

Introduction

All parents want the best for their children and getting the right education for them is an important part of that expectation.

For a looked after child, education can be fraught with difficulties caused by upheavals and upsets in the child's life. Additionally, there may be confusion among those with parenting responsibilities about who does what. Not least because for looked after children the parents may be actively involved in decisions about the child's well-being. Understanding who makes important decisions, such as choosing a school, and who supports a young person throughout school and beyond compulsory education can be crucial to their life chances.

Services are arranged differently in different local authorities, to support and improve the education of looked after children; to provide multi-agency training; secure school placements; organise in-school support for children. From April 2006 the framework for arranging and providing these services in conjunction with local partners will be the Children and Young People Plan which local authorities will be required to prepare and publish. This guide focuses on the particularly important contributions made by carers and social workers in supporting the education of a looked after child. It is a response to the Social Exclusion Unit's recommendation that there is a need for clarity about these roles and responsibilities, to reduce the chance of no action being taken to help a child because of uncertainty about who should do what. This guide also recognises that there may in some places be local arrangements, especially in the absence of an allocated social worker for a child, in which case a carer might assume some of those responsibilities. Where the text refers to both social workers and carers, this means that they should negotiate who is best placed to do a particular task. Some responsibilities will also vary according to the child's care status.

For the purposes of this guide, the term 'carer' is used to denote a foster carer or residential social worker as primary carer.

References:

A better education for children in care (Social Exclusion Unit, 2003)

The background of the image features several overlapping silhouettes of human figures in various shades of orange and yellow. The silhouettes are stylized and lack facial features, creating a sense of a diverse group of people. The largest silhouette is on the left, with others positioned behind and to the right, some appearing to be in motion or interacting.

Who is
a parent?

01

When a child is in care, the local authority comes under a duty to safeguard and promote the child's welfare. The local authority is also under a new duty, introduced in the Children Act 2004, to give particular attention to the educational implications of any welfare decision. The range of individuals involved in that collective responsibility is very wide and includes health services and all local authority services, from education and social services to housing, leisure and youth services.

Schools too have a vital role to play in promoting a child's wider well-being. Under the Education Act 2002 schools have a duty to safeguard children, promote their welfare and ensure everyone plays their full part in safeguarding children from abuse and neglect.

Education law defines who is a parent very widely. It includes anyone who has parental responsibility for a child, or who has care of them. This means it is possible for someone who does not have parental responsibility to be a 'parent' because they have care of the child in question, for example foster parents.

Parental responsibility is defined in the Children Act 1989. The following people usually have parental responsibility:

- The father and the mother of the child if they were married to one another at the time of the child's birth or subsequently marry or if they were married to one another between the time of the child's conception and the child's birth.
- The mother of the child, whether she is married to the father or not.
- The unmarried father of the child if he becomes registered as the child's father after 1 December 2003.
- The unmarried father where he has made a formal parental agreement with the mother or by obtaining a court order.
- A step-parent can acquire parental responsibility if both natural parents make a formal agreement or by obtaining a court order.*

No other people have parental responsibility automatically. However, parental responsibility can be acquired through court orders, for example, a residence order. If a carer or parent is unsure as to whether they have parental responsibility they should seek their own independent legal advice.

The responsibility of the corporate parent continues at least until the age of 21 and up to 24 if the young person is still being supported in higher education or training.

References:
Section 576 of the Education Act 1996

Children Act 1989 (as amended)

If this were my child (Local Government Information Unit, 2003)

* This applies from 30th December 2005. Step-parents includes a person who is the civil partner of the parent of the child.





Starting pre-school

02

One of the most important milestones in a child's life is starting pre-school at the age of three. From April 2004 the right to a free part-time pre-school place was extended to all three-year-olds as well as those aged four and five. We use the word 'pre-school' here to cover all under-fives provision such as school nursery classes, childminders, nurseries, playgroups and daycare centres that receive government funding to provide early education.

Early education is not compulsory for under-fives, but the offer of a free pre-school place does provide children with quality early learning and development opportunities. Different areas will have different kinds of pre-school settings, so carers can decide what is best for their particular child and family, and should discuss the options with their key worker, health visitor and/or local education authority (LEA).

In some areas SureStart programmes offer extra support in early learning and family support, for example childcare for under-twos, book packs for young children, holiday play schemes, parenting classes and day trips. The Birth to 3 Matters Framework provides support and information for all those with the responsibility for the care and development of babies to children aged three.

From April 2006 local authorities will plan early years education for all

children, including young children and those who are looked after, in their Children and Young Peoples Plan. Health workers and social workers should make sure carers know how to access any local programmes or support which can benefit the child.

When a child attends pre-school, the education dimension of their Care Plan will set out how their educational and developmental needs will be met. For children of compulsory school age there will be a Personal Education Plan (PEP) drawn up by the social worker in partnership with the child, teachers, parents / relatives / carers and other professionals, such as health workers. The PEP should set out the child's needs and the services and support required to match them. Every statutory review of the care plan will have to consider how well the child's educational needs are being met. An Independent Reviewing Officer will chair the review and will have an important role in ensuring the PEP is up to date and that it is working for the child. As a child's needs may change quickly it may be necessary to hold multi-agency meetings to make sure services are well co-ordinated. Where such changes lead to a significant change in the care plan reviews may need to be held more frequently than the minimum required by regulations. Carers, social workers and pre-school workers should involve the child in planning, observing the child's play and behaviour, for example, to work out what they feel.



TAMESIDE METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A number of literacy initiatives have been implemented by the Education Resource Team, including:

RESOURCE BOXES Twenty-four different sets of resource boxes have been developed to promote literacy and language skills in early years children. These boxes contain fiction and non-fiction books, toys, games, artefacts, pictures and musical instruments, and are available for carers to borrow. There are three sets of the boxes available from different locations within the borough and social workers operate a delivery service to any carer who wants to borrow the equipment. Many of the carers are using these boxes, and the social workers are actively promoting them. The Education Resource Team uses the resources with children in school, and the Children with Disabilities team is now developing resource boxes along a similar theme.

STORY SACKS Two sets of thirty story-sacks have just been bought for the five-to nine-year olds. Neil Griffiths, the Story Sack creator, showed the foster carers how the Story Sacks can be used. The sacks are available for foster carers to borrow, and early indications show that this is going to be a very popular activity.

CONTACT Kim Brooks, Education Resource Team, Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council
Tel: 0161 343 3339
E-mail: kim@ltol.co.uk

References:

Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage – www.surestart.gov.uk/quality/foundationstage
Birth to 3 Matters Framework

Resources:

Education Matters (The Who Cares? Trust, 2003)

The background of the slide features stylized, overlapping silhouettes of people in various shades of orange and yellow. The silhouettes are abstract and layered, creating a sense of depth and movement. The colors range from a light, pale yellow to a vibrant, deep orange.

Starting school and
changing school

03

Evidence suggests that continuity of schooling is fundamental to a child's chances of success. Although a change of school often happens when a child comes into care or changes placement, *social workers should try to arrange placements around a child's existing school wherever possible*. While attending a local school may be generally desirable, this may not be the top priority in cases where a child is already well settled in a school within travelling distance. Children should not be taken off roll from a school until an adequate equivalent placement has been set up. The Social Worker will be responsible for arranging the child's school in consultation with the carer and child and where appropriate with the child's parents. Transition points need to be carefully managed, to overcome the risk of exclusion.

CARERS AND SOCIAL WORKERS CAN FIND OUT INFORMATION ABOUT LOCAL SCHOOLS. THIS WILL INCLUDE:

- the local education authority's admissions guide to mainstream schools in their area
- the school's prospectus – a booklet which gives a wide range of information about the school including its admission arrangements
- the school's inspection report; available from the school, local libraries or Ofsted website (www.ofsted.org.uk)
- advice for parents from the Advisory Centre for Education, which publishes *Choosing a School* (0808 8005793; www.ace-ed.org.uk).

