

A HANDBOOK for SCHOOLS
and EDUCATION PROVIDERS

**How to Support
Looked After Children,
Previously Looked After
Children and Children with a
Social Worker**



Lancashire Virtual School for looked after children, previously looked after children and children with a social worker

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Section 1: Children in our care

Introduction

Whatever may be happening in the lives of looked after children, the fact that they are in care usually means something traumatic has occurred in their family life.

The best chance looked after children have of overcoming these difficulties is if we, as professionals, vigorously take on the role of 'corporate parent' ensuring that they get the service we would want 'as if they were our own children'.

This guide aims to support schools, nurseries and further education providers to maximise outcomes for their looked after children through monitoring and supporting their progress via Personal Education Plans (PEPs) and effectively communicating with the appropriate people and agencies involved in the life of each child and young person.

Introducing the Virtual School for looked after children

Initiated by *Care Matters, Time for Change*, all local authorities are required to support raising the educational attainment and achievement of their looked after children through the overarching support of a Virtual School.

The responsibility for each child's education, target setting, learning and teaching remains with the schools and settings where they are enrolled. However, it has been found that where a 'virtual' school is able to keep an overview and provide additional support for looked after children's education, as if they also belonged to that 'virtual' school it has additional, positive benefits for their educational outcomes.

Lancashire Virtual School aims to provide support and challenge to schools, education providers, social work teams and other key partners (especially around PEPs), as well as monitoring and tracking of individual educational outcomes and targets.

The Virtual School consists of the Head Teacher, Education Consultants and administrative staff, who together focus on improving the attainment and achievements of looked after children, improving attendance and reducing the number of expulsions. In addition, the team also includes the Employment and Support Team who focus on the employability skills for Lancashire looked after children and care leavers aged 14-25 to support them into education, employment or training opportunities.

The Virtual School seeks to work with schools and others to ensure that, 'Our looked after children are safe, secure and achieve their full potential'.



What is meant by the term looked after child?

- *Care Order (under section 31 of the Children's Act 1989)*
 - This is a court order, and the local authority shares parental responsibility with the parents. This type of order is made when a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm and the making of the care order is better for the child than if no order was made. A care order can last until the child is 18, or an alternative order is made (i.e. adoption), or the order is discharged (an interim care order places the child in the care of the local authority and allows the court a period to decide whether a full order should be made).
- *Accommodated (section 20 of the Children's Act 1989)*
 - Parents retain primary responsibility with the local authority acting as a corporate parent. A person with parental responsibility can remove the child from local authority accommodation at any time, without giving notice.
- *Section 44*
 - An 'Emergency Protection Order' is sometimes issued in an emergency, where a child is suffering, or likely to suffer, harm or abuse and is a temporary arrangement pending an interim care order hearing.

The corporate parent

This phrase captures the responsibility that we all share to bring up those children who cannot be cared for by their birth parents. This responsibility includes to 'care about' not just 'care for', our looked after children. This is a wide-ranging demand and to successfully achieve it all agencies and all staff, have a level of 'corporate' responsibility and a part to play.

'In local authorities with a strong ethos of corporate parenting, the sense of vision and responsibility towards looked-after children and care leavers is a priority for everyone from the Chief Executive to front line staff. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 established seven fundamental needs (collectively known as the corporate parenting principles) to which the local authority must have regard when they are carrying out functions in relation to looked-after children and care leavers'.

Promoting the Educational Achievements of Looked After Children. Statutory guidance for local authorities February 2018

What should happen when a child becomes looked after?

The social worker informs the school that the young person has become looked after and initiates, within 20 days, a PEP meeting, inviting appropriate people to attend. If it is an emergency placement the PEP should take place within 10 days.

Social worker, designated teacher and others involved in the young person's care, agree to the proposed plan.

The roles of the foster carer, or residential staff involved with the day-to-day educational arrangements of children who are looked after need to be clarified.

PEP review dates are arranged to monitor the progress of the plan, the frequency of which depend on the issues raised but **must be at least once a school term**.

Guide to the Lancashire PEP

Introduction

The PEP is a statutory document that is required for all looked after children from early years to 18 and is the joint responsibility of children's social care (social worker) and education (designated teacher / practitioner).

The purpose of the PEP is to support our looked after children to progress in learning, thrive in their education setting, and achieve the best outcomes. It should also support effective communication and partnership working between the education setting, children's social care, the child / young person, carers, other relevant services and the Virtual School in the interests of the child or young person.

Currently the requirement for a PEP in Lancashire is from age 2 (in any education setting) until 18 years of age. For those pupils of statutory school age up to 18 a PEP should be in place even if the young person is not in education, employment or training (i.e. NEET), as the document should record what is being done to support the young person back into education, training or employment with training.

