is essential between professionals. It is important to exchange information in-between formal reviews if there are significant changes in a young person's circumstances e.g. if there is a change of course, there is a change of care placement or there are significant issues such as behaviour and attendance. The Designated Teacher and or the Progress Tutor will be the central point of contact.

Colleges, and social workers within Children's Services should endeavour to co-ordinate their review meetings e.g. to have an Annual Statement or Education Health Care Plan Review and a Personal Education Plan or PEP meeting or review. This is necessary to ensure the child does not feel overwhelmed by the number of meetings and the same information is not having to be repeatedly shared.

The Designated Teacher for Looked After Children will be responsible for providing reports on the progress and attendance of all children in care to the virtual school and Board of Directors as requested.

Transition and Admission

All Looked After Children who apply to NCLT colleges will be offered transitional visits in addition to being able to attend open day/evenings. The Designated Teacher will lead and arrange all visits as necessary.

Looked After Children will have dedicated on-going support through a Progress Tutor, who will be their first point of contact throughout their time at college.

Once enrolled, records will be requested from the student's previous school. This will provide information to inform the PEP. Contact arrangements will be clarified at this meeting including who to call first in an emergency.

When Looked After Children leave the college, either due to progression into Higher Education or transfer to another educational provider, contact will be made with the new educational establishment.

Careers Advice and Progression Planning

All students are able to receive careers guidance within their college and 1:1 appointments can be made throughout the year for further support. Looked After Children, as all other students, will have a dedicated Progress Tutor who will support them with their progression planning, HE applications and also employability skills.

Destinations will be monitored and reported at the end of every academic year.

Record Keeping and Information Sharing

The Safeguarding Lead will co-ordinate record keeping for all Looked after Children in College. Looked After Children status will be appropriately "flagged" on Cedar.

Sensitivity is a priority in sharing information with members of the college staff. We are guided by best practice and on the "need to know". Wherever possible students' wishes are taken into account in sharing information within the staff team.

Partnership Working

NCLT and its colleges values the views of parents/carers. We firmly believe in developing strong partnerships with carers, parents and residential care workers to enable students to achieve their full potential.

We recognise the essential contributions that external support services make in assisting Looked after Children and we are committed to developing positive partnerships with all involved.