If a change is inevitable or is just part of the normal school transfer process, it is important for the social worker or carer to get the best 'fit' for the child when choosing a school. This means starting with the child and his or her needs. Making a list of needs and putting them in order is a good way of identifying what to look for in a school. So, if a child most of all needs the security of attending school near home with local friends, then attending the local school may be a priority. The children are likely to have strong views themselves and social workers and carers should discuss the options with them.

What should the social worker/carer look for in a school?

1 Visit the school, if possible with the child. Most schools have open days or evenings, but it is also normal for parents and carers to arrange an appointment to be shown round at other times. Does the school seem welcoming? Look out for purposeful activity and evidence that the children's work is valued by being put on display.

Check if the school is well run: policies can give useful information on how the school deals with special educational needs, equal opportunities, behaviour and bullying, for example. A report on the school written by Ofsted can be found on its website (www.ofsted.gov.uk), or ask for a copy from the school or local library. The school prospectus includes

References:
School Admissions Code of Practice (DfES, 2003)

A Better Education for Children in Care (Social Exclusion Unit, 2003)

Resources:
Choosing a School (ACE, 2003)

References:

School Admissions Code of Practice (DfES, 2003)

A better education for children in care (Social Exclusion Unit, 2003)

Resources:

Choosing a School (ACE, 2003)

details of recent results of national tests and public examinations.

2 What do the admission rules say?

These decide how places are allocated when more people apply than there are places. The Government expects schools and LEAs to give top priority to looked after children in allocating places when schools are over-subscribed and under the Education Act 2005, has the power to make this a legal requirement. Carers should say on the application form that they are applying for a looked after child. If the admission rules do not say anything about looked after children, they should ask their LEA admissions department what they will do about this. Social workers and carers can also complain to the Local Government Ombudsman. Where the school deals with its own admissions, the LEA is expected to object to the Schools Adjudicator. This is one way the local authority can make sure it is taking action as a corporate parent to make sure young people in public care are not always placed in poorly-performing schools.

3 Will there be travelling expenses?

If a child does not attend the nearest available suitable school there may be no help with transport costs even if the school is farther than the legal walking distance (three miles for a child of eight and over; two miles for under-eights). Some local authority departments jointly fund transport costs.

4 What support does the school usually provide for children who may need extra help to learn?

Ask for a copy of the school's special educational needs policy if the child has learning difficulties, including emotional and behavioural difficulties (*see Special Educational Needs Code of Practice chapter 1:23*)

Transferring schools and appeals

Many children in the care system change schools frequently, and finding a school place can be very difficult if a child is transferring outside the normal entry time, generally because all the schools are full. This is particularly the case with popular and successful schools. Some LEAs now have local arrangements in place that allow a looked after child to be admitted to a school, even where the school is full. The child's carer or social worker should ask the admissions team at the LEA if they have such an agreement in place.

Parents can apply for a place at whatever school they want their child to go to. So too can a child's social worker acting as corporate parent. Details of how to go about this can be obtained from the admissions team at the relevant LEA. Where the school is already full the application may be turned down by either the school or LEA depending on who is the admission authority. It should not be turned down by the headteacher acting alone. The school or LEA turning down the application must provide the parent

or social worker with the reason for their decision and inform them of their right to appeal to an independent appeal panel. Where the social worker has applied as the child's corporate parent, they should ensure that copies are sent to carers and birth parents (where appropriate). The social worker should then ask for appeal forms and should seek to work with the child's parents where possible, in particular where a child is accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 and the parents retain parental responsibility. The child's views should be represented at the appeals panel by the most appropriate person with parental responsibility, who may be accompanied by a friend, adviser or interpreter to speak on the child's behalf.

Appeal hearings outside the normal admission timetable should be held within 30 school days of the appeal being made. Admission authorities should deal with applications and appeals for looked after children as quickly as possible to avoid 'unnecessary delay'. In any case, local authorities should make sure that a looked after child is receiving full-time education within 20 days although, if an appeal is about to take place, this may be a temporary provision.

It may be useful to get advice from the Advisory Centre for Education which has an advice booklet, *Appealing for a School*.

Taking up a place

Well planned moves and transition support should be detailed in the child's

Personal Education Plan. When children move school, head teachers must pass on their school record to the receiving school within 15 school days of them leaving. The designated teacher is responsible for liaising with their counterpart in the new school to enable information, including the Personal Education Plan (PEP), to be passed on quickly so that any support can be put in place without delay.

Teachers responsible for pastoral care should make sure that a child is helped to settle in, for example by matching the child to a 'buddy' – generally another child in the same class who can smooth the way for them. This is particularly important when the transfer is outside the normal time of changing schools. It is important that the school makes the child feel welcome while maintaining as much confidentiality as possible. The designated teacher should discuss beforehand with the child what they would like to be kept private and help them find the explanations and words that they will need when other pupils ask them where they are from and where they live now.

There is no universal right to grants for school uniform although many authorities have some funds. The education welfare officer should provide information on grants to carers when a child changes school. A foster carer's allowance should cover the cost of uniform.

References:
School Admission Appeals Code of Practice (DfES, 2003)

Resources:
Appealing for a School (ACE, 2003)

References:

Guidance on the Education of Children and Young People in Public Care (DfEE/DH, 2000)

Resources:

Think smart – moving schools (The Who Cares? Trust, 2004)

Believe in me (The Who Cares? Trust, 2002)



SCHOOL TRANSFER SUPPORT PROGRAMME

Since September 2001, Westminster City Council's Education of Pupils in Care Team (EPiC) have run a transition project with the following aims:

- To ensure all children due to start in Reception class or in secondary school during the following school year have a place in a suitable local school before the school year starts
- To ensure that the local authority, carers and social workers act as advocates for children who do not immediately obtain a suitable place
- To ensure support for looked after children is maximised at the often difficult time of secondary transfer.

It involved the following activities:

- Identifying children in the two age groups concerned
- Contacting social workers and carers to check what work has been carried out or planned to ensure that a school place is accessed
- Making contact with admissions departments of the LEAs concerned to check local procedures and timetables

- Ensuring carers have made considered applications in accordance with local timetables and circumstances
- Where required, ensuring a 'supporting letter' is provided regarding social factors to assist application
- Following up applications in the Spring Term
- Providing support for carers and social workers where applications have not been successful to ensure further applications are made or right of appeal is exercised.

This work has been of particular importance in the London area where there are limited numbers of school places available. Moreover, the majority of these children were placed in other authorities, all of which have different admissions timetables and procedures that make it difficult to provide standardised support to carers and social workers.

