

Staffordshire Families First Services

Virtual School for Looked After Children & Care Leavers

- Policy & Procedures – Guidance for staff



Staffordshire County Council (People)

Families First Services

Policy & Procedures – Looked After Children

Part Three, Section 20 - The ‘Virtual School’ for Looked After Children and Care Leavers

1. Introduction:

- 1.1 Initiated by *Care Matters, Time for Change* (2007), all Local Authorities are advised to support the raising of 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 where they are enrolled. However, it has been found that where another ‘Virtual’ School is able to keep an overview of Looked After Children’s education, as *if* they also belonged to that ‘Virtual’ School, it has additional, positive benefits for their educational outcomes.
- 1.2 Staffordshire’s Virtual School for Looked After Children provides a support and challenge role for schools and Local Authority teams in the form of staffing support; access to additional resources to support educational outcomes; information, advice and guidance (especially around Personal Education Plans); monitoring and tracking of educational outcomes and targets, and training and support at key transitional moments.
- 1.3 The Virtual School and the work it carries out are informed by the following legislation and statutory guidance:
- Children Acts (1989/2004)
 - Children & Young People’s Act (2008)
 - Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations (2010)
 - Independent Review Officer’s Handbook (2010)
 - Children (Leaving Care) Regulations (2010)
 - Promoting Educational Achievement of Looked After Children (2010)
 - Children Act Higher Education Bursary Regulations (2009).
 - The Designated Teacher (Looked After Children) Regulations & Statutory Guidance (2009)
 - Education Acts (1993), (1996), (1998) and (2002)
 - The Importance of Teaching (2010).

2. Guiding Principles:

- 2.1 Looked After Children deserve the best experiences in life, from excellent parenting which promotes good health and educational attainment, to a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and skills in order to have an enjoyable childhood and successful adult life.
- 2.2 It is the duty of the Local Authority to promote the educational achievement of all children and young people who are Looked After; and Staffordshire Families First services must work closely with schools to promote educational opportunity for each individual child or young person.
- 2.3 Looked After Children should normally be educated by full-time places within local mainstream schools, unless they have identified special educational needs which necessitate special educational provision.
- 2.4 Social Workers and other practitioners should work closely with schools (including Designated Teachers for Looked After Children), colleges and other educational providers to support Looked After Children. Fostering Social Workers should support Foster Carers in a similar way.
- 2.5 Many Looked After Children with unmet social and emotional needs are, as a group, more likely to be at risk of school exclusion. Schools are therefore expected to support and co-operate with carers and the Local Authority in doing everything possible to avoid exclusion of a Looked After Child.
- 2.6 The Local Authority have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children they look after, and a particular duty to promote their educational achievement, regardless of where they live. As Corporate Parents, the Local Authority must strive to offer all the support that a good parent would give in order to make sure that the children they look after reach their full potential.
- 2.7 The policy links with DfE Adoption (2011) Regulations. Please see [Adoption Regulations](#) for more information. In addition, please see **Appendix 7** for a summary of 'Standard 7' (Adoption Services National Minimum Standards, 2011) in relation to *Promoting Educational Attainment*.
- 2.8 The policy complies with DfE Fostering (2011) Regulations to have a policy in place that promotes and values children's education. Please see [Fostering Regulations](#) for more information. In addition, please see **Appendix 8** for a summary of 'Standard 8' (Fostering Services National Minimum Standards, 2011) in relation to *Promoting Educational Attainment*.

3. What is the Virtual School?

- 3.1 The Virtual School works to support the education of Looked After Children and Care Leavers. It provides support to children who are Looked After by Staffordshire County Council, and to those attending Staffordshire schools who are Looked After by other Local Authorities.
- 3.2 The 'school' consists of the Headteacher, three Looked After Children Education Co-ordinators and four Education Mentors, who together focus on improving the attainment and achievements of children in care, improving attendance and reducing the number of exclusions.
- 3.3 The School provides an additional resource to support those involved in the education of Looked After Children, but does not replace mainstream school or other educational provision. The school is managed by the Families First (Specialist Inclusion) Service.