The first PEP is initiated as part of the care plan before the child becomes looked after. The first PEP must be available for the first statutory review meeting of the care plan (within 20 working days of the date the child became looked after). However, where a child enters care in an emergency the first PEP should be initiated within 10 working days of the start of the first placement. A PEP is required in the final term in which the child or young person ceases to be looked after.

It is a requirement that PEPs are reviewed and updated once a term. Social workers should aim to attend all PEP meetings, as they have a vital role in supporting the educational provider to ensure the child or young person can reach their educational potential.

Quality assurance



Good quality planning and support is the key to helping our looked after children progress and achieve their best. The PEP is part of the wider care plan for the child and so is a vital element of the way our looked after children are cared for.

Key elements of an effective PEP are listening to and responding to the voice of the child; accurate assessment of all factors that impact on learning and emotional development; and clear and measurable targets that are challenging and realistic within an environment which is consistent, nurturing and caring.

The Virtual School is required to monitor the quality of PEPs for their children. A sample of PEPs are identified each term for grading, with at least one PEP quality assured for each school / setting.

PEPs are graded **Green**: Good or better, **Amber**: Could be improved or **Red**: To be re-submitted.

A PEP that is considered **Red**, would be returned to the school / setting for amending and re-submission.

The submission of an approved PEP allows Pupil Premium Grant Plus (PPG+) to be allocated for that term for children of reception age up until the end of year 11.

Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) is allocated directly to the setting depending on the number of hours of nursery education accessed.

Feedback on those PEPs that have been quality assured will be exported to the school / setting along with the final version of the PEP. In addition, feedback will now be provided to the social worker.

The Lancashire PEP

An online form is provided for the following age groups:

Early years (for children aged 2 to 4 in a nursery setting through to children in reception)

Primary mainstream schools (including Pupil Referral Units)

Primary special schools

Secondary mainstream schools (including Alternative Provision settings / Pupil Referral Units)

Secondary special schools and key stage 5 pupils on roll at a special school

Key stage 5 (years 12 and 13)

All PEPs are initiated by the social worker / children's social care as an online form delegated to the school / setting at least 10 days prior to the PEP meeting.

Process

Once a child becomes looked after the social worker will initiate the PEP, complete the 'My Personal Information' and 'My Health' sections before delegating all sections via the professional portal. Before this happens the social worker will need to have



requested for the relevant person in the school / setting to be set up by ICT as a portal user if they are not already an existing user.

Once delegated by the social worker, the school / setting's PEP lead for that child will receive an email from noreply@lancashire.gov.uk (subject title: 'New delegated form').

When the first PEP is delegated the PEP lead needs to register as a new user on the professional portal to set up their account. This will then enable them to access, complete and submit any PEPs delegated to them in the future.

Please note: the PEP should be returned to LCC **within 10 working days** of the PEP meeting taking place.

Once the form has been submitted back to LCC, it will be validated and finalised. A final copy will be exported and securely emailed to the PEP lead, which can then be saved and printed to provide for the carer and child.

Upon finalisation of the PEP, the form for the following term will then be sent out to the social worker ready for completion whenever it is due.

The PEP meeting

Before the meeting

- Social worker, carer, young person and any other key persons should be invited to the meeting - i.e. for a child with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) the SEND Case Manager should be invited.
- For young people with statements / EHCPs the PEP may be reviewed alongside the annual SEN statement review when appropriate.
- The designated teacher or other relevant staff member should meet with the young person to ensure they are aware of the purpose of the meeting and to help with the young person's contribution to the plan. Their views are vital and are the focus of the first education-led section of the PEP.
- It is helpful if educational information, such as the short-term targets, key stage results, attendance and current national curriculum target levels are gathered before the meeting for inclusion into the plan.
- Social workers should make sure all relevant parts, such as the legal status, etc. have been inputted before the PEP is delegated to the school / setting.

The meeting

- The 'My Voice' section should be considered first, either at the start or prior to the meeting, as the PEP review should be steered by the young person's wishes and feelings. If appropriate, the child or young person should attend the meeting or part of the meeting.
- All details and contacts should be checked and corrected where necessary.
- All parties should discuss the plan and contribute to it.
- All parties should be clear what the short-term targets are.
- All parties should be clear what the long-term targets are.
- All parties should be clear how the plan will contribute to the young person's educational progress, wellbeing and what their role will be to support the young person.

- Attendees at the meeting should be recorded, along with the details of others who may have contributed to the PEP review.
- A date and time for the next PEP review meeting should be set - the PEP needs to be reviewed every term.

Following the PEP meeting

- The PEP form should be completed and submitted via the professional portal within 10 working days of the PEP meeting taking place. Additional documents, i.e. related to pupil voice can be attached and submitted with the PEP.
- Once a final version of the PEP is exported to the portal user a copy should also be provided for the carer and young person.

Feedback on PEPs selected for quality assurance will be provided each term to the designated teacher / lead professional who completed the PEP and the social worker.