For further information, please contact Steve Bywater, c/o the Looked After Children Team, 1st Floor, 4 Frampton Street, London NW8 8LF.
E-mail: sbywater@westminster.gov.uk

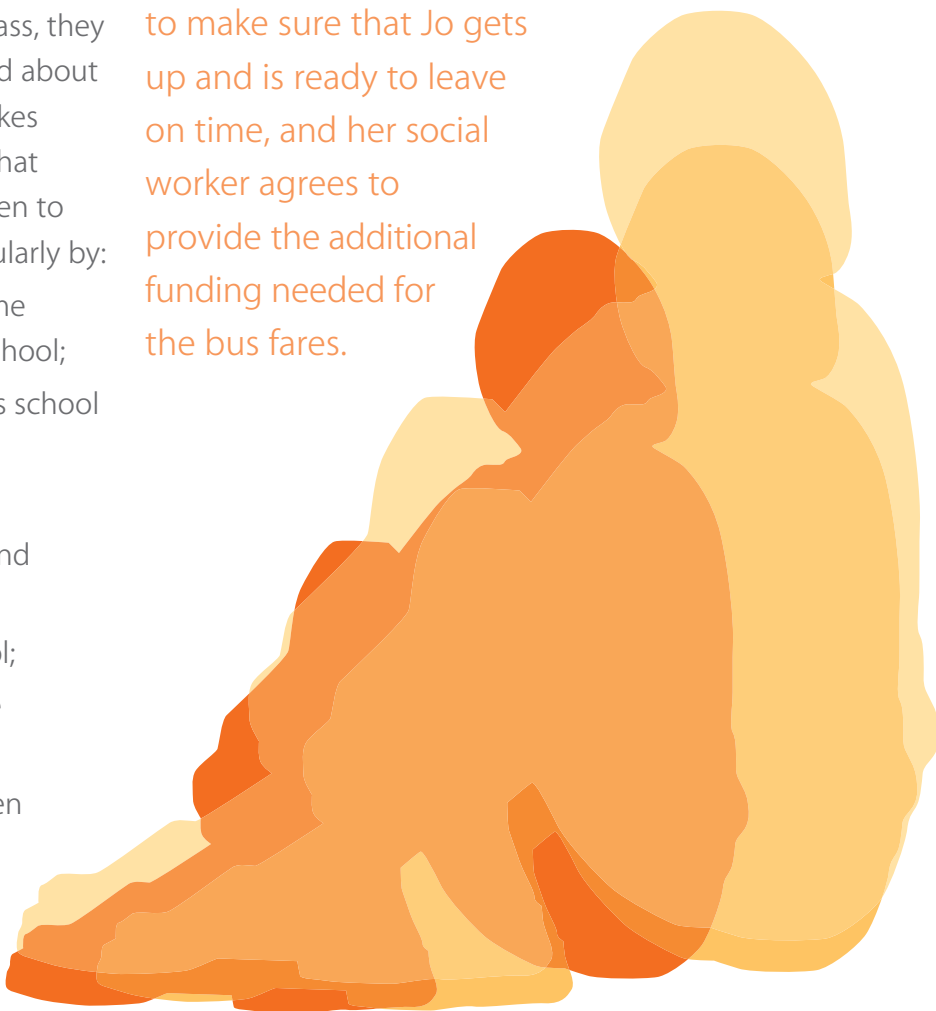
Primary carers would normally be expected to sign a home school agreement. Generally this is a standard document that applies to all parents, but it provides an opportunity for the carer to check what support the school will offer and for the school to say what it expects of the carer. There should be a home school agreement even where the child's stay is temporary, although home school agreements are not legally binding and the parent/carer does not have to sign it.


Attendance

Being in school full-time gives children the best possible chances to succeed. As well as learning subjects in class, they develop routines and understand about timekeeping. Missing school makes it harder for them to catch up what they miss. Carers can help children to build the habit of attending regularly by:

- making sure they get up in time to have breakfast and go to school;
- taking an interest in the child's school work and activities;
- checking homework diaries;
- attending parents' evenings and reading reports;
- keeping in contact with school;
- not taking holidays during the school term; and
- looking out for signs of children skipping school, and taking prompt action to get them back in if they are.

Case study Jo moves to stay with new carers, but as she is settled in Year 10 at her school, the decision is taken by Jo and her social worker, in discussion with the designated teacher and other professionals, to maintain her school placement. Although this will mean a journey of about thirty minutes by bus, Jo is happy to be able to stay at the school where she has friends and is making good progress with her coursework. Her carer agrees to make sure that Jo gets up and is ready to leave on time, and her social worker agrees to provide the additional funding needed for the bus fares.



The background of the slide features stylized, overlapping silhouettes of a man and a woman in shades of orange and yellow. The man's silhouette is on the left, and the woman's is on the right, partially overlapping the man's. The text is overlaid on these silhouettes.

Children's progress
– who checks?

04

Supporting young people to attend and do well at school is one of the primary tasks of carers. This means encouraging the child by showing an interest in work they bring home; reading with younger children and, for young people, understanding the demands of course work, exams and tests, and offering the right kind of support and encouragement. Through links within local authorities, social workers should make sure that carers know how to take an active part in care and education planning, and whom to contact at school, LEA and social services level for information and support.

Social workers should consult with carers to find out what kind of training, support and information they need and tailor any support appropriately.

Day-to-day carers and residential social workers should:

- provide a quiet place for the child to do homework, and essential materials (e.g. pens, paper, ruler, books, calculator)
- check that homework is done
- encourage regular school attendance
- encourage after-school activities
- attend school events including parents' evenings (unless there is an agreement between social services and the designated teacher that the child's parent attends)
- attend local authority events to celebrate children's achievement.

In addition, residential social workers should:

- Make sure they are familiar with the education policy that every children's home is required to have.

Social workers should check:

- the child has access to a room for quiet study
- they have access to suitable books and other reference material
- they receive support with their reading
- they have access to a computer with suitable software.

The designated teacher should be aware, from the young person's point of view, of any day-to-day difficulties they experience. Specific actions in relation to these points should be detailed in the Personal Education Plan. This should inform planning with other teachers to ensure an inclusive approach to the curriculum and classroom management. The designated teacher should help young people access study support, including out-of-hours support, to help them catch up with their peers where necessary.



LONDON BOROUGH OF MERTON – EXPLAINING SATS TO FOSTER CARERS

INTRODUCTION The Merton literacy and numeracy consultants delivered sessions for foster carers on how literacy/numeracy is taught in schools. They explained the SAT's content and stages and how they could support the children at home.

AIM

- To empower foster carers to be able to help and support children with their literacy and numeracy skills.
- To help prepare the children for SATs tests.

DETAILS OF ACTIVITY

- There were two sessions – key stages 1 & 2, key stage 3.
- Participants were given information on how literacy and numeracy is taught in schools e.g. the literacy hour/numeracy lesson.

- The various levels of attainment were explained for SATs and what the children would be asked to do.
- Everyone was involved in some practical activities.
- Foster carers were able to ask questions at the end of the session and could choose £20 worth of books for the children. They were also given maths packs containing games/cards/learning aids for children to use at home.

CONTACT Rosa Ashton, Chances Team,
Chaucer Centre, Canterbury Road,
Morden, Surrey, SM4 6PX
Tel: 020 8288 5456
E-mail: rosa.ashton@merton.gov.uk

Out of authority placements

If children are to succeed when placed out of their home authority, it is essential that agreements are established between the placing and receiving authorities, as to who will take responsibility for

- securing appropriate mainstream provision
- keeping in regular, frequent contact with the child
- checking on their attendance and progress

- attending events, meetings and parents' evenings
- identifying who will fund arrangements.

The distance between the two authorities, and the practicality of the child's social worker being able to visit, may affect these agreements. With agreement some of this role could be undertaken by a social worker in the receiving authority. Whatever the arrangement, clear protocols must be established, and children should know what they can expect.

Reviewing progress

All parents and carers are entitled to a school report detailing a child's progress every year and should be given information about how they can discuss that with the child's teachers, generally at parents' evening.

For looked after children there are other obligations to check the child's progress, both in their education and other aspects of their life. The Children's Services team manager and the child's social worker are responsible for making sure statutory reviews are held on time, and that they are chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer. It may be useful for the year or class teacher or the designated teacher to attend the statutory review or, where more appropriate, to provide a written report on progress towards any short- or long-term targets which will be written up in planning documents.

Personal Education Plans

Planning can take many forms but all looked after children should have an effective Personal Education Plan (PEP), which forms part of the overall Care Plan. This should be *initiated* by the child's *social worker* in partnership with:

- the child
- designated teacher
- parent or relative
- carer and/or
- other professional.