4. The work of the Virtual School

- 4.1 The team focuses on improving the attainment and achievements of children in care. It looks to support and improve attendance, reduce the number of exclusions and to provide support to children, young people and carers. In addition, the team:
- a) Monitors the education of children coming into care, and leaving care.
 - b) Supports schools, education providers, social work teams and other key partners in the development of work to enhance the educational outcomes for Looked After Children.
 - c) Provides training for Designated Teachers, Social Workers and Carers, as required by the Children and Young Person's Act of 2008.
 - d) Develops systems and processes for assessing, planning and reviewing the education of children in care e.g. PEPs.
- 4.2 The Virtual School will also challenge and support children and young people to ensure the best possible progress is made by the young person, in the most suitable educational placement.

The following pages provide guidance for Social Workers and other practitioners involved in the education of Looked After Children. Further information can also be located in the [Children in Care pages](#) on the Staffordshire Learning Net (SLN).

5. School Admissions

- 5.1 The School Admissions Code and Regulations are in place to support the admission of Looked After Children into school. These regulations require admission authorities to give Looked After Children the highest priority in their oversubscription criteria at the normal point of entry.
- 5.2 If the school being requested outside of the normal admission round is oversubscribed and admitting an additional pupil would cause infant class size to be exceeded, the Admissions Team will look at other schools within a reasonable distance in the first instance.
- 5.3 At the point it is decided to accommodate a child or young person of school age, or to change a child or young person's placement, consideration must be given to their education. School, or other educational provision, offers stability and familiarity, therefore every effort should be made to minimise disruption to the child's education.
- 5.4 Social Workers wishing to apply for a school place on behalf of a child or young person should contact the Admissions Team on 01785 278593 to obtain a copy of an in-year application form.
- 5.5 If the child is currently excluded from school, or there are other difficulties in planning for their education, the child's Social Worker should discuss the case with one of the Looked After Children, Education Co-ordinators.
- 5.6 The Education Co-ordinators are currently based at the following locations:

Newcastle/Moorlands & Stafford North	01782 297524	Seabridge Centre, Ash Way, Newcastle. ST5 3UB
Lichfield/Cannock/South Staffordshire	01543 512056	The Old Library, Bird St, Lichfield. WS13 6PN
East Staffs/Tamworth & Stafford South	01283 239761	Burton Education Centre, Grange St, Burton. DE14 2ER

- 5.7 If details about the school that the child or young person already attends are unknown, contact the School Admissions Team (01785 278593).
- 5.8 For full details about admissions to school, including the specific roles and responsibilities of Social Workers, please see the [Good Practice Guide - Admissions to School](#)

SAP Process: Whenever a child moves placement and also school, the social worker should forward a copy of the 'Child Movement' form (SW4C) to the Children in Care Research Officer: Vicki.green@staffordshire.gov.uk
See the Good Practice Guide - [How to complete a child movement form](#)

6. Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

- 6.1 It is a statutory requirement that all Looked After Children of compulsory school age have a Personal Education Plan, initiated by the child's Social Worker and agreed with the school within 20 days of a young person becoming looked after. This is to ensure that a PEP is available for the 28 day (1st) Statutory Looked After Child Review.
- 6.2 The PEP identifies key tasks to support the child's education, highlighting any special needs, and establishing clear goals. It also acts as a record of progress and achievement. For more information see the 'Quick Guide to PEPs' on page 8 in the [School Handbook](#).
- 6.3 The PEP is part of the child's **Care Plan**, which must describe arrangements for meeting the child's developmental needs in relation to their:
- Health
 - **Education**
 - Emotional & behavioural development
 - Identity
 - Family and social relationships
 - Social presentation
 - Self care skills.
- 6.4 The PEP forms the 'education section' of the Care Plan which cannot be changed without first having a review. It is important to make sure that any changes at KS4 are formally agreed by the relevant County Manager. **See Appendix 6** for the Nominated Officer Key Decision Form – 'Change of School at KS4'.
- 6.5 The child's Social Worker convenes a PEP meeting with the school's Designated Teacher for Looked After Children, (or their nominee). The meeting should involve the carer(s), parent(s) and the child/young person (if appropriate). Before the meeting the Social Worker should complete relevant sections of the PEP form.