Further information and support

Training video on competing the Lancashire PEP:

<https://youtu.be/nVuQRuSwnCg>

Available from practitioner section of the Virtual School website:

- Guide to completing the Lancashire PEP

Mailbox:

pepqueries@lancashire.gov.uk



Funding to support the progress of looked after children

PPG+

Funding is allocated to each local authority to support educational progress for looked after children. This funding is based on £2,410 per looked after child. The Virtual School Head in the local authority administers this funding. Statutory guidance requires the funding allocated to reflect the needs of the child / young person and there needs to be clear evidence on the use and impact of the funding. The PEP provides this evidence. Currently, a maximum of £620 per term is available on submission of an approved PEP. The remainder of the PPG+ allocated to the local authority provides High Needs Funding (HNF) for those pupils who require additional funding for significant short-term needs, training for designated teachers and other school staff, key stage 4 annual conference for looked after children, specialist support and projects to benefit cohorts of looked after children - such as home reading packs and contribution to the Virtual School staff structure.

Independent schools who have Lancashire looked after children placed with them, usually through an EHCP or residential children's home providing in house education, do not receive a separate PPG+ payment. All needs of the pupil should be met through the funding provided to meet the EHCP / school / residential place. In exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of the Virtual School Head, some PPG+ may be allocated.

HNF

This funding is part of the PPG+. All non-independent schools can apply for additional funding when the additional needs of the pupil cannot be met from their current PPG+. Requests for this funding are made to the Virtual School Head. Forms are accessed from the Schools Portal. Schools are required to provide feedback on the impact of the additional funding to the Virtual School. Schools located in other local authorities can request a form from virtualschool@lancashire.gov.uk.

PEPSA

This funding is designed to provide educational activities / resources identified through the PEP process, outside of school to promote progress and engagement.

Applications for PEPSA funding is made by the social worker and looked after children of all ages are eligible.

Bursaries

Looked after children / care leavers who go on to further education are potentially eligible for the 16-19 Bursary Fund of up to £1,200. This funding is made available through the college and the assessment of need can vary by establishment.

Care leavers who go on to higher education are eligible for a £2,000 bursary, which is allocated by the Virtual School.

School admissions

When a child becomes looked after, it is imperative that their school place is maintained. School offers stability and familiarity, which is vital at this often traumatic time.

However, there are occasions when circumstances necessitate a move of school. When this happens, everything should be done to assist in securing a new placement. Time is of the essence so to avoid the child becoming disengaged from education. Schools, including academies, need to consider how they can support the admission of vulnerable children, their admissions policy should reflect this.

Current legislation supporting the admission of looked after children and previously looked after children requires that:

- A school place should be found as quickly as possible.
- All admission authorities are required to give the highest priority in their admission arrangements and oversubscription criteria.
- Infant class size regulations allow for the admissions as an excepted child if admitted outside the normal admission round. Individual admission authorities may admit over number for in year requests. If agreed the exception to class size legislation applies throughout the child's infant years (or until the class size reduces back to 30).
- Looked after children are not included in Lancashire's Fair Access Protocol (which places children outside of normal admissions practice). This is because the School Admissions Code requires that they must be admitted (section 3 - paragraph 3.12).
- For in year admission requests Lancashire generally requires all schools and academies to accommodate requests for places for looked after children. Where there may be reasons for alternative local places to be considered the local authority will liaise with the relevant parties.
- The local authority is responsible for admissions to community and voluntary controlled schools. The governing bodies of these schools must by law implement any decision relating to the admission of pupils taken by or on behalf of the admission authority - section 6 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.
- All local authorities have the power to direct own admission authority schools and academies to admit these children. This includes directing into year groups and classes which are already full - including infant classes.
- Where direction occurs those admission authorities have the right to refer to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator whose final decision is legally binding.
- In addition, to increase stability, Care Planning Regulations require social workers to gain the agreement of a county manager if they plan to change a child's school in key stage 4 (years 10 and 11).

Transitions

Planning for any transition points is essential. The most common transition points are moving from nursery to primary school, primary to high school and high school to

college. However, there are other points, such as moving from one key stage or even a new class within the same school. For our children school moves can occur more frequently than for other children. This can be difficult for any child but for our children it often involves a change in home placement and a move to a new, unknown area. For our children who already experience attachment issues this can be a very difficult time. It is important to plan as far ahead as possible, except that in some cases the move may be unplanned due to exceptional circumstances.

When the transition is to a new school or into college, it is important that:

- A PEP review is held in the current school, which includes the designated teacher from the new school / setting, social worker and carer/s.
- A transition plan is agreed, which includes how the child will be informed and prepared for the move which, if possible, should include visits to the new school and the timing of the transition to minimise the emotional impact on the child.
- All essential information is shared with the new school / setting so they are fully informed of the child's needs.

The designated teacher / person

The role of the designated teacher / person is pivotal to meeting the needs and promoting wellbeing, and progress of looked after children in their school.