Local authorities have created a wide range of multi-agency teams to support the education of children in care. They may take a lead role in ensuring that PEP planning is effective. The PEP should be reviewed either at the statutory review or close to this. The Independent Reviewing Officer should make sure this is done at least every six months, and ideally termly, and that action to meet identified needs is followed up.

The designated teacher is responsible for:

- checking that the Personal Education Plan has been set up
- ensuring that information about the child's education is transferred between agencies and individuals
- discussing feedback from the statutory review with social workers and, where necessary, the carers
- ensuring anything decided about the child's education at the statutory review is acted on.

Targets and support for pastoral care and special educational needs may have been drawn up by school staff or LEA with the child and carer; these will form part of the child's PEP. The PEP identifies two particular types of target – short- and long-term. It is important that these are appropriate and sufficiently challenging for the child, and that the child is aware of them.

References:

The Education (Pupil Information) (England) Regulations 2000 (SI297)

Guidance on the Education of Children and Young People in Public Care (DfEE/DH, 2000)

Independent Reviewing Officers Guidance (DfES, 2004)

References:

A better education for children in care (Social Exclusion Unit, 2003)

Resources:

Think smart – planning to do well (The Who Cares? Trust, 2004)

Education Matters (The Who Cares? Trust, 2003)

**LONDON BOROUGH OF EALING**

Reviews for children in Ealing have independent chairs. Education is discussed and needs addressed. Personal Education Plans are part of this process.

- Social workers increasingly visit and relate to schools and meet with designated teachers.
- Issues of confidentiality are addressed in the format of general advice/discussion at meetings – similar to Child Protection issues.

PEPs are currently monitored through:

- reviews
- PEP meetings with schools for individual pupils
- Work of teacher/caseworkers and social workers
- PEPs relate to other plans through target setting and long-term plans.

Training and implementation:

- Foster carers have been trained on PEPs.
- Social workers are now more aware of the importance of education e.g. not moving young people during SATs weeks/at important exam times.
- Expectations towards/around education have been raised.
- Experience has shown that once a PEP is written, it definitely improves targets and planning.
- There is an annual conference on the Educational Achievement of Ealing's young people in care. Young people usually speak at this.

CONTACT Linda Thompson,
Education Co-ordinator for Looked After Children, London Borough of Ealing Tel: 020 8825 7791,
E-mail: thompsonl@ealing.gov.uk

Help with keeping up and catching up

Looked after children have all too often been out of school for long periods of time, and as a result fall behind with school work. It is important that their school is notified of this, and that their needs for study support and catch-up materials are identified and recorded in their PEP. Sometimes young people will need to benefit from individual tuition to support progress in school. This should be recorded in their PEP, and the designated teacher should ensure that the support is put in place. Carers and social workers should provide

encouragement and help the child to catch up.

Where looked after children have no school place for whatever reason, the LEA should ensure that their education continues, whether by placement at a PRU, home tuition or other arrangement. The emphasis should be on helping the child keep up rather than catch up. Where looked after children have been out of school and have fallen behind with school work, it is important that their school is notified of this and that their needs for study support and catch up materials are identified. Diagnostic testing is a good way to assess any gaps.

Study support (Out of school hours learning) activities

Study support (out of school hours learning) activities have been shown to have a positive impact on children, and especially on pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and those who need extra support with their learning. The more relaxed atmosphere of study support might be of particular benefit to looked after children, who often face great instability. It is therefore essential that a child's interests and out of school activities should be recorded on their PEP. It might be appropriate to make these activities the subject of some of the targets, ^e.g. joining a school sports team, arts club, computer club or homework club, or having music lessons. Carers and social workers should enable children to access these activities, by ensuring that they have appropriate equipment, and especially transport to and from the activity. This will help to ensure that looked after children have the same opportunity to benefit from study support as other children.

Carers should take children to the local library to join as members. They may be able to provide a parental signature if the library requires it. They should check whether there are any special arrangements about not imposing fines on lost or late books for looked after children, whose frequent moves sometimes result in library books being mislaid. They should also help children to visit the library regularly, to use the

Case study Sam is in Year 9 at school and brings home a letter about a school trip to Italy to go skiing for a week. He's very keen to go as several of his friends are going, and he'd really like to try skiing. His carers are concerned about the cost: they have previously paid for school day trips from their fostering allowance, but a week abroad is more than they can afford. Sam doesn't want to be left out because he's in care, and speaks to his social worker about it. As the subject of school trips has already been discussed at his last PEP review, the social worker knows that funding is available to support the trip, and Sam is able to go.

References:

A better education for children in care (Social Exclusion Unit, 2003)



Resources:
www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/studysupport



CALDERDALE – FRIDAY CLUB AND PASSPORT TO LEISURE

Calderdale Looked After Children Education Service provides a wide range of support for looked after children by maximising life chances through education and leisure pursuits. These include:

- Tuesday Club for 11–16 year olds – a youth club feel with off site activities too.
- Friday Club meets from 6–8pm each Friday of term time (ages 7–11 years) for sport, leisure and culture activities e.g. trampoline, archery, mountain biking.
- Half term Activities take place at least one full day of every week of the school holidays e.g. making bird boxes, museum visits, canoeing.

- Summer Residential Visits take place on three occasions to build on our annual programme e.g. climbing, gorge walking, and potholing.
- Passport to Leisure package is available free to all looked after children, carers and their siblings.
- Free tickets to local rugby, football and theatre events are distributed through LACE Service to LAC and carers.

CONTACT Robert Glover, Looked After Children Education Service, Heath Training & Development Centre, Free School Lane, Halifax HX1 2PT
 Tel: 01422 394126
 E-mail: robert.glover@calderdale.gov.uk

resources there as well. As well as books they can borrow music, CDs, DVDs and use the Internet for homework.

Planning for life after school

When young people reach the age of 16 their Care Plan will become their Pathway Plan. The Pathway Plan must be based on a thorough assessment of the young person's needs, which must lead to detailed proposals as to the services and the support that they should be offered so that they are enabled to manage the transition to a more independent lifestyle as they enter adulthood beyond the age of 18. Interventions in the Pathway Plan usually build on previous services that have been provided under the young person's Care Plan and their Personal

Education Plan. The Pathway Plan must include an updated assessment of the young person's education and training needs and whether it is proposed that they young person will stay on at school beyond compulsory school age. Detailed information will be necessary about the support that will be provided to the young person so that they are able to continue to achieve at school or to successfully make the transition to college-based education, training or employment. It is the responsibility of the young person's Leaving Care Personal Adviser to make sure that this plan is in place and reviewed. Other agencies whose support will be necessary so that the young person will achieve their potential will also need to be involved.

The Connexions service offers careers guidance and support in moving on to further education and training for young people. The young person's leaving care personal adviser will usually also be their Connexions PA – though the local Connexions service will have an important role advising on the support that can be available to the young person so that they can achieve in education, training or employment. The Connexions service, along with schools and LEAs, should be able to provide the young person, their carer and the authority responsible for their care with information about alternatives at Key Stage 4 where the normal curriculum seems inappropriate.