SAP Process: Practitioners will locate the PEP form in:

Child - Looked After Children - Planning – Plans

Early Years PEP

PEP

PEP monitoring and assessment sheet

Child - Looked After Children - Review

PEP review

PEP monitoring and assessment sheet

Contact the PISCES helpdesk if you have any queries

PISCES Helpdesk: 01785 85 (4800)

pisces.helpdesk@staffordshire.gov.uk

- 6.6 Once the Social Worker has completed relevant sections of the PEP (in SAP), copies should be sent to the Designated Teacher, the carer(s) and/or parent(s), the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and the Virtual School for Looked After Children District Office (if appropriate).

PEP Review

- 6.7 A child's Personal Education Plan should be reviewed before each Statutory Looked After Child Review.
- 6.8 The review is chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) whose primary task is to ensure that the care plan for the child fully reflects the child's current needs and that the actions set out in the plan are consistent with the local authority's legal responsibilities towards the child.
- 6.9 As part of the review, the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) should ensure that the child's educational needs, progress and development are being met, and whether any actions need to be taken before the next review, in order to ensure that the child's education is not being neglected.
- 6.10 The IRO should receive a copy of the current PEP at least **three working days before the review**. The PEP should be the starting point for discussion about education at the review, and the IRO should be satisfied that the current PEP has been developed in consultation with the child and all the relevant adults; that targets have been identified, and that satisfactory progress is being made in implementing them.
- 6.11 Quality assurance of PEPs is a way of ensuring that work with children and young people is providing the best possible outcomes. As part of this, regular checks of how well PEPs are being completed are undertaken by the Education Co-ordinators. This is done by completing the 'Quality of Practice' Check Form - PEP Monitoring and Assessment and is completed on approximately five children per double district, bi-monthly. **See Appendix 4.**
- 6.12 Copies of all PEP forms can be found here: [PEP Documents](#)

7. Additional Support for Looked After Children

7.1 Pupil Premium

This is passed via Local Authorities direct to schools, and is additional funding aimed to directly support and help meet the educational needs of individual Looked After Children. Eligible children must have been looked after continuously for at least 6 months and be of statutory school age (Reception – Year 11).

To cater for mobility and in-year admission, funding is allocated termly to school, one term in arrears and should be used to fund educational needs as identified (and recorded) in the PEP. Academies receive their Pupil Premium for Looked After Children directly from the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA).

7.2 Personal Education Allowance

This is a Local Authority funded initiative, which aims to support those educational activities that 'any good parent' would fund. Usually, funding supports activities normally undertaken 'after the school bell'. The PEA is applied for by the Social Worker but must illustrate linkage and agreement with school needs and aims. Again, this is usually exemplified and recorded via the PEP. **See Appendix 1.**

7.3 Dowry

This is a Local Authority funded initiative, which aims to support in-school support at key moments of transition and where a child might be in danger of exclusion. Administered and applied for by the Virtual School, the funding usually enables school based Teaching Assistant support to be accessed to support individual children. Support is finite, pressurised and evaluated 6 weeks after completion.

7.4 GCSE or Equivalent Incentive Scheme

This is a Local Authority funded initiative, which makes high street vouchers available on a sliding scale according to the GCSE (or equivalent outcomes) that our Year 11 Looked After Children achieve. Social Workers must register their children for the scheme in their final year of statutory school and successful students receive their rewards the following autumn.

7.5 Letterbox Club and 'Jump into Juniors'

These schemes allow for literacy and numeracy books and materials to be directly mailed home to Year 5 and Year 2 children who are in danger of falling behind in their Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) the following year. The schemes aim to encourage home working in the key areas of literacy and numeracy and support the successful educational support roles of our Carers.

8. Role of Designated Teachers for Looked After Children

8.1 Given the particular barriers which get in the way of Looked After Children doing well in education, and in order to ensure greater consistency, the Government has made the role of Designated Teacher for Looked After Children statutory.

8.2 **See Appendix 3** for more information on the statutory role of Designated Teachers for Looked After Children.