- The designated teacher ensures the school register for looked after children is kept up-to-date.
- They ensure that the school holds a current PEP for each looked after child.
- If there is not an up-to-date PEP in place, they ensure that the child's social worker is contacted, and a PEP meeting is arranged.
- They monitor the progress of all looked after children within the school and inform senior staff, governors and the Virtual School.
- They report annually to the governing body on progress.
- They ensure that the school has suitable catch-up programmes to support looked after children who may have been out of school for a period or have fallen behind.
- They keep up-to-date with developments and requirements for the education of looked after children.
- They ensure that staff are informed, trained and updated on looked after children's issues.



- They work to maintain a culture of high expectations regarding looked after children 'as if they were our own children'.

What governors need to know?

The 2008 Children and Young Person's Act placed a duty upon governing bodies to ensure that they designate a teacher (the Act stipulates that it must be a teacher) who has responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of the school's looked after children and previously looked after children. This is the case whether or not the school has any looked after children or previously looked after children currently on roll.

Statutory guidance for governing bodies (*The role and responsibilities of the designated teacher for looked-after children DCSF 2009*) includes the requirements that they receive an annual report from their designated teacher, and they ensure that the designated teacher has the necessary support and training to undertake their duties.

It is considered good practice for a governing body to appoint a named governor for looked after children and previously looked after children

To support governing bodies in their legal duties, the Virtual School produces:

- Proforma for designated teacher's annual report to governors
- Contributes to related Governor Core Agenda and Lancashire Governor Newsletter

Key legislation that underpins the legal status of looked after children

Includes the following:

Section 52 of the Children Act 2004, places a duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children, and for social workers to develop PEPs as part of the care plan. Looked after children have a right to expect the outcomes we want for every child.

"To achieve these outcomes, local authorities as the 'corporate parent' should demonstrate the strongest commitment to helping every child they look after to achieve the highest educational standards he or she possibly can"

(Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children. Statutory guidelines for local authorities Department for Education 2018)

Children and Young Persons Act 2008, requires school governing bodies to appoint a designated teacher for looked after children, underpinned by statutory guidance.

Ofsted's inspection framework for schools places a strong emphasis upon the support and achievement of vulnerable children, especially those looked after. Inspectors will require listings of looked after children, copies of PEPs and how school policies

support their education. They will want to know how looked after children compare academically and socially with other children. They will ask governors about their knowledge of this discrete group and how the school's admission policy actively supports this group.

Closing the gap

Looked after children and previously looked after children make significantly less progress, and achieve less well, than their peers who are not looked after. This gap in progress and achievement can have a huge impact on their life chances and prospects. One measure of how well we are doing in supporting looked after children, is how well we are narrowing that gap and at what rate.

This 'gap' in attainment and progress makes it especially important that we closely monitor our looked after children's educational outcomes. This is not only important at the end of key stages and at GCSE but also at regular intervals throughout the school year.

The Virtual School tracks the progress of each Lancashire looked after child around 5 indicators on a RAG-rated model. School is asked to rate the looked after child on each indicator as **Green**, **Amber** or **Red**. This data is collected each term. This is part of the PEP, as well as discussed face to face or virtually with the Virtual School Education Consultants (secondary, primary and special schools). This data helps to identify those children and young people who may need additional support, as well as providing summative data on how our looked after children as a group are progressing.

The 5 indicators are: Educational Progress, Attendance, Wellbeing / Emotional Resilience, Behaviour and Expulsions.

It is strongly suggested that schools maintain progress and attainment data for previously looked after children as a group so issues can be identified early, and strategies put in place to address these.

Expulsions

Schools should be especially sensitive to expulsion issues when looked after children, previously looked after children and children with a social worker are concerned and be aware of how their life experiences can impact on their emotional, social and behavioural responses, especially if they feel they are being rejected.

- Looked after children, previously looked after children and children with a social worker are particularly vulnerable to expulsions and the effect on them can be catastrophic. On occasions foster / home placements break down as the expulsion takes effect.
- Schools need to be proactive, providing support and perhaps alternative educational packages to prevent this from happening. Early dialogue with all involved with the young person is essential and the mechanism of the PEP or EPPLAC (see page 22) can assist this.



- Schools should try every practicable means to maintain the child in school and should seek local authority and other professional advice as appropriate. The designated teacher in school may be best placed to do this. The child's social worker and carer should, in all cases, be involved at the earliest opportunity in working with school to avoid the need to exclude.
- **Please contact the Virtual School if a looked after child or previously looked after child is at risk of permanent expulsion.**

The PPE / Pastoral Support Plan should reflect strategies being employed to avoid a permanent expulsion for an individual pupil where expulsion is a risk.

