

WIRRAL COUNCIL

WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM 25th September 2012

REPORT OF THE ACTING 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 Council's care was reviewed last year.

The report informs Schools Forum of the current position of 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

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.

Current 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 has taken place. The new arrangements are now formally in place. Moving forward the LACES team will consist of one Virtual School Headteacher, two senior educational progress officers (one to be seconded to Fostering Futures), five (FTE) educational progress officers and two admin assistants. The Virtual School Headteacher role is shared between a Primary School Headteacher and a Secondary School Headteacher. The focus of the roles of the LACES team is to:

1. Track, Monitor and Challenge

The