9. **Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)**

- 9.1 Requests for statutory assessment of special educational needs are the responsibility of the District SEN Panels. These panels are made up of various senior staff from Families First and Education Transformation including the District Senior Assessment Officer, the District Senior Educational Psychologist, and the District Senior Advisory Teacher from the Special Educational Needs Support Service (SENS).
- 9.2 There are four double districts - Lichfield/Cannock; Stafford/South Staffordshire; Newcastle/Staffordshire Moorlands; and East Staffordshire/Tamworth.
- 9.3 If a child attending a special school needs to be looked after, a placement should normally be sought which allows him or her to continue to attend school on a daily basis. Consideration of residential schooling should only take place when it is clear after discussion with the relevant district that current provision cannot meet the child's needs. Such proposals will be subject to scrutiny and approval by the District Panels.
- 9.4 For children and young people accessing short breaks, if they receive a short break under s17 of the Children Act (1989), they are not defined as a Looked After Child, and do not require a Care Plan, or a PEP.
- 9.5 If the child or young person is to receive short-breaks under s20 of the Children Act (1989), for a continuous period of more than 24 hours, they are defined as being Looked After and will require a Care Plan (including a PEP).
- 9.6 However, if the child or young person receives a pre-planned series of short-breaks in the same setting under s20, the care planning arrangements are modified in respect of that child by Regulation 48, to reflect the continuing role played by the child's parents. In these circumstances, a *Short-break* Care Plan is written which must include details relating to the child's education.
- 9.7 Children under 5 with special educational needs who are not attending a maintained setting will be monitored by the Early Years Forum (EYF). The fora are made up of specialist staff in each district and representatives from other agencies, including health. The forum is responsible for assessment, monitoring of children's progress, and the identification of appropriate provision to meet needs. The forum liaises closely with schools and other settings at transition. In these circumstances, it is helpful for the child's Social Worker to communicate with the contact worker for the EYF.
- 9.8 See Section 12 for guidance about children and young people placed in residential schools.

10. Children Out of School (Excluded)

- 10.1 The child's Social Worker should be involved at the earliest opportunity to work with the school to avoid a need for exclusion. The statutory role of Designated Teacher for Looked after Children in a school is central to involving other services and, where appropriate, securing additional support.
- 10.2 There are eight District Inclusion Partnerships in Staffordshire who have processes in place for the early identification and intervention of students whose education is at risk. These partnerships acknowledge priority for Looked After Children and for those students with special educational needs.
- 10.3 No Looked After Child should be permanently excluded from a school or a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) without discussion with the Local Authority. This is to ensure that there is suitable alternative provision available elsewhere.
- 10.4 Where possible, schools should seek advice from the Behaviour Support Co-ordinator for their District when there has been more than two instances of fixed-period exclusion in a term.
- 10.5 If a child is Looked After, or becomes Looked After, and has no school provision because they are either excluded or not on a school roll, the child's Social Worker must seek immediate advice from the relevant Looked After Children Education Co-ordinator.
- 10.6 In most cases (apart from emergencies), school moves should be planned via the PEP prior to the move, with the Social Worker and/or Foster Carer taking the lead.
- 10.7 Where a child has been attending a mainstream school previously and they need to start a new school (e.g. due to a placement move), then the Foster Carer or the Social Worker must approach the new school.
- 10.8 Information about the child's Looked After status must be shared with the new school's Designated Teacher for Looked After Children by the child's Social Worker. If there is an existing PEP then it should also be shared with the new school and a date can be arranged for the child's next PEP meeting.
- 10.9 If there isn't an existing PEP, then the child's Social Worker should contact the school within 14 school days to arrange the new PEP meeting. (This will be a new PEP rather than a PEP Review as the child will have a *significant change* i.e. a new school place).
- 10.10 If a Foster Carer or Social Worker has any problems getting a child into their local school, they can contact the Admission's Team (01785 278593) who will assist directly or signpost/advise.

- 10.11 If a child has had a permanent exclusion or a series of fixed term exclusions, or a history of difficulties at school, the Foster Carer or Social Worker should still approach the school with the same information. Schools can then contact the Looked After Children Education Co-ordinators for advice.

11. Children Out of County

- 11.1 Children who are placed outside Staffordshire in foster care or residential care are subject to the same requirements (in relation to education) as children placed in Staffordshire. If there are difficulties in reaching agreement with schools on general provision, the child's Social Worker should contact the Looked After Children Education Co-ordinator for advice.
- 11.2 Children placed in independent or voluntary aided schools, or in care placements providing education, must also have a PEP. Where children are placed in children's homes or other care settings which already provide education, the PEP must address how and when the child will access mainstream school or college in due course.

