

WIRRAL COUNCIL

WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM 27 September 2011

REPORT OF THE INTERIM DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Changes to The Looked after Children's Education Service

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The way in which the Looked after Children's Education Service (LACES) is delivered and supports the education of children in the Councils care has been reviewed.

The report informs Schools Forum of the changes to the Wirral Looked after Children's Education Service (LACES) in assisting to discharge the local authority's statutory duty to promote the educational achievement of young people in care.

Introduction

The LACES team has worked closely with schools over a number of years to promote the education attainments of children in Local Authority Care through provision of direct teaching, through supporting children with emotional barriers to learning, and by facilitating personal education planning.

Until December 2010 the team was managed by the Virtual School Head and consisted of four teachers (plus one permanently seconded to the Fostering Futures Program), four full time equivalent learning mentor posts, one learning support assistant and two admin assistants. A subsequent EVR round saw two teachers, 1 learning mentor and the Virtual School Head leave the service by June 2011.

The role of the teachers has been to work closely with schools' Designated Teachers and social workers to monitor the attainments of each child in care and to organise additional support according to their needs.

They support the Personal Education Planning process according to a protocol jointly agreed with schools and social care. They allocate the work of the learning mentors and organise additional tuition paid for through the PEA Budget.

One of the teachers has responsibility for monitoring pupils who are looked after by Wirral but placed outside the area.

The Learning Mentors give direct support in their schools to children who have fallen behind, who are having difficulties with their behaviour, who have difficulties with organisation (e.g. with homework or coursework), or whose attainments are suffering as a result of the emotional consequences of their situation.

Statutory Guidance

The Children Act 2004 places a statutory duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of children in care.

This requires local authorities to:

- Rigorously track and monitor the school placement and educational performance of each child in care.

- To ensure that their education is seen as a priority by all those who work with them
- To act, where necessary, to address underachievement and to promote improvement in outcomes
- To ensure that heads and designated teachers in schools know who is looked after and what can be done to support and enhance their attainment and to ensure access to any initiatives which will help with this
- Ensure that they have a high quality PEP
- Share effective practice with colleagues to improve behaviour, and attendance, and to promote improved outcomes and school stability and address barriers to learning.
- Lead on devising and delivering training about the needs of looked after children, current legislation and guidance for all local authority staff and schools
- Ensure that the achievements of looked after children are recognised and celebrated

“Discharging the duty on a day to day basis means that the local authority should do at least what any good parent would do to promote their child’s educational aspirations and support their achievements”

The Statutory Duty on Schools Governing Bodies

- The Children and Young Person’s Act 2008 “places a duty on the governing bodies of maintained schools to designate a member of staff as having responsibility to promote the educational achievement of looked after children who are registered pupils at the school. This includes those aged between 16 and 18”. The Regulations requires that this person should be a senior teacher (The Designated Teacher)
- The governing body must ensure that the Designated Teacher undertakes appropriate Training
- The role of the Designated teacher “needs to be understood as part of the wider responsibilities on local authorities for looked after children both in terms of their care and to promote their educational achievement”

Designated teachers lead within the school in promoting the educational achievements of children in care by ensuring that their “personal, emotional and academic needs are prioritised. As well as this strategic role they have a duty to ensure that Personal Education Plans are effective and that they are implemented within the school. They are the primary contact co-ordinating the work of external agencies in relation to promoting the educational achievement of looked after children on the school’s role.

New arrangements

The roles and responsibilities within the LACES team have been reviewed to more closely reflect the council’s statutory duties and a formal restructuring process with the existing team is taking place. New arrangements will be formally in place from January 2012. Moving forward the LACES team will consist of one Virtual School Head teacher, two senior progress officers (one to be seconded to Fostering Futures), three progress officers and two admin assistants. The focus of their roles will be to:

1. Track, Monitor and Challenge

The Progress Officers will complete with schools' designated teachers a termly tracking and review of educational progress. The results of these reviews will be shared with social workers to enable them to update the Personal Education Plan between annual PEP Meetings.

2. Personal Education Planning

The statutory responsibility for Personal Education Planning is shared by schools and social workers.

Social workers will manage Personal Education Plans using the new social care database ICS (Integrated Children's System) and they will liaise directly with schools' designated teachers. In exceptional circumstances, if invited by the social worker or schools designated teacher, The LACES team will support the completion of the PEP.

There is statutory requirement to monitor the quality of the Personal Education Plan. This role will be performed by the LACES Team.

3. Training

The Virtual School Head will commission and deliver training that supports the educational needs of children in care for school and local authority staff (Designated Teachers, social workers and foster carers etc

4. Supporting Pupils

Schools requiring a service that delivers direct support to pupils, such as that formerly delivered by the learning mentor, may wish to purchase a bespoke service direct through the LA traded service EQ.

Arrangements will remain in place to allocate and distribute the PEA (Personal Education Allowance) for those children who have fallen behind considerably and who need additional support programmes beyond those normally available in school.

Funding

The LACES budget for 2011-12 is £304,800. It is funded as follows:

	£
Schools Budget	185,500
Childrens Services	<u>119,300</u>
Total	<u>304,800</u>

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Wirral Schools Forum notes the changes to the Looked after Children's Education Service.

David Armstrong
Interim Director of Children's Services