



THE NEW GUILD TRUST

Children in Care and
Looked After Children (LAC) Policy

Introduction

This policy expresses the commitment of schools, the Virtual School and social care to achieve excellent education outcomes for Children in Care [CiC] in Stoke on-Trent.

Why do we need a policy and standard?

The neglect and abuse that have brought nearly 600 children into care provide a moral, legal and pragmatic drive for us to work together as corporate parents or in loco parentis to repair the damage. We know that a secure and successful education experience is a major factor in improving the life chances of our children in care.

'Parents want their children to have the best start in life and to reach their full potential. As corporate parents, local authorities should have equally high aspirations for the children they look after.'

Promoting the education of Looked after Children statutory guidance for Local Authorities - July 2014
'Excellent practice in supporting looked-after children already exists in many schools. The designated teacher role is statutory to help ensure that effective practice becomes universal.

The Designated Teacher for Looked after Children statutory guidance for the governing bodies of maintained schools and academies and designated teachers on their roles and responsibilities – 2009.

[NB - is likely to be updated in the light of VS role and Pupil Premium for CiC changes.]

Basis in Legislation

The policy and standard is based on the legislation below:

1. Section 20 of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 ("the Act") and The Designated Teacher (Looked-after Pupils etc.) (England) Regulations 2009.
2. The Local Authority statutory duty under 22(3A) of the Children Act 1989 to promote the educational achievement of looked after children [includes those CiC placed out of authority].
3. The Children and Families Act 2014, which requires every local authority in England to appoint an officer to make sure that its duty is properly discharged - referred to as the Virtual School Head

How Will the Impact of the Policy be Measured and How Will the Policy be Reviewed?

- The impact of the policy will be seen in improved outcomes for CiC
- Inclusion
- Attendance
- Attainment
- Progress
- The quality of plans for CiC in Electronic Personal Education Plans (EPEPS)
- The views of the children captured in EPEPs)

All of the above is summarised in the annual report of the designated teacher to the Local Community Governing Body, and any review with the Virtual School of the report and outcomes for children.

The Policy

The policy is based on a set of principles, which in turn are linked to statutory guidance. It is expected that all partners will be familiar with the guidance. Key VS documents that underpin it can be found on the VS website <http://www.stokevirtualschool.org.uk/>

Policy Detail

Multi agency working and shared accountability Schools, the Virtual School, social care and other agencies, over which they have control, will work together and hold themselves and others to account for ensuring the best possible outcomes for CiC and delivering the policy below.

Corporate Parents

We will be prepared to ask, 'would this be good enough for my child?' and, if it is not, we will address the issue.

The Senior Leadership Team

- Consider CiC in developing strategy as appropriate.
- Ensure that resources targeted at CiC [Pupil Premium Plus, money for special needs etc.] are used directly to benefit them.
- Ensure CiC have access to the best of what the school has to offer and that barriers to do with being in care, which might make this difficult, are overcome.
- Work with, support and challenge wider partnerships in providing the best possible educational provision and support for CiC.

Designated Teacher

- Each school will have a Designated Teacher [DT], with the seniority, training and personal commitment necessary to support all CiC in the school.
- CiC will know and feel supported by their Designated Teacher e.g. because they meet prior to a PEP to discuss their views.
- The DT will ensure directly, or by taking management responsibility, if they delegate any of their responsibilities:
 - That the voice of the child is heard and acted upon appropriately
 - ePEPs are up to date and have SMART [Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Related to Time] targets for progress
 - All are challenged to achieve good outcomes for CiC and that progress is tracked and supported
 - Partners are engaged to ensure good outcomes e.g. social care, carers.

Governors

- Governors will ensure statutory requirements are met.
- Each school will have a designated governor, who will ensure the policy is supported.
- CiC will know who this person is.
- The governor will have the training and personal commitment to take responsibility for outcomes for CiC.

Carers

- Carers, residential workers and parents [as appropriate and advised by social worker] will be involved proactively, their expertise valued and their constructive input welcomed.
- Carers will attend ePEPs and other meetings as required.
- Carers will know how to support CiC e.g. via ePEPs, work at home, transitions.

Children in Care

- Children in Care will be and feel safe in school.

- Their voices will be heard and responded to appropriately e.g. because they are invited to and feel welcomed in their PEP meetings.
- Information about CiC will be only shared on a need to know basis and with due regard to their wishes, feelings, right to privacy and all relevant data security requirements.