12. Children in Residential Schools

- 12.1 Any child or young person placed in a residential school, who was previously accommodated by Staffordshire County Council under Section 20 of the Children Act (1989), will remain a Looked After Child and will continue to receive services under S20 (CA 1989). This will include entitlement to statutory reviews and an allocated IRO; statutory visits from their named Social Worker, a Personal Education Plan/review, and access to Leaving Care Services.
- 12.2 This includes children and young people who were placed in a residential school under Part IV of the Education Act (1996), and who prior to the placement being made, were receiving services under any part of Section 20 of the Children Act (1989).
- 12.3 This change of duty follows the R (RO) v East Riding of Yorkshire Council judgement (March 2011), which now requires local authorities to uphold their legal and statutory responsibilities to children looked after under Section 20 of the Children Act (1989). This judgement also affirms the nature and scope of the Children Act (1989) and (2004) to promote the educational achievement of children with looked after status, including those placed in residential schools.
- 12.4 For more information please see the [East Riding Judgement 2011](#)

13. Young People aged 16 to 21 (25 if in Higher Education)

- 13.1 Every young person who meets the criteria of the Children (Leaving Care) Act (i.e. Looked After for 13 weeks since the age of 14, and in care for some time whilst 16 or 17), must have a completed **Pathway Plan**.
- 13.2 The plan will include:
- The educational progress made while the young person is looked after
 - A continuing assessment of the young person's progress
 - Any remedial education required
 - Information on the young person's achievements and/or needs
 - Areas to improve the young person's employability
 - Links with colleges/employers
 - A detailed network of assistance and support, both practical and financial so that the young person may attain a positive Education, Employment or Training (EET) activity.
- 13.3 The young person's Pathway Plan should be reviewed at least every 6 months or sooner if their circumstances change.
- 13.4 Young People who are aged 16 and 17 and still looked after (Eligible) will continue to receive all the benefits of the care system to ensure positive progression to Education, Employment or Training, including the support and assistance from their Carer, Social Worker and their Personal Adviser.
- 13.5 Former Relevant young people, who take up further education or training, will be provided with a Higher Education Bursary as well as support from a Personal Advisor up to the age of 25. (Children & Young People Act, 2008, and HE Bursary Regs 2009).
- 13.6 When the Pathway Plan identifies a young person as not being in a positive EET activity assistance and support should be provided.

14. Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

- 14.1 As Looked After Children, Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children are entitled to the same educational opportunities as other children in care. Where a child has special educational needs, the school is responsible for providing the help that they require. However, if a child's special educational needs are severe, complex and long-term, a statutory assessment may also be required, which may result in a statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN).
14. For further guidance please see Policies & Procedures, Part Two, Section 16 – Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.

15. Further Information

- 15.1 For more details about this policy and procedures please contact the Service Development Team Tel: 01785 27 7024.

Appendix 1 – Personal Education Allowances for Looked After Children - What, who, how?

What are they?

- Additional financial awards, currently up to £350, with the aim of funding learning and development activities or resources that a parent would be expected to fund; thereby supporting improvement to the child's education attainment.
- They aim to prevent a child falling behind in their education, or if they are already behind, help them to catch up.
- They should always be tailored to individual needs so the choice of activity should be linked to the education objectives set out in their PEP
- They are not intended to replace, duplicate or substitute the services or support that the LA, schools, carers or other practitioners already provide or that are universal services.

Who do they apply to?

Eligibility Criteria

- Looked After Children, from Reception Year at school -18 year olds
- Been in care for 28 days or more
- At risk of not reaching National Curriculum levels at the end of Key Stages or not making adequate progress
- Activities or resources referenced in the PEP
- Children been educated both in mainstream or other educational settings
- Children living or attending school both in and out of county

Key characteristics

- Those in need of additional support to meet learning outcomes identified by their carer, Social Worker or Designated Teacher
- Especially important at vulnerable moments, e.g. moving school; repeated placement moves; not receiving full-time education
- Awarded annually; children can receive this additional support for each year they are at risk of not reaching expected standards of attainment.

How do you apply?

Process

- At the PEP meeting, discuss, agree and record what the PEA is for.

- Child's Social Worker then fills out the application form found at: www.education.staffordshire.gov.uk/lookedafterchildren
- Social Worker attaches the child's current PEP to the PEA application.
- Then sends the completed forms to: PEA Application, c/o Business Support Service, Families First, The Old Library, Bird St, Lichfield. WS13 6PN. Or emails to: personaleducation.allowance@staffordshire.gov.uk

Appendix 2 – The Virtual School for Looked After Children – Staff Roles

The Virtual School for Looked After Children is made up of a Headteacher, Education Co-ordinators and Education Mentors.