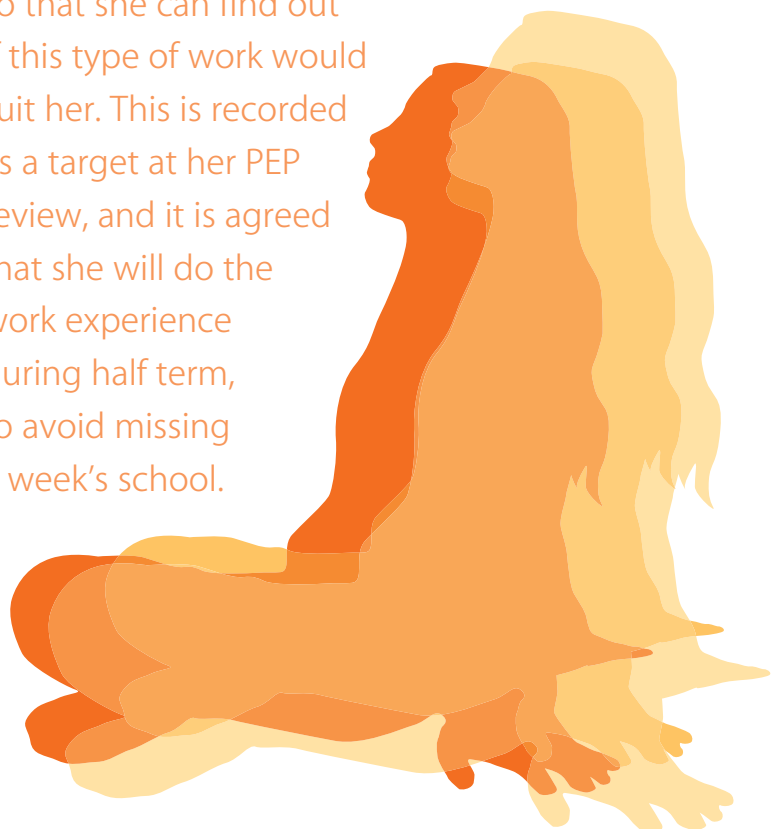
Work experience

All young people, including those in care, might benefit from a period of work experience, to help them explore the possibilities for training and employment in the future. This should be recorded in the PEP or Pathway plan. Young people in care often miss out on work experience. This may be because they have moved schools, they lack support in planning or sustaining a placement, or they may have been excluded. In this case, the social worker, leaving care worker or carer should talk to the young person about what they would like to do, and then decide who will contact the designated teacher or the Connexions adviser in order to negotiate for the requested work experience to be arranged. Alternatively, they may wish to organise work experience for their young person independently (and should seek advice about insurance in this case).

Case study Zoë has had several placement moves over the past year, and has recently changed school again. She arrived in the autumn term of Year 11, and has missed the opportunity for work experience, which the school provides in the summer of Year 10. Zoë is interested in going to college next year to do a GNVQ in art and design, and would like to find out about jobs that would help her to use these skills. Her carer and social worker encourage her to talk to her Connexions personal adviser, who sets up work experience with a graphic design company, so that she can find out if this type of work would suit her. This is recorded as a target at her PEP review, and it is agreed that she will do the work experience during half term, to avoid missing a week's school.

Resources:
Employability
(The Who Cares?
Trust, 2002)

Employability Plus
(The Who Cares?
Trust, 2004)





Special Educational Needs

05

For a number of reasons, young people in care are more likely to have a statement of special educational needs (SEN) than other pupils. Achieving the right help for children with SEN often requires much energetic determination by parents. The local authority, in its role as corporate parent, should be equally vigorous in ensuring that all looked after children have their additional and special needs met, and have access to effective advocacy when needed.

Checking a child's progress

A range of professionals have responsibility in law and/or set out by the SEN Code of Practice for ensuring children with special educational needs have their needs identified and met.

They include:

- certain early years providers
- teachers
- school governors
- head teachers
- local education authorities
- health authorities and social services departments.

The school governing body must make sure that the parent or carer is told when a child begins receiving special educational help. They must also do their best to make sure that children with SEN have their needs met.

Every school should have a SEN policy, available free to parents and carers.

Every school must have a SEN Co-ordinator (SENCO), a teacher who liaises with the LEA, members of staff and parents/carers about children with SEN. For a looked after child, this should extend to the designated teacher and/or social workers. All the professionals are expected to make sure that support is provided in school as an urgent priority.

If a child has just moved into the school, the designated teacher should make sure that school records detailing help given in the previous school are passed on to the SENCO. This will help inform

the action to be taken immediately to prevent the child experiencing failure before help is put in place.

The SENCO will generally draw up an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for any child who is on the school levels of support, called School Action and School Action Plus. In a pre-school setting these levels are called Early Years Action and Early Years Action Plus. The IEP should be drawn up with the child and parent/carers and sometimes with input from outside professionals such as an educational psychologist from the LEA. Carers should be invited to reviews of the IEP although sometimes these are discussed at the regular parents' evening.

Asking for extra help

Carers can raise concerns about a child's progress and ask that they begin receiving help or more help if they feel that the child has learning difficulties, including emotional and behavioural difficulties which have not been identified or are not being fully met. The decision rests with the school, but the carer should ask for a meeting with the SENCO to explain their concerns.

Asking for a statutory assessment

If a child is receiving help at School Action Plus or Early Years Action Plus and is still not making progress or seems to need more help than the school can provide, parents and carers have the right to ask the LEA for a statutory assessment. The head teacher may also make this

request on behalf of the child. The designated officer for social services should inform LEAs of children who they think might have special educational needs.

LEAs have a responsibility to identify those children who might need more help than is routinely given in schools. If they decide this is the case, they must make a statutory assessment and then decide whether to write a statement. The named officer (or statementing officer) at the LEA must ask for advice from the parent/carers, school, its educational psychology service health authority, social services and any other agency or professional who seems appropriate when it undertakes a statutory assessment. Social services must comply with such a request unless they consider that the help is not necessary for the LEA to carry out its legal duties.

Having your voice heard

The designated officer for social services should provide and/or co-ordinate advice to LEAs during the assessment. This may include:

- supporting social workers who need help to prepare reports for the assessment
- taking part in any multi-agency meetings during assessment and statementing
- working with the LEA to decide what provision if any should be included in the statement in relation to any non-educational needs of the child.

Carers' views and observations could cover the following:

- Health – eating, sleeping, illnesses, tiredness, depression, panic attacks
- Physical skills – walking, climbing, drawing, using scissors
- Communication – speech, describing things, talking to people, using the telephone, taking messages
- Personal skills – dressing washing, dealing with pocket money, time-keeping, remembering sports kit/books for school
- Behaviour – poor concentration, silly behaviour, anxiety, aggression, following instructions
- Activities at home – watching TV, reading, hobbies
- Outside activities – clubs, sports
- Relationships – parents, brothers and sisters, other adults
- Behaviour at home – sharing, listening, helping, moods, caring, tantrums
- Homework – difficulty with remembering what to do or getting it finished in the set time
- At school – What is the child good at? What do they enjoy?
- Friendships, relationships with teachers
- Problem areas – particular lessons, playtime, changing class, school transfer
- Help that has worked or not worked
- Are the child's difficulties getting worse?
- What help does the child need?

- What does the child say about their difficulties? When do they most enjoy learning?
- Does any particular incident or piece of work illustrate the child's difficulties or lack of progress?

Carers should check as many of the points in their report as possible with the child and add their comments.

Local education authorities may have their own version of this checklist to guide parents and carers in giving their advice during statutory assessment.

Drawing up a statement

Parents, carers and social workers have the opportunity to comment on the content of the statement. They should ask for meetings with the statementing officer or other people whose advice has contributed to the statement if they are unclear or unhappy with the description of the child's needs or the help they will get.

Once the statement has been drafted by the statementing officer, the LEA must ask parents/carers which school they would like the child to attend.

The LEA must comply with a preference for mainstream education unless it feels the child's attendance would adversely affect the education of other children.

This does not mean a preference for a particular maintained school (mainstream or special) will almost always be met, however. The LEA may refuse a place if the school is unsuitable for the child's age, ability, aptitude and

their special educational needs as well as if the child's attendance would adversely affect the education of other pupils, or if it would be an inefficient use of resources. Carers can appeal if they disagree with the school named in the statement.

Appeals to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal

Parents, carers and social workers have the right to appeal to an independent specialist tribunal against certain decisions of the LEA during this process. They can appeal if:

- the LEA refuses to assess the child
- the LEA refuses to issue a statement
- they disagree with the description of the child's educational needs in the statement
- they disagree with the description of the child's educational provision in the statement
- they disagree with the school named in the statement, or that no school has been named.