Admissions

- CiC will have timely access to education that meets their needs.
- Schools will not reject application for school places for CiC. However, we will ensure that the provision will be right for the child and, if there are issues, school will meet and resolve them with social care, Virtual School and admissions as needed—see admissions section of VS website.
- In year transfers of Stoke-on-Trent CiC will only occur if they have been agreed by the VS.
- CiC will not be taken off roll until the child starts a new placement.
Meeting learning, emotional health and well-being needs
- A proactive approach will be taken to: meeting SEN; seeking further advice and making EHC plan requests and carrying out EHC reviews as appropriate.
- Schools will have sufficient up to date knowledge and training about emotional and health needs [particularly attachment and trauma] to be able to support CiC and seek help when needed. For example schools may: -complete the 'Attachment Aware Schools audit' with EP or VS support [see VS website] - attend training on attachment provided by Educational Psychology- attend training on interventions with specific relevance to CiC e.g. Emotion Coaching; Five to Thrive [EYFS settings]; Stoke Speaks Out [especially EYFS and R –Y6.
- Set up or attend EP or CAMHS consultations, promoting multi agency attendance to ensure a 'joined up' approach.
- Include targets to address emotional and health needs as appropriate in ePEPs.

No Permanent Exclusion

- Our CiC have already had many broken relationships in their lives. CiC need to understand and deal with the consequences of their actions but permanent exclusion has disproportionate consequences for CiC, for example in terms of breakdown of care placements, break up of sibling groups and mental health, therefore we will not permanently exclude CiC but instead we will work together proactively, using resources in our control, to solve problems.
- In the event of a serious issue, which might otherwise lead to permanent exclusion, the child will be fixed term excluded and an emergency review of the ePEP [and EHC plan if appropriate] will be called and attended by social care and the VS and the issue resolved. As appropriate, by shared agreement and in the best interests of the child, a managed move to other provision may sometimes be necessary.

Inclusion and Fixed Term Exclusion

- The VS and social worker will be informed of fixed term exclusion on the day it occurs, with paperwork within 48 hours.
- The VS and social worker will be invited to the return from exclusion meeting and review of ePEP, if plans need to change.
- Schools will take a proactive approach to sourcing the DfE recommended first day provision for fixed term exclusion, in view of the additional pressures that exclusion can put on care placements.
- CiC will not be 'grey excluded'.
- CiC will not be on part time timetables other than for a multi agency agreed, ePEP recorded, regularly reviewed, fixed term.
- Where Alternative Provision is appropriate, this will always be accessed via the AP Learning Pathways hub if in Stoke.
- Under all circumstances the school remains responsible for CiC in whatever provision they attend.

Attendance

- Schools will maximise attendance, promote inclusion and minimise fixed term exclusion.
- A first day calling system will be operated for all absence on and off site [e.g. in Alternative Provision].

- Where attendance is falling or below 85% a review of the ePEP [and EHC plan if appropriate] will be called and attended by social care and the VS as appropriate.

Achievement

- The necessary data set to show up to date baseline attainment, current attainment, targets [set on the basis of at least expected average national progress] and value added will be recorded in the ePEP and shared openly.
- Aspirations will not be lowered on the basis of current performance but will be based on secure knowledge of the child's potential.
- In order to enable our CiC to achieve their potential we will take shared responsibility for writing and delivering high quality long term plans with short term SMART targets in the ePEP.
- Where CiC are not making at least average progress a review of the ePEP [and EHC plan if appropriate] will be called and attended by social care and the VS as appropriate.

PEPs and Other Plans

- All CiC will have an up to date, accurate and high quality ePEP from 20 days of coming into care or starting a new school, reviewed termly at a multi-agency meeting.
- DT, social worker and young person's sections will be completed prior to the meeting
- The DT will drive the PEP process and chair the PEP meeting unless otherwise agreed.
- The DT will use social care advice to ensure the PEP links to Care Plan
- All CiC who need it will have an EHC plan that cross references with the PEP
- The DT will ensure that SMART targets are set to enable CiC to meet their potential and that linked funding is used appropriately.
- If PEP targets are not being met, the DT/social worker/carer or VS will call a review of the ePEP [and EHC plan if appropriate] attended by social care and the VS as appropriate.

Transition

- We will ensure there are clear plans for the next phase of education, training and employment in ePEPs.
- The DT will attend a pre-admission meeting or review in the new provision and so ensure plans are handed over and maintained.