Virtual School, Education Co-ordinator

The Education Co-ordinators' key role is to promote access to education and the raising of educational achievement for Looked After Children. This is achieved through liaison and signposting to other teams and agencies; contributing to multi-disciplinary discussions and meetings as appropriate. The Education Co-ordinators develop and deliver training for a variety of audiences to help to raise awareness of the children's needs. In addition, they use data to monitor the progress of Looked After Children, disseminating information as appropriate.

Schools – the Education Co-ordinators:

- Help schools to produce and review Personal Education Plans, prioritising support where necessary
- Act in an advisory capacity for teachers on issues and provision for Looked After Children, including current education initiatives and support programmes to improve educational outcomes
- Help to co-ordinate smooth transitions and transfers between educational provisions
- Provide direct teaching/mentoring support in school where appropriate to respond to identified areas of need.

Social Work teams – the Education Co-ordinators:

- Work closely with colleagues to assist with the development and monitoring of PEPS
- Attend team meetings to give regular education updates
- Discuss individual referrals to assist with transfer of information and identification of support
- Work with colleagues to celebrate the achievements of Looked After Children
- Provide advice and support for residential staff to help the development of a positive educational ethos
- Support foster carers with information and advice.

Virtual School, Education Mentor:

Education Mentors work under the direction of the Education Co-ordinators for Looked After Children. They work in a variety of schools and settings and offer direct educational mentoring support. Their key roles and aims are to support young people with improving their levels of progress and attainment alongside their personal development.

The Mentors encourage the young people to achieve and aspire by promoting learning and participation through positive role modelling and effective mentoring relationships.

The Education Mentors have good communication links with other agencies and work with, and alongside, a variety of staff to prevent exclusion and reduce disengagement, as well as supporting young people with the management of their transitions. The Mentors attend PEPs when required; offering support with specific identified needs and providing feedback to the young person and other agencies.

Support may be appropriate if a Looked after Child:

- Would benefit from additional input to improve examination results.
- Is in danger of exclusion.
- Has been out of school for a long period of time.
- Is starting at a new school or is in a period of transition (e.g. KS2 to KS3).
- Is underachieving, has behavioural difficulties or a poor attendance record.

Support for schools – Learning mentors provide:

- Assistance and guidance with Personal Education Plans (PEP), where required.
- Academic support for individual students.
- Group work in schools.
- Guidance and Advice for Designated Teachers.
- Identification of training needs and contributions to training sessions regarding the needs of Looked After Children.

Other assistance offered by the Looked After Children Education Co-ordinators:

- Work with colleagues from Families First and Designated Teachers through the development of PEPs.
- Support for Foster Carers with information and advice.
- Work with staff in children's residential units to raise the achievement of Looked After Children.
- Contributions to training sessions for Teachers, Families First staff, Foster Carers and School Governors.
- Signposting to other professionals and agencies within the district.

For more information go to:

<http://www.education.staffordshire.gov.uk/lookedafterchildren>

Appendix 3 – The Role of the Designated Teachers for Looked After Children

Within School Systems:

- To ensure that all staff both teaching and non-teaching, have an understanding of the difficulties and educational disadvantage faced by Looked After Children and understand the need for positive systems of support to overcome them.
- To inform members of staff of the general educational needs of Looked After Children, and to promote the involvement of these children in school homework clubs, extra curricular activities, home reading schemes, school councils etc.
- To act as an advocate for Looked After Children.
- To hold a supervisory brief for all Looked After Children e.g. to ensure all relevant education and care information is available to school staff and carer(s), and that this information is kept up to date.
- To monitor the educational progress of Looked After Children in order to inform the school's development plan.
- To intervene if there is evidence of individual under achievement, absence from school or internal truancy; and

Work with Individual Looked After Children:

- To enable the child to make a contribution to the educational aspects of their care plan.
- To help ensure that each pupil has a Personal Education Plan (PEP) in initiated by the young person's Social Worker.
- To ensure that a home-school agreement is drawn up with the primary carer and signed by the Social Worker.

