Lancashire Virtual School for Looked After Children.

Guidance for Education Providers, Social Care and Key Partners

20th March 2020
School Closures and Educational Provision for Lancashire Children Looked After (CLA)

(also includes Pupil Referral Units and Alternative Providers who are registered schools).

Thank you for your patience regarding school closures and education provision for Lancashire Children Looked After (CLA). We appreciate that this is a difficult time and whilst ensuring that we keep everyone informed it is also vital that accurate, consistent information is provided. We are led by updates from the Government, Department for Education and Public Health and as you will be aware these change daily.

The Government guidance for schools and settings remaining open to offer essential childcare is updated regularly and is accessed on the Gov.uk website.


In terms of the guidance, where appropriate the term ‘parent’ is also applicable to carers.

Within the guidance the government has identified the following key principles;

1. If it is at all possible for children to be at home safely, then they should be.
2. If a child needs specialist support, has an EHCP, is vulnerable (has an allocated Social Worker), looked after but the local authority, or has a parent who is a critical/key worker, then educational provision in the form of childcare, should be available for them.
3. Parents should not rely for childcare, upon those who are advised to be in the stringent social distancing category such as grandparents, friends, or family members with underlying conditions.
4. Parents should also do everything they can to ensure children are not mixing socially in a way which can continue to spread the virus. They should observe the same social distancing principles as adults.
5. Residential special schools, boarding schools and special settings continue to care for children wherever possible.

Further guidance for parents and carers stipulates that;

- For vulnerable children, the child’s social worker will work with you to assess the best option for the child.

Social distancing is still the priority, so if children can remain at home safely, they should remain at home. This is so that schools can remain safe places as part of the social distancing response.
This must be reviewed on a case by case basis with consideration given to placement stability, context of placement and any associated risks to the child or young person.

Schools should contact the parents and carers of identified children and young people to ascertain whether they require provision, **this must be in agreement with the child’s social worker.**

**Social Workers should also contact schools to confirm that children are allocated a place when this is assessed as the safe option for a child.**

**Provision for pupils remaining at home:**

CLA who it has been agreed will remain at home should have access to remote learning or learning materials provided by their school.

**Lancashire CLA Attendance Monitoring and Safeguarding**

This information applies to the education provision for Lancashire CLA, whether they attend a Lancashire setting or are educated out of borough.

If at any point a child or young person has been in contact with individuals who show symptoms, or they themselves become unwell the most recent advice and guidance from Public Health and the Government must be followed regarding isolation and treatment.

**Placement Offer**

As an identified group, CLA have this provision available to them should it be required and schools and settings should have contacted the parents and carers of all CLA that attend to ascertain whether they will take up the offer to attend the provision or remain at home, in line with the social distancing recommendations.

**Monitoring Attendance**

**School Age Children - Reception to Year 11**

We are requesting that a designated member of staff contacts the Lancashire Virtual School to confirm which of their Lancashire CLA are accessing on site provision. This can be done via the Virtual School mailbox Virtualschool@lancashire.gov.uk or to your named Virtual School area consultant by phone or secure email.
Post 16 CLA: Further Education Providers;

The Virtual School lead for post 16 is collating the provision that is being provided by Further Education settings, to ascertain if CLA/Care Leaver Students are able to continue to attend or learning at home.

Social Workers/PA's need to ensure that pupils unable to attend their college site are safe.

Alternative Provision: when a pupil is dual rolled.

Where a child is on roll of a school but attending Alternative Provision it is vital the school and the provider agree whether the young person will continue to access provision, in agreement with the Social Worker and carer.

If continued attendance is agreed, the alternative provider must notify the school of attendance at each session.

CLA with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)

Within the guidance, the Government are encouraging both residential specialist provision and specialist schools and colleges to remain open, whilst acknowledging the challenges in supporting this particular cohort. Specialist providers have been advised to make case by case assessments of the health and safeguarding needs of pupils and students against the provision they are able to put in place on a day to day basis. In the case of CLA any decision for a child not to attend school on site has to be agreed by their Social Worker with advice from the named SENDO.

Non-Attendance

If a setting or school is expecting a looked after child or young person to be in and they do not attend, they will be asked to contact the relevant Social Worker and inform them. This is to continue to ensure the children’s safety where there are concerns. If contact with the child's Social Worker is not possible contact can be made with the Virtual School mailbox or area Virtual School team member by phone of secure email.

Attendance information will be shared with CSC to ensure a timely, coordinated response where concerns arise.
Safeguarding and Monitoring

Where a child is attending provision and safeguarding concerns arise, practitioners must follow the agreed policy and process, recording incidents as appropriate and notifying the child’s Social Worker accordingly.

Where it has been agreed that children are not attending and remain at home, it is important that suitable safeguarding and monitoring arrangements are agreed and put in place between school and the Social Worker, based on needs and context of placement.

To ensure effective measures are in place it is suggested that school and Social Worker;

- Ensure relevant setting, CSC and carers contact details are kept up to date
- Settings to ensure that provision is in place for appropriate home learning to take place including homes without technology and / or internet access.
- Ensure that appropriate safeguarding plans are in place through weekly contact. These responsibilities should be shared between the setting and Social Worker and will depend on the context of individual cases.

Options can include;
- Home visit
- Doorstep contact
- Telephone call
- Liaise with the necessary professionals as usual.
- Ensure that safeguarding processes are followed and recorded and reported accordingly
- When possible participate /contribute to any planned review meetings by phone, email, skype – including PEP meetings when practical to complete review,

PEPs

Spring Term PEPs

We are currently in the process of quality assuring the remaining spring term PEPs. Please ensure that any outstanding PEPs are completed and submitted to the Virtual School as matter of urgency.

Due to the situation it has been decided to postpone the launch of the new PEP template and system. The hope is to mow launch this is autumn 2020,

Further updates will follow regarding Summer Term PEP completion.
Updates

As we have seen, the pace of change has been significant and the speed in which services have had to respond to this has been challenging. It is likely that more changes are yet to come.

We will continue to work closely with all partners to ensure the wellbeing and safety of our children.

Lancashire Virtual School Team will be sending updates as appropriate, in the meantime please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any queries or questions or require further guidance.

Thanks again for your ongoing commitment and support for Lancashire's Children Looked After.

Kind regards

Lancashire Virtual School Team

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