Later, if the LEA decides to amend or stop the statement, or refuses to reassess the child, they can appeal against that decision.

Annual review

Once a statement has been drawn up, it is the responsibility of the LEA to keep it under review. A review must be held at least annually and the head teacher

References:

Part 1V Education Act 1996

Special Educational Needs Code of Practice, (DfES, 2001)

Guidance on the Education of Children and Young People in Public Care (DFEE/DH, 2000)

Resources:

Getting Extra Help (ACE, 2002)

Early Years Extra Help (ACE, 2003)

Asking for a Statutory Assessment (ACE, 2004)

Special Education Handbook (ACE, 2002)

How to Appeal (Special Educational Needs Tribunal, 2002)

Case study A foster parent disagreed with her local education authority about the help planned in a statement of special educational needs being drawn up for Terry, 12, a dyslexic child with emotional and behavioural difficulties. She decided to appeal to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal. The result was that Terry was able to attend a local mainstream school with a detailed package of help rather than in a special school for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

is responsible for calling a meeting and inviting those who can contribute to the review. The head teacher should consult the child's social worker to decide who should be invited to the review – parents, foster carers and residential workers, for example. At least one care review each year should coincide with the annual review of the statement, so there needs to be close liaison and co-operation between the social worker and school staff, including the SENCO and head teacher. The Child Care Plan must incorporate a Personal Education Plan that sets out the educational arrangements for the child and should include information from the statement, the annual review and IEPs.

The designated officer for social services should make sure that there are mechanisms in place for social work advice to be provided at annual reviews. The young person's social worker should be invited (by the head teacher) and attend each annual review of the statement; the head teacher must invite them to the Year 9 transition review and it is particularly important that they attend and contribute to the Transition Plan which looks ahead to the child's final two years at school and beyond.

The child's personal adviser from the Connexions service must attend the transition review and goes on to co-ordinate any agreed action. They should circulate any action plan worked out with the young person before the transition review meeting.



Following the annual review or transition review, the head teacher reports any recommendations and differing views given at the meeting to the LEA-named officer who must then decide whether to amend the statement, cease to maintain it or take no action. Parents and carers must be informed by the LEA officer of any such decisions and of their rights of appeal against any amendments or a decision to cease to maintain the statement.

Support for carers

The designated officer for social services is expected to ensure that families with a child with SEN have appropriate support including help in:

- resolving any difficulties
- planning ahead
- writing parental advice during statutory assessment or for annual reviews.

Negotiating the right provision for a child is a demanding prospect for any parent or carer, but many voluntary organisations exist to provide independent support. In addition, the LEA must have a SEN Parent Partnership Service (PPS), which must offer those who request it the help of an independent parental supporter, a volunteer who has some knowledge of special educational needs issues.

The Parent Partnership Service should make sure that corporate parents and carers receive publicity information about their services. They should consider how to offer support and

establish working contacts with those with parental responsibility for the education of children with SEN in care, including social workers, care leaver personal advisers and Connexions Service personal advisers.

The PPS can promote good practice by corporate parents by:

- agreeing with schools to monitor attendance at annual reviews of statements for looked after children
- following up cases where no representative attends for the child.

Local Education Authorities must also make local arrangements for resolving disagreements between parents, the authority and local schools about the educational provision to be made for their children.

SEN: who assesses – who pays?

It is the responsibility of the LEA where a child lives to carry out any statutory assessment of special educational needs. They will make a statement and maintain that statement as necessary and ensure appropriate provision is in place.

Where a statement of SEN has been made for a child who has been placed with a carer or in residential accommodation outside the local authority that cares for the child, the financial cost of that statement should be met by the authority that cares for the child. Authorities have procedures and protocols by which the financial cost of maintaining a statement of SEN can be recouped.

References:

Guidance on the Education of Children and Young People in Public Care (DfEE/DH, 2000)

Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (DfES 2001)

The background of the page features stylized, overlapping silhouettes of people in various shades of orange and yellow. Several hands are raised in the air, suggesting a group activity or a classroom setting. The silhouettes are layered, with some appearing more prominent than others, creating a sense of depth and movement.

Taking part
in school life

06

Supporting children at school

Taking an active interest in a child's school is a very powerful way of letting the child know that their education and progress are important.

Parents and carers have a range of ways of becoming involved, from fundraising and volunteering to help in the classroom to taking an active part in the PTA or becoming a school governor.

Carers and those with parental responsibility who have a child in the school at the time of the election may stand as a parent governor and vote in elections.

Other opportunities to take part include attending the governors' annual meeting for parents, when parents and carers can ask questions about school policies and procedures or other aspects of school management.

Home-school communication

Head teachers should ensure that a pupil's record includes details of carers and anyone who has parental responsibility for the child. This should include details of any court orders. In this way, the school can be sure that all those who have rights in law to stand as governors, vote in elections, take part in assessment and statementing of children with special educational needs are properly informed. The records should also make clear who should be contacted if a child is ill at school, who may collect a child from school, who should attend parents' evenings to discuss the child's report and whose permission should be sought before school outings.

Good home-school communications make it easier for problems to be resolved quickly if difficulties arise for the child in school. An informal meeting with a trusted member of staff can often resolve any emerging problem before it becomes a much bigger issue.

If careful induction of a looked after child has taken place, the designated teacher or pastoral care staff should have made sure that carers and residential care workers know whom to contact over day-to-day matters. Similarly the designated teacher or class teacher should know whom to contact if they have concerns about the child.

Social workers should inform the head teacher or designated teacher as soon as possible when there are significant changes in the home circumstances of a looked after child.

Resources and references:

Guidance on the Education of Children and Young People in Public Care (DfEE/DH, 2000)

The background of the slide features several overlapping silhouettes of human figures in various shades of orange and yellow. The silhouettes are stylized and layered, creating a sense of depth and movement. They represent a group of people, possibly students or a community, in a school setting.

Dealing with
problems in school

07

Behaviour problems and school discipline

As well as disrupting friendships, transferring schools can frequently be a root cause of disaffection from school and behaviour problems. In many cases children should receive help to address their behaviour and any gaps in learning through the special educational needs framework. Parents/carers and social workers may need to set this in motion by expressing their concern to the school.

Bullying

One of the common complaints of children in the care system is that they are bullied at school. It is known that transferring schools outside the normal time is a risk factor, partly because it can be more difficult to make friends. Pairing the child with a buddy for support and friendship when they come into school is a good idea that the designated teacher/pastoral care staff should consider.

If bullying does happen, the child's parents/carers or residential social worker should act quickly. They should ask for a meeting with the class teacher or designated teacher. They should also ask to see a copy of the school's anti-bullying policy.

Strategies vary according to the age of the child involved, the nature of the bullying and what the children themselves would like. School staff should refer to the government guidance *Don't suffer in silence* (DfEE 2000) which describes different ways to deal

with bullying. Children are often reluctant to name names for fear that the bullying will get worse, so school staff need to consider how to ensure that this does not happen. They need to protect the child by providing safe places for them; bolstering friendships and making sure they monitor the situation.

Help through the SEN framework

If a child appears to be getting into trouble a lot, the SENCO should investigate and arrange a meeting with primary carers/social workers if special educational provision is required. Carers could ask the SENCO for a meeting if they have concerns.

If the school is already giving help through the SEN framework, it must inform parents and carers. The governing body must make sure that there is a system in place so that this happens automatically and that children who are looked after do not fall through the net. For example, if a foster care placement changes, the school should make sure that the new carer is informed of this.

