

# Raising the Educational Attainment of Looked After and Previously Looked After Children

## An Overview

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**Solihull Virtual School**

# Areas for Consideration

- What it means to be ‘looked after’
- What it means to be ‘previously looked after’
- The Solihull context
- Barriers to educational achievement
- Role of the Designated Teacher / Designated CLA Coordinator in schools
- The Personal Education Plan (PEP)
- Pupil Premium
- The Virtual School and the Virtual School training programme
- The Early Years Framework for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children

Under the Children Act 1989 a child is legally defined as 'looked after' by a local authority if he or she is:

- provided with accommodation for a continuous period for more than 24 hours (section 20)
- subject to Full Care Order (section 31) (or I.C.O. Interim Care Order)
- subject to a Placement Order

# Previously Looked After Children

- Children who are adopted
- Children who are under a special guardianship order (SGO)
- Children under other child arrangements orders

# Solihull Context

The number of looked after children is increasing year on year nationally, including in Solihull.

Current number of Solihull looked after children (nursery to age 18) that virtual school supports is approximately 500, plus around 35 aged 18+ that we continue to support in year 13

Current number of Solihull looked after nursery children is 47. 24 are living in borough and 23 are living out of borough (Solihull, including Virtual School, remain responsible for children in and out of borough).

Number of Solihull looked after reception children is 26 – 12 in borough and 14 out of borough

In line with the national picture, the majority of Solihull looked after children are placed with foster carers, in and out of the local authority.

Solihull children requiring residential placements are placed out of borough as historically there have been no residential providers in Solihull, although this is now changing.

Some looked after children remain living with their parent(s)

There is an increasing number of looked after children being discharged from care onto Special Guardianship Orders (previously looked after children), to provide a more permanent home life for children.

As with all looked after children nationally, the vast majority of children are in care or have been in care through no fault of their own, the majority are looked after due to abuse and neglect

Solihull has seen some higher numbers of children in care due to emotional abuse, as compared to nationally.

# Barriers to Achievement

## Examples:

- Lack of stability prior to coming into care
- Not accessing any or good quality nursery provision
- The impact of trauma, separation and insecure attachment that looked after children experience.
- Poor health and wellbeing
- Multiple placement moves whilst in care
- Delays in care planning
- Too much time spent out of school - high rates of absence, exclusion
- Low expectations
- Restricted educational opportunities - extra-curricular, part time attendance
- Not being able to read early or fluently.

# Role of the Designated Teacher / Coordinator

All education providers are required to have a designated teacher / coordinator for looked after and previously looked after children whose role includes:

- Advocate
- Multi-agency liaison
- Building positive home-school relationships
- Monitoring progress
- Key advisor to other staff and senior management
- Responsible for the PEP (Personal Education Plan)
- Liaison with social worker to ensure that Personal Education Plan meetings take place within timescales
- Making sure relevant information is available at times of transfer or move.

# The Personal Education Plan (PEP)

- All looked after children must have a personal education plan, from the first term after their 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday and within 20 working days of becoming looked after.
- The personal education plan forms part of the overall care plan
- It is a statutory document – importance of being thorough and complete
- It is a record of how the child is being supported educationally and socially to make progress and to achieve their best outcomes in their education
- Linked to information in other education plans (eg EHCP, IBP) and other services eg Inclusion support, area SENCo
- A record of achievement that reflects the child and the parent / carer views
- A plan that has targets and actions to support achievement and progress
- Reviewed termly – robust first document – updated termly thereafter
- The designated teacher / CLA coordinator ensures that there is a PEP meeting in place and that the paperwork is an accurate reflection of the meeting.
- Initial PEP needs to take place within 20 working days of a child becoming looked after.
- Attended by Designated Teacher / Coordinator or member of staff that knows child well and is in a position to fulfil the requirements of a PEP discussion
- To include how Pupil Premium Plus is to be used for the individual child and the impact of this on academic performance.



# Pupil Premium Plus

- Early Years 1 and 2 receive around £100 EYPP per term from the local authority. It is claimed on a termly basis by providers from the local authority that the provider is based in (ie not necessarily from the LA that the child is looked after to). Use of this should be discussed and agreed in the PEP meeting, documented in the PEP and impact reflected upon.
- Reception children –schools currently receive £600 PP+ per term directly from virtual school, following a PEP meeting taking place during which there is an agreement about use of money and return of the paperwork.
- Reception £600 per term is ring-fenced for the child but can be combined with other looked after children PP+ money, as long as all parties are in agreement and all children benefit equally.
- Use of Pupil Premium should arise from a child centred discussion
- The use should be linked to the PEP targets around how to improve attainment
- Use of the money should be over and above what is already being provided
- It must not be used for transport, childcare or uniform

# Virtual School

- The Virtual School is a service that fulfils the Local Authority's duties in ensuring that children and young people in care receive the best possible educational outcomes.
- All local authorities are required to appoint a Head of Virtual School that discharges the local authority's duties, in order to promote the educational achievement of children in its care. Most heads of virtual school have a team of staff that assist the head in fulfilling the local authority's duties.
- Extended duties to previously looked after children, children with a social worker and from September, children in kinship care.
- Solihull Virtual School staff have an allocation of children in care that they support – allocated by year group.
- Virtual School training programme – Designated Teacher / Coordinator and training on specialist topics.
- Alison Keen is Solihull Virtual School teacher, Early Years.
- Contact Virtual School for any advice and guidance.

# Framework

**for Evaluating the Effectiveness of Early  
Years Provision for Looked After Children**



# West Midlands Early Years Framework (also referred to as 'tool kit')

This framework has been based on the good practice that already exists in West Midlands early years settings. It brings together advice and guidance for working with Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children into one place. Initially, it should be used as a tool to assist early years settings in their self-assessment of their current provision and practice. This will help early years settings to identify any gaps that need to be addressed in order to provide the best possible inclusive practice and outcomes for Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children.

'Sarah Rivers - Framework for evaluating the effectiveness of early years provision for looked after and previously looked after children'

# Training – Summer Term

12.06.24 – 9.30-12.30 (via Teams)- Attachment and Trauma

19.06.24 – 9.30-2.30 at Sans Souci - Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

2024/ 2025 – Full training programme with booking links due out.

Including (9.30-12.30 via Teams):

16.09.24 – Attachment and Trauma

**10.10.24 – Designated Teacher Core 1 – including Early Years**

17.10.24 – Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

04.12.24 – PEPs Workshop

# Contacts

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