Attendance

The importance of regular and good attendance at a child's and young person's educational setting cannot be over emphasised. All the research proves that without good attendance a child or young person will not reach their potential and attainment at all points will be impacted on. Absence - even for a few days can impact on progress and examination results. Persistent absence - less than 90% attendance can have a very detrimental impact not only on progress and attainment but on social skills and wellbeing. This can also lead to safeguarding concerns and higher risks of exploitation.

As a Virtual School we are required to monitor the attendance of all our looked after children. Since September 2021 we have commissioned Looked After Call to gather daily attendance data from all schools who have a Lancashire looked after child on roll - in Lancashire and wherever they are placed. Several local authorities use this service. It allows us to see in real time the attendance for our children, including any expulsions, and therefore, provide support to school and communicate to social workers in a timely manner.

The electronic system is called IRIS and data can be collected in several ways depending on the school's preference:

- Data extractor - which allows the data to be collected automatically from the school system, e.g. SIMs. This is the most efficient method and does not require any additional tasks for the school. It is safe and secure and in line with GDPR requirements.
- The school can have access to their school section and submit the data themselves each day.
- School can opt for a daily phone call or secure email.

The recent Department for Education (DfE) guidance document published in May 2022:

Working together to improve school attendance guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities raises the priority

of attendance and expectations on all who are responsible of children and young people including parents, schools and local authorities.
The requirement of this guidance applies from September 2022.

Requests for a looked after child to be absent from school during school term

As with all children, taking time away from school in term time, except in exceptional circumstances, is not permitted in law. The ultimate decision regarding whether leave of absence meets the criteria of exceptional circumstances rests with the head teacher.

The new DfE guidance on attendance that applies from September 2022 makes it very clear that approval for request for leave during term time for a holiday should not be approved.

- Only exceptional circumstances warrant a leave of absence. Schools should consider each application individually considering the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.
- If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the head teacher to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school.
- As head teachers should only grant leaves of absence in exceptional circumstances it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

Requests for looked after children

1. Taking into account the national principles / guidance, and to ensure that the educational needs of looked after children are promoted, Lancashire County Council, as corporate parents, will only in very exceptional circumstances agree to a request for any child or young person looked after being absent from school during term time.
2. Approval for any request to be made to school will only be given by the head or deputy head of children's social care services as designated manager.
3. **Foster carers should not approach a school with a request for leave of absence but should contact the social worker to discuss the request.**

Early years and children educated in nursery settings

Before children in care start school they are often 'well behind' their peers and this achievement gap only widens as they get older. We know that good quality early years provision can act as a powerful intervention to help narrow this gap. Many children in care have such a tough start in life, so we need to give as much support in the first few years of a child's life to try to mitigate this.

Numerous studies have demonstrated how high-quality early education vastly improves outcomes for disadvantaged children, but take-up of the funded early education places for two, three and four year olds is at least 14 percent lower among children in care.

The DfE have said, 'Giving children the best start in life is at the heart of this Government's agenda. Latest results show the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils, including children in care, and their counterparts is narrowing. But we know there is more to do. That's why we give disadvantaged families, including looked after children, extra support through the funded 15 hours offer for two-, three- and four-year-olds'.

Funding

Two-year-old funding is available for eligible two-year-olds from the term after the child's 2nd birthday. Lancashire will fund a 2-year-old place for all children that meet the national criteria (which includes children who are looked after) and will also fund children who are on a child protection plan, children in need (as defined by social care), children receiving portage, children residing in Lancashire of families who are serving in the armed forces, and children of Gypsy / Roma / Traveller heritage. Children can access 15 hours per week over 38 weeks of the year (maximum 570 hours).

Three and four-year-old universal funding is available for all children from the term after their 3rd birthday. Children can access 15 hours per week over 38 weeks of the year (maximum 570 hours). From September 2018, foster carers who meet certain criteria are also able to apply for the additional 15 hours funded nursery provision for 3 and 4-year-olds who are looked after by the local authority.

Looked after children who are placed with family may also be eligible for the additional 15 hours if their family meet the same eligibility criteria applied to looked after children placed with foster carers.

If you require any further information, please contact the Early Education Funding Team by emailing fee234@lancashire.gov.uk.

Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) is allocated to 3 and 4 years old and is a maximum of £342 per year.

If a looked after child is accessing Free Early Education Funding in a private, voluntary, independent, or maintained setting they will be entitled to the EYPP which is 0.60p per hour for every hour of the 15 universal funded hours they access. For example, if they access the full 15 universal hours per week over 38 weeks, they will receive an

additional 0.60p for 570 hours which is the annual figure of £342. This is paid out termly to the setting that is claiming the free hours.

In Lancashire, the EYPP is administered by the Early Education Funding Team and is allocated each term as follows:

Autumn term: a maximum of 210 hours is funded (£126 EYPP)

Spring term: a maximum of 165 hours is funded (£99 EYPP)

Summer term: a maximum of 195 hours is funded (£117 EYPP)

Early year providers in Lancashire will be able to claim the EYPP in the same way that they do for all other eligible children. The Early Education Funding Team also check all claims to see if a child is looked after and will allocate the EYPP even if the providers have not claimed it. If a child is looked after by Lancashire but placed in a nursery outside of the authority, the EYPP will be administered by the local authority where the nursery is based. They may request written evidence from Lancashire Social Care that the child is looked after.