The SENCO is responsible for devising provision for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD), sometimes with the support of outside advice from behaviour support specialists within the LEA. School staff – teachers and learning support assistants are responsible for providing the extra help, and the SENCO should make sure that they know what to do and act consistently with other members of staff.

References:

Guidance on the Education of Children and Young People in Public Care (DfEE/DH, 2000)

Resources:

Don't Suffer in Silence (DfEE, 2000)
www.dfes.gov.uk/bullying

Tackling Bullying (ACE, 2002)

Think smart – bullying... get it sorted (The Who Cares? Trust, 2004)

References and resources:
Inclusive Schooling: Children with Special Educational Needs (DfES, 2001)

The provision varies with age but *Inclusive Schooling* guidance gives good examples which SENCOs should use as the basis for supporting inclusion of children of both primary and secondary age with EBD.

Learning mentors and counselling

Another approach aimed at preventing exclusion and dealing with disaffection is for pastoral care staff in school to offer a range of pastoral support including learning mentors, counselling and anger management. These staff should draw up a written action plan with parents and pupils to make clear to everyone what is expected.

For those children who may be at serious risk of permanent exclusion or criminal activity or who look likely to drop out of school, pastoral support teachers should devise a Pastoral Support Programme (PSP). This will involve external services including an LEA representative such as a behaviour support specialist, social inclusion officer or educational psychologist. The child's social worker must be involved to resolve any home problems that may be contributing to the school difficulties. For looked after children the pastoral support staff should ensure that a copy of the PSP goes to the social worker so that they are aware of targets and outcomes. It should be included in the education section of the Care Plan. For pupils of 13 and over, a Connexions personal adviser should also be involved in drawing up the PSP.

Other professionals and workers who may be involved in drawing up a PSP or making provision include youth officers/workers, workers in voluntary organisations, health workers including drugs counsellors and teenage pregnancy co-ordinators, and housing officers where accommodation difficulties are a factor.

Exclusion

All those who work with children in public care should take responsibility for identifying behaviour that is likely to get them into trouble, and work with them to prevent them being excluded from school. Looked after children are ten times more likely to be permanently excluded than other children. Many have experience fixed period exclusions. This disruption in a child's education is often the cause of breakdowns in foster placements so it is vital that Heads try every practicable means to maintain the child in school. With the designated teacher they should seek advice from appropriate LEA officers such as behaviour support advisers, educational psychologists and education welfare officers. They should also involve the child's social worker as soon as possible to avoid the need to exclude the child.

Even where the local authority does not have parental responsibility the child's social worker should be informed about any exclusion. The designated teacher for looked after children should make sure the Head knows the legal status of pupils in public care so he or she notifies all those who have parental responsibility.

Case study Lisa, aged 14, had been excluded from school for several short fixed periods since she started there six months earlier. Her social worker feared a permanent exclusion was imminent and discussed this with her foster carer who reported that she was struggling to get her to school in the mornings. The foster carer felt Lisa had not made friends following the change of school and foster placement.

The social worker agreed to raise the problem with the designated teacher at the school and a meeting was fixed to set up a pastoral support programme. The designated teacher, Lisa's social worker, foster parent, head of year and Lisa herself agreed support and targets.

Lisa was linked with another girl, Tara, in her class who could act as her 'buddy' and extra help for French in the learning support unit was set up twice a week. French was a new subject for Lisa who had been learning Spanish in her previous school.

Lisa agreed to behaviour targets, which included getting to school

on time. She would be on report for eight weeks with class teachers reporting on her behaviour.

If her punctuality and behaviour improved, the foster carer promised an ice skating trip for Lisa. If Lisa's punctuality did not improve, she would have to stay behind in detention once a week.

The PSP was reviewed at eight weeks and Lisa's behaviour had much improved although homework was still patchy. The foster carer took Lisa and Tara ice skating.

Lisa agreed new targets to get her homework in on time and the designated teacher suggested Lisa attend the school's homework club. She arranged for Lisa's form tutor to check homework weekly and award merits for a complete week. Pupils received vouchers for ten merits in a term.

The foster carer agreed to check the homework diary against the school's homework timetable.

References and resources:

Social Inclusion: Pupil support (DfEE, Circular 10/99 (except for Chapter 6 and Annex D))



References:

Education Act 2002

Improving Behaviour and Attendance: Guidance on Exclusion from Schools and Pupil Referral Units (DFES, 2004)

Guidance on the Education of Children and Young People in Public Care (DfEE/DH, 2000)

A better education for children in care (Social Exclusion Unit, 2003)

Resources:

Permanent Exclusion (ACE, 2004)

Fixed Period Exclusion (ACE, 2004)

Think smart – staying in school (The Who Cares? Trust, 2004)

Challenging exclusions

If those with parental responsibility including carers decide to challenge an exclusion they have the same rights to information as parents of other children. As well as parents and carers, residential care workers, social workers, designated teachers, or an independent advocate arranged by the local authority may make representations to the governing body and appeal to an independent appeal panel on behalf of the child.

If social workers or others with parental responsibility feel the exclusion is unfair or disproportionate the decision should be challenged. In any case it is a good idea that the child's views – including any mitigating factors – be made in writing by the social worker. They should check the details of the exclusion against the Government guidance and consult the exclusions help line at the Advisory Centre for Education for advice on how to challenge decisions.

Government guidance, along with a step-by-step guide on putting together a case, is included in the ACE exclusions pack. Currently the guidance includes:

- Improving Behaviour and Attendance: Guidance from Schools and Pupil Referral Units (2004)
- Social Inclusion: Pupil Support (Circular 10/99) (Note: Chapter 6 and Annex D are no longer in force).

With all exclusions, the first stage is to put the case to the governing body which will review the exclusion.

Social workers should make sure that the child's views are heard at the governors' meeting and/or in a letter to the governing body and, where relevant, the independent appeal panel which hears appeals against permanent exclusion.

Governors should generally add any views or details of any representations to the child's school record if asked.

Education out of school

If a child is excluded their education should not stop. For fixed period exclusions, the school is responsible for making provision, which generally means sending work back home.

The carer or residential social worker should liaise with school staff to make sure this happens and that the child's work is returned. School staff should make sure the work is marked. For longer exclusions the child's home LEA may make provision and, in the case of all children excluded permanently, they are expected to provide full-time provision at least by the time the child has been out of school for 15 school days.

Foster care placements can break down if the child is home all day so LEAs should consider making full time provision available for all looked- after children who are excluded, whether for a fixed period or permanently. Arrangements would need to be agreed with the teacher in charge of the authority's Pupil Referral Unit.

Social workers should make sure that they carefully plan for children moving from placements that are outside

mainstream schools. Only where continued attendance is not practical should children be taken off roll at a PRU or be stopped attending a further education college before the next placement is arranged.

Absence from school

Regular attendance is essential for a child to succeed in school, both socially and academically. The law makes parents responsible for a child's regular attendance. If this does not happen, parents may be invited to enter into a parenting contract or, where they are unwilling to engage with the school or LEA to improve the child's attendance, they can be fined or prosecuted.

Guidance on this restates the definition of 'parents' as including carers and all those with parental responsibility. However, parenting contracts and prosecution will not apply to local authorities who have parental responsibility as a result of being named in a care order. They may, however, apply to foster carers.

Every local authority should have an officer who keeps an overview of the attendance of children and young people in public care. In some authorities this will be a Lead Officer for looked after children. When a child's non-attendance reaches 10 days or more this should trigger local authority action. Where the pupil lives in a different LEA, the LEA where they attend school should take the lead in any such LEA-level action needed to improve their attendance. LEAs are advised to

draw up protocols setting out the basis under which cross-border working will take place in these cases.

The Education Welfare Service is likely to take the lead in any inter-agency work involving attendance issues. Schools – probably the designated teacher in the case of a looked after child – are expected to work closely with the LEA to decide any action. They should have clear arrangements worked out between them for deciding how and when the school involves the LEA; Social Services, Connexions, the Police or Youth Offending Teams may also be involved.