Liaison:

- To liaise with the member of staff responsible for monitoring children subject to a Child Protection Plan.
- To be the named contact for colleagues in Education and Families First.
- To ensure the speedy transfer of information between agencies and individuals.

Training:

- To develop knowledge of Families First /Education procedures by attending training events organised by the Local Authority.
- To cascade training to school staff as appropriate.

Appendix 4 – Quality of Practice Check Form (PEP)

**Virtual School for Looked after Children
Quality of Practice Check Form
PEP Monitoring & Assessment**

Name of Young Person	D.O.B	Yr Group
SAP BP Number	Social Worker	Social Work Team

DATE:

	YES	NO	
Is there a PEP in place?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is the PEP dated within the last 6 months?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is there a review date?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Does the review date reflect the urgency of the issues being addressed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Say why
Have current working levels and targets for English and Maths been recorded?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are the educational priorities, Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-related?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Say why
Are possible barriers to success clearly identified and actions planned to overcome these?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Say why
Are there clear long term plans?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is there evidence that the young person has been involved in the PEP?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are the legal/medical details complete?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Name of person carrying out this Monitoring & Assessment:

Name of Team Manager to receive this document:
Action Taken by Team Manager:

Appendix 5 – Special Educational Needs (Out of County)

Responsibility for Looked after Children with Special Educational Needs placed Out of Authority.

If a child or young person has a special educational need but does not have a statement, it is the school that is responsible for meeting their needs.

If a child or young person already has a statement, or needs a statutory assessment, which may lead to a statement, it is generally the local authority in whose area the child lives that is responsible.

What legislation determines this?

The Education Act 1996, which states that a local authority is responsible if the child lives in their area. (The term 'in their area' is not defined, but the Department for Education construes this as meaning 'ordinarily resident in their area'.)

What about a child who is looked after to Staffordshire but placed with foster parents in another authority e.g. Walsall?

The child lives with the foster parents in Walsall, so the child is ordinarily resident in Walsall. If a statutory assessment of the child's special educational needs is needed, it is Walsall's responsibility to undertake this. They are also responsible for maintaining any statement of special educational needs and determining what special educational provision the child requires. If a statement already exists, it will be transferred to Walsall when the child moves.

What about a child who is looked after to Staffordshire but placed in a children's home in another authority e.g. Herefordshire?

The child lives in a children's home in Herefordshire, so the child is ordinarily resident in Herefordshire. If a statutory assessment of the child's special educational needs is required, it is Herefordshire's responsibility to undertake this. They are also responsible for maintaining any statement of special educational needs and determining what special educational provision the child requires. If a statement already exists, it will be transferred to Herefordshire when the child moves.

So what are the 'Belonging Regulations', as these are often mentioned when the issue of responsibility is discussed?

The Education (Areas to which Pupils and Students Belong) Regulations 1996 (The Belonging Regulations) determine financial responsibility. Generally, the local authority responsible for carrying out a statutory assessment and maintaining a

statement of SEN, is also responsible for the cost of any special educational provision. However, special rules apply to children who are Looked After.

The special rules state that the cost of any provision specified in a statement of special educational needs must be met by the local authority that looks after the child.

Are there any exceptions to the principle that local authorities are responsible for statutory assessments and statements if the child lives in their area?

52-week placements

If a child is placed in a 52-week residential educational placement in another local authority, the child continues to be regarded as living in the area of the placing authority. In these circumstances, the placing authority continues to be responsible for undertaking any necessary statutory assessment and maintaining any statement of special educational needs.

38-week placements

Some SEN statemented residential placements are for a time period less than 52 weeks – usually 38 week (term time) placements. In these cases, the looked after child returns 'home' to the placing authority. It is the placing authority that continues to be responsible for undertaking a statutory assessment or maintaining a statement.

Serial short-term placements

Where a looked after child with a statement of special educational needs has a number of short-term out-of-authority placements (usually because of difficulties making a permanent placement decision), the placing authority will be responsible for any statement until a permanent placement is found.

Emergency placements

By their nature, emergency placements may have some degree of instability, and so the placing authority will continue to be the authority responsible for maintaining any statement of SEN until such time as the placement becomes permanent, or another permanent placement option has been agreed. At that point the statement can be transferred to the authority where the child now lives.

Do local authorities have to follow these rules for determining responsibility?