Our Early Education Funding Team can advise further on any other queries relating to funding on 01772 533552 or fee234@lancashire.gov.uk.

Personal Educations Plans (PEPs)

The Children's and Social Act (2017) requires looked after children from early years to 18 to have a PEP.

In Lancashire we require a PEP for looked after children from 2 years old who are attending an educational setting using the early years form, which is accessed via the professional portal. Settings will be delegated a PEP for their looked after children by the child's social worker via the professional portal. Please see PEP section from page 5 of this guide.

The early years PEP applies to children from 2 who are in a nursery setting and to children in their reception school year.

We also deliver bespoke training for early years practitioners in supporting children who become looked after at this early stage in their life.

For further information, or to suggest ideas of how outcomes for this group could be improved, please contact virtualschool@lancashire.gov.uk.

CEIAG for Lancashire looked after children: school age pupils

Since September 2012, every school must ensure that pupils are provided with independent careers guidance from year 8 to year 13. In addition, since 2018 schools need to meet the Gatsby Benchmarks and appoint a careers leader.

To support Lancashire's looked after children, over, and above provision already in the school, the Employment and Support Team, part of the Virtual School will offer careers support. This will be delivered in the following way:

- For years 10 and 11 Lancashire's looked after pupils to meet a minimum once per term with an Employment Officer from the Employment and Support Team. CEIAG sessions are on a 1-1 basis and based on the needs of the pupil. They

can include discussion around career aspirations, CV writing, future education options, application forms, support into apprenticeships, work experience, applying for part-time employment or looking at transferable skills. This can be in school or outside of school hours as agreed with the school and pupil.

- Offer of a work experience placement (where appropriate). This would be in partnership with existing school policies or where schools don't participate, offers made outside of the school timetable in school holiday periods.
- Offer to Lancashire's looked after year 8 or 9 pupils during their options year (depending on the school options year) to have a discussion to aid making their option choices linked to future career aspirations.

Post 16 CEIAG support

The Employment and Support Team support Lancashire's looked after children or care leavers aged 16-25 years living in Lancashire, who are looking for the next steps into employment, apprenticeships, training, volunteering, or work experience.

This support can include:

- Employability programme of activities based on need
- Careers advice
- CV writing
- Interview preparation
- Opportunities for work experience to trial a career choice
- Applying and securing training opportunities
- Applying and securing apprenticeships or employment
- Support with travel training to develop independence
- Support on-site in the workplace for a limited time to assist with the smooth transition into work (if required)
- Access to funding for any additional training costs required and support to employers (where required)
- Access to funding to remove barriers preventing moving into EET activity

Year 12 and 13 young people in further education

There remains a significant gap in educational outcomes for looked after children and care leavers compared to their peers who have not been looked after. This continues beyond school, with a higher proportion of looked after young people and care leavers being NEET - not in education, employment, or training from year 12 onwards. A higher proportion drop out of college or training, fewer move on to higher education or higher-level apprenticeships and permanent employment.

Local authorities now have the responsibility to support former relevant care leavers until 25, when required. Lancashire recognise that the first 2 years after leaving school is a pivotal period for any young person and especially care leavers, who are preparing for independent living at a very early age, compared to many of their peers who have the support of their birth family.

Lancashire have developed a looked after / care leaver education, employment and training strategy and a key element is to ensure the support provided during year 12 and 13 is as effective and consistent as possible. This is part of the care leaver local offer and has been informed by the extensive consultation with young people that has been carried out in relation to the offer.

Planning: PEPs

The Children and Social Act (2017) requires looked after children from early years to 18 to have a PEP. The PEP must be reviewed each term.

In Lancashire, we request a PEP is also completed for the term in which the young person turns 18 to ensure plans for the remainder of year 13 have been considered.

For young people in an education setting or training provider the PEP will continue to be the joint responsibility of the social worker and the education / training provider.

In the case of young people who are NEET for a period the PEP will be led and completed by their social worker.

From the age of approximately 15 years and 9 months the young person will be allocated a Personal Adviser (PA) and a Pathway Plan will be developed to support the young person in progressing towards independent living.

When completing the PEP and to help demonstrate how a young person is doing at college, it would be helpful to upload any additional information to the portal when submitting the PEP securely, such as individual targets and termly report.

PEP grading for this age range has recently been simplified in line with those for statutory school age children and feedback for those PEPs that have been selected for quality assurance will be provided for the setting.

Please also see the PEP section in this guide on page 5.