Many attendance problems will be dealt with at school level to begin with.

First day contact by the designated teacher or other pastoral support staff with carers is recommended in cases where there is no explanation for the pupil's absence.

Managers of children's homes should draw up clear education policies that say what they do to help children attend regularly. This should include how they will respond to first-day contact calls.

The designated teacher should take a lead with investigating any attendance problem of a looked after child and should involve other members of staff and the child's social worker in providing solutions. The designated teacher should ensure that parents and/or carers are involved in discussions about strategies in school and at home to encourage regular school attendance.

References:

Improving Behaviour and Attendance: guidance on Exclusion from Schools and Pupil Referral Units (DfES, 2004)

References:

Guidance on Education-Related Parenting Contracts, Parenting Orders and Penalty Notices (DfES, 2004)

Guidance on the Education of Children and Young People in Public Care (DFEE/DH, 2000)

Resources:

Ensuring Regular School Attendance (DfES, 2003)

www.dfes.gov.uk/section96/forapprovedqualifications

Changes to the Key Stage 4 Curriculum available from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (01787 884444) reference QCA/03/1167

Schools may offer the following types of help:

- learning mentors
- peer mentors
- in-school counselling
- changes of timetable, subjects or class
- identifying special educational needs and providing appropriate provision
- help in catching up with work missed
- for more serious cases, setting up a pastoral support programme (see above).

Alternatives at Key Stage 4

For some young people who may be at risk of dropping out of school, whether because of attendance problems or exclusion, there are alternative curriculum programmes which may be available to help them re-engage with learning. Many take part in vocational courses in further education colleges linked to extended work experience, for example. If a child is on roll at a school, generally the school will fund the provision; excluded pupils generally are funded by their LEA – in the case of looked after young people, local authorities need to have clear protocols about which LEA will fund this.

For young people to take part in such programmes, it may be necessary for the head teacher to disapply them from some National Curriculum subjects. However, any alternative qualification offered must be approved under Section 96 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000. Important decisions like this should involve a review of the Personal Education Plan and must involve the child or young person. Before a decision to disapply is made the young person must have a guidance interview. This will generally involve an impartial and informed adult such as a member of the school staff or a Connexions personal adviser. They should point out the implications of the proposed disapplication to the young person and look ahead to future education and training.

Raising concerns and complaints procedures

School governing bodies must have general complaints procedures that explain how parents and others should raise concerns with the school. Generally complaints are made to a senior member of staff, such as a head of year or deputy head teacher and are then followed up by the head teacher if necessary. The governing body will hear complaints that staff do not resolve to the satisfaction of the person complaining.



TRAFFORD MBC – GET A JOB, GET A LIFE PROJECT

Get a Job, Get a Life is a corporate parenting initiative, launched in October 2001. It enables looked after children and care leavers to access and participate in flexible, long-term work experience projects within TMBC and externally in the local community and businesses.

AIM Its aim is to encourage and motivate looked after children aged 14+ who are also poor attendees back into education, by offering 1 or 2 days/week work experience over a max of 6 months. The work experience offers valuable insight and experience to aid career planning and progress. This project also aims to improve awareness of this client group's needs internally within TMBC and externally with training and education providers to inform their practice. It also assists with improving attendance as a day on work experience is counted as a school day.

DETAILS OF ACTIVITY The project also employed a study support worker who developed an OCR entry level accredited 'Preparation for Employment' handbook so young people could gain a qualification while on work experience. She also assisted them with their basic skill development. The young people involved in the project have also participated in the development and production of the A–Z work experience video and tutors pack – now available for use by education providers to assist in preparing pupils effectively for work experience.

CONTACT Sarah Maynard,
Employment & Training Initiatives,
71a Northenden Road, Sale M33 2DG
Tel: 0161 912 3503

References:

Curriculum complaints: Section 409 of the Education Act 1996

General complaints: DfES guidance for schools: www.governor.net.co.uk

Resources:

Making a complaint (ACE, 2003)

As well as curriculum complaints from most types of state-maintained schools, LEAs should consider complaints from parents, carers, social workers and others, where these are about teaching staff in community or voluntary controlled schools.

Young people in care should not be denied access to any channel of complaint or appeal on the grounds that one part of the authority cannot challenge the decisions of another part of the local authority or of a school maintained by that authority.

Glossary of terms

Individual education plan (IEP): a short term planning document for pupils with special educational needs. It should include three or four short-term targets that match a child's needs; ways of teaching to be used; the help to be put in place; and how the school will decide if the help has been successful.

Personal education plan (PEP): every child and young person in care should have a PEP which sets out academic achievement; identifies developmental and educational needs; and sets out short and long-term targets and plans. The PEP should be part of the child's Care Plan and reflect any other education plans such as an IEP, Statement etc.

Statement of special educational needs: a document in six parts, which sets out a child's needs, provision to meet those needs and where the child will be educated.

Sure Start: initiative, mainly in disadvantaged areas, to provide early support for families with young children.

Designated teacher: a teacher with responsibility for looked after children in the school. They are expected to be an advocate for young people in public care and ensure that each child has a PEP.

SENCO: each school must have a SEN Co-ordinator who organises the support for children with special educational needs and liaises with parents and carers over reviews of IEPs and annual reviews of statements.

Mentor: an individual who may be an older pupil, non-teaching assistant, teacher or volunteer mentor who provides support or a role model for pupils who need help and guidance. Learning mentors are generally school staff who work with teaching and pastoral staff to support pupils with difficulties in school.

Connexions personal adviser: provide advice and guidance for all young people 13-19, especially those who may experience difficulty making the progression to adult life.

National Curriculum: all mainstream and special schools, but not pupil referral units, must provide the National Curriculum. The three core subjects – English, mathematics and science – are given more teaching time than the other subjects. Children's achievement in the core subjects is tested at the end of Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 with national public exams taken at the end of Key Stage 4. The Foundation Stage begins when children reach the age of three and continues until the end of the

reception year. Early learning goals for this age group cover the main areas of development that young children need to progress in before beginning more formal learning.

Pupil referral unit: a school set up to teach children who have been excluded from school or who are at risk of exclusion, or who cannot attend school for other reasons such as ill health, pregnancy or school phobia.

Further information

- A better education for children in care (Social Exclusion Unit, 2003)
- If this were my child (Local Government Information Unit, 2003)
- Education matters (The Who Cares? Trust, 2003)
- School admissions code of practice (DfES, 2003)
- Education of young people in public care (DfEE/DH, 2000)
- Think smart – moving schools (The Who Cares? Trust, 2004)
- Believe in me (The Who Cares? Trust, 2002)
- Independent reviewing officers guidance (DfES, 2004)
- Employability plus (The Who Cares? Trust, 2004)
- How to appeal (Special Educational Needs Tribunal, 2002)
- Don't suffer in silence (DfEE, 2000)
- Tackling bullying (ACE, 2002)
- Think smart – bullying... get it sorted (The Who Cares? Trust, 2004)
- Inclusive schooling: children with special educational needs (DfES, 2001)
- Every Child Matters Change for Children in Schools (DfES, 2005)

If you want to know more about supporting the education of looked after children contact your local looked after children education service. Details can be found on the Education Protects website at

www.dfes.gov.uk/educationprotects

Help for parents, carers and social workers on school issues is available from The Advisory Centre for Education (ACE) an independent charity providing advice, information and support about children's education in maintained schools. Charity no: 313124

ACE's website www.ace-ed.org.uk

Exclusion information line **020 7704 9822**

(for a free exclusion pack and details of our freephone exclusion helpline)

Advice on all other issues freephone **0808 8005793**

Notes