Not if it is in the child's best interests to vary these arrangements. For example, the local authority where the child is ordinarily resident could delegate responsibility for assessing a child, or making and maintaining a statement, to the placing authority where there are practical reasons for doing this. Clearly both authorities must be in agreement before such arrangements can go ahead.

Appendix 6 -

Nominated Officer Key Decision Form – Change of School at Key Stage 4

NB: It is expected that the young person’s education should not be disrupted other than a consequence of an emergency placement

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE TEAM MANAGER / TEAM CO-ORDINATOR

Information about the Child:

Name of Child:	Current Address:
BP No:	
Date of Birth:	
Social Worker:	Team:
Legal Status of the child:	

Evidence to Support the decision:

1. Is the disruption an emergency placement? Y N
2. What are the wishes and concerns of the young person on the school change and the impact on their schooling?
3. What are the wishes and concerns of the parent/carer where the young person is accommodated?

Education Provision:

4. In their new placement will the education provision meet the needs of the young person and ensure that the young person’s educational achievement is consistent with the PEP?
5. Has the designated teacher at the school where the young person is a registered pupil been consulted? Y N

Child’s Review

6. Has the Independent Reviewing Officer been consulted about this decision?

Y N

Consultation with Virtual Headteacher

7. Is the Virtual Headteacher in agreement with the move?

Y N

TO BE COMPLETED BY COUNTY MANAGER

8. There is clear evidence that the appropriate steps and consideration have been taken in changing the school of the child during Key Stage 4.

Y N

Actions / Comments:

Agreement is given to go forward with this placement Y N

Signed by Nominated Officer

Printed Name

Date of Decision:

Copy of the Decision Form should be saved on the child's Record

Notification should be sent to –

- Respective Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)
- Designated Teacher, in both the school where the young person is registered and where they are moving to.

Appendix 7 - Adoption Services (National Minimum Standards) 2011**STANDARD 7 – Promoting Educational Attainment****OUTCOME**

The education and achievement of children is actively promoted as valuable in itself and as part their preparation for adulthood. Children are supported to achieve their educational potential.

STANDARD

- 7.1 Children have access to a range of educational resources to support their learning and have opportunities beyond the school day to engage in activities which promote learning. (✓)**
- 7.2 Children are supported to attend school or alternative provision regularly (✓)**
- 7.3 Children are helped by their prospective adopters to achieve their educational or training goals and prospective adopters are supported to work with child's education provider to maximise each child's achievements and to minimise any underachievement (✓)**
- 7.4 The placing agency has, and is fully implementing, a written education policy that promotes and values children's education (✓)**
- 7.5 Prospective adopters maintain regular contact with the child's school and other education settings, attending all parents' meetings as appropriate and advocating for the child where appropriate (✓)**
- 7.6 Prospective adopters engage and work with schools, colleges and other organisations, to support the child's education including advocating to help overcome any problems the child may be experiencing in their care setting (✓).**

Appendix 8 - Fostering Services (National Minimum Standards) 2011**STANDARD 8 – Promoting Educational Attainment****OUTCOME**

The educational and achievement of children is actively promoted as valuable in itself and as part of their preparation for adulthood. Children are supported to achieve their educational potential.

STANDARD

- 8.1 Children, including pre-school children and older children, have a foster home which promotes a learning environment and supports their development. (✓)**
- 8.2 Children have access to a range of educational resources to support their learning and have opportunities beyond the school day to engage in activities which promote learning. (✓)**
- 8.3 Children are supported to attend school or alternative provision, regularly (✓)**
- 8.4 Children are helped by their foster carer to achieve their educational or training goals and foster carers are supported to work with a child's education provider to maximise each child's achievement and to minimise any underachievement. (✓)**
- 8.5 The Fostering Service has, and is fully implementing, a written education policy that promotes and values children's education and is understood by Foster Carers. (✓) - a summary of this policy has been developed and included on the Foster Carers' website and in the Foster Carers' Handbook)**
- 8.6 Foster Carers maintain regular contact with each child's school and other education settings, attending all parents' meetings as appropriate and advocating for the child where appropriate. (✓)**
- 8.7 Foster carers engage and work with schools, colleges and other organisations to support children's education, including advocating to help overcome any problems the child may be experiencing in their education setting. Foster carers have up-to-date information about each child's educational progress and school attendance record (✓)**