Tracking progress

The Virtual School tracks the progress of each young person around 4 indicators on a RAG-rated model. College is asked to rate the young person on each indicator as **Green**, **Amber**, or **Red**. This data is collected each term through a face-to-face discussion with the Education Consultant. This data helps to identify those young people who may need additional support, as well as providing summative data on how our young people as a group are progressing. The 4 indicators are:

Educational Progress (is the young person on track to achieve their qualification?):

Green: Yes **Amber:** With additional support in place **Red:** Not currently

Attendance:

Green: Excellent (95%+) **Amber:** Good (90%+) **Red:** Poor attendance (less than 89%)

Wellbeing / Emotional Resilience:

Green: Presents as happy / confident / no concerns **Amber:** Some concerns but support in place **Red:** Significant concerns around emotional / mental health

Behaviour:

Green: No issues **Amber:** Some issues **Red:** Significant issues

Pilot activity for year 13 transitions

Historically Virtual School has undertaken activity relating to data collection and support relating to transition for our year 11 pupils. Now this is well established we have decided to extend the principle to our post 16 cohort to consider their intended next steps to help identify those with no fixed plan, so that action and support can be implemented in a timelier fashion through a shared approach between local providers and children's social care. The aim is to increase EET by a minimum of 5% and the impact of this activity will be evaluated following the pilot, along with any recommendations for improvements to the process that will be of benefit to our young people.

Funding

Bursaries: for those students who study at college the 16-19 Bursary Fund of up to £1,200 is potentially available. This comes directly through the college / institution.

PEPSA: Personal Education Plan Support Allowance. This is a small fund provided by Lancashire County Council and managed by the Virtual School Head, to support looked after children and care leavers for activities and resources to promote engagement and positive outcomes, out of the formal education setting. Needs should be identified via the PEP and requests are made to the Virtual School by the social worker or PA.

PPG+ funding is not currently applicable to this age group.

Section 2: previously looked after children



Introduction

Children who have previously been in care may still carry the impact of a difficult period in their life and require additional support and attention to achieve their best. They are often more likely to struggle in school, have special educational needs and be at a greater risk of expulsion. Schools are now required to demonstrate how they support and promote the education of previously looked after children.

Introducing the Virtual School for previously looked after children

Local authorities are also now required to promote the education of previously looked after children by providing information and advice to those who have parental responsibility, schools, early years providers and other relevant people.

We offer a dedicated mailbox (previouslylookedafter@lancashire.gov.uk), website and training for both professionals and parents supporting with advice and guidance for this group of children.

What is meant by a previously looked after child?

The groups included in the new duties for schools and local authorities are:

- Children who have been adopted from care
- Children on Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) from care
- Children on Child Arrangement Orders (CAOs) from care

Previously looked after children are still entitled to PPG+. This is allocated directly to the school. The school must include any children in these groups on the School Census.

School admissions

Please see Children in our care School admissions section (page 10)

Duties for previously looked after children

In response to amendments to the Children and Families Act 2014 contained in the Children and Social Work Act 2017, there are revised duties for schools and local authorities, in relation to previously looked after children.

The following revised guidance documents are essential reading:

Revised guidance for designated teachers of looked after children and previously looked after children DfE February 2018

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

Statutory guidance for local authorities: Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children DfE February 2018

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



[ment_data/file/683556/Promoting_the_education_of_looked-after_children_and_previously_looked-after_children.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683556/Promoting_the_education_of_looked-after_children_and_previously_looked-after_children.pdf)

These duties came into force in 2018.

There is a requirement for schools and local authorities to promote education progress and outcomes for previously looked after children, in addition to existing requirements in respect of looked after children. The cohorts involved are adopted children, children on SGOs and those on CAOs, also included are those adopted from state care outside of England.

These groups are already allocated PPG+ directly into the school budget based on information inputted onto the School Census. Currently this is £2,410 per year.

The key responsibilities for schools, including governors, in relation to previously looked after children are **(these are a summary, and it is important that the revised statutory guidance for schools is referred to for greater detail)**:

- Appointment of a designated person for previously looked after children - as with looked after children this needs to be an experienced, qualified teacher. For most schools this may be the existing designated teacher.
- Ensure access to training and access to senior leadership and governors to champion the educational needs of this group.
- Ensure PPG+ allocated is used to support progress and to meet needs.
- Ensure previously looked after children are priority for school admissions.
- Provide advice and support to adoptive parents and carers.

Please note: this group will not have social workers or require statutory PEPs.

It is advisable and good practice, to have systems to track progress and attainment for this group, have a policy on the use of PPG+ allocated for these pupils and individual plans to ensure that their needs are being met.

In Lancashire, we have devised education plans for previously looked after children and children with a social worker (EPPLAC / CWSW). These plans are differentiated depending on the age of the child / young person. Current versions available are for: early years, primary, secondary and key stage 5 and they are downloadable from our website.

These are short documents which will help schools and settings to identify any needs of the child / young person and action plan to meet these. We advise that these are completed termly, alongside termly meetings which we suggest the parents / carers are also invited to.

We strongly suggest that all schools and settings complete the EPPLAC / CWSW form for their previously looked after children to ensure that this vulnerable group are a high priority. It is important to remember that just because they may no longer be in the care system, they will still have many of the same needs.

It is very likely that these duties and how the school is meeting them may be raised by Ofsted inspections.

Section 3: Children with a social worker

Introduction



The DfE's children in need review concluded in 2019 and highlighted for the first time that 1.6 million children had needed a social worker in the previous six years, the equivalent to 1 in 10 children or an average 3 children in every classroom. The review recommended that the Virtual School Head, as a strategic leader, could help bring together local authorities and education settings to improve the educational outcomes of children with a social worker. Virtual School Heads, who have statutory responsibilities for looked after and previously looked after children are well positioned to enhance partnerships between agencies and raise aspirations for this cohort of children.

The review also found that children with a social worker generally perform less well than their peers at every stage of their education and poor outcomes persist, even after social worker involvement ends. Experiences of adversity and trauma can create barriers to education that affect attendance, learning, behaviour, and wellbeing. However, with the right support in place, children can overcome these barriers to reach their potential.

This group does not require PEPs and they are not eligible for PPG+. They may be eligible for the lower level of Pupil Premium / Free School Meals depending on their circumstances, but this is not managed by the Virtual School and would be allocated directly to the school budget for use by the school to support this group of children within their school.

The role of the Virtual School

The Virtual School Head role in relation to children with a social worker (current or previous) is to help:

- Make visible the disadvantages that children with a social worker can experience, enhancing partnerships between education settings and local authorities to help all agencies hold high aspirations for these children.
- Promote practice that supports children's engagement in education, recognizing that attending an education setting can be an important factor in helping to keep children safe from harm.
- Level up children's outcomes and narrow the attainment gap so every child can reach their potential. This will include helping to make sure that children with a social worker benefit from support to recover from the impact of COVID-19.

This duty differs from that in relation to looked after and previously looked after children and **does not include**:

- Working with individual children and their families - including tracking and monitoring educational progress of individual children or providing academic or other interventions.

- Responding to requests from parents or carers to offer advice, intervention, and support in relation to individual children with a social worker.
- Taking responsibility for children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) who do not require or need a social worker, as defined above.

Lancashire Virtual School actions to date

- Involvement across local authority to embed the Team Around the School and Settings model. Virtual School Head is member of the TASS monitoring group.
- Extended training for professionals to include this group of children and young people.
- Provided a school planning template and training in its use to schools.
- Sharing attainment, attendance and expulsion data and analysis for this group to a range of boards and groups to raise their profile and needs.
- Contribution to locality workstreams to address locality priorities that reflect especially the needs of vulnerable children and young people, i.e. school readiness, speech and communication, education / training / employment, attachment and trauma awareness.
- Working with Education Data Team to identify gaps in data and how to address these.
- Funding an additional Data Technician to focus on children in need, child protection and looked after children.
- Training session for parents of children in need or on child protection in relation to speech and communication, self-regulation, trauma, education systems and transition.
- Virtual School Head and other team members active members of several local authority and multi-agency groups and boards to raise the needs of vulnerable children and young people and influence policy and practice.

Checklist for head teachers and governors

- Do you know how many looked after children, previously looked after children and children with a social worker are on your roll?
- If a child becomes, or arrives at school as a looked after child, do you ask the social worker to arrange a PEP?
- As a discrete group, how do your looked after children, previously looked after children and children with a social worker perform academically compared to the rest of the school?
- Does the school's designated teacher have sufficient time and support to successfully carry out their role for all 3 groups of vulnerable children?
- What catch up programmes are in place to support looked after children, previously looked after children and children with a social worker?
- What procedures are in place to support and monitor the attendance of looked after children, previously looked after children and children with a social worker?
- Do you have a specific policy for looked after children, previously looked after children and children with a social worker?
- Are all staff and governors aware of the issues surrounding looked after children, previously looked after children and children with a social worker?
- Have the whole school team including governors undertaken attachment and trauma training recently (this can be provided free of charge by Virtual School)?
- Do you have a governor with specific responsibility for looked after children, previously looked after children and children with a social worker?
- Does your admissions policy support the placement of looked after children and previously looked after children?
- What measures are taken to prevent the expulsion of looked after children, previously looked after children and children with a social worker?



Virtual School contacts

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Other available documents

- A. [Use of PPG+](#)
- B. [PPG+ high needs request form](#)
- C. [High needs impact return](#)
- D. [Guide to the Lancashire PEP](#)
- E. [Proforma for designated teachers annual report to governors](#)
- F. [Model policy for looked after children and previously looked after children](#)
- G. [Sample letter to parents re: new duties for previously looked after children](#)
- H. [EPPLAC / CWSW form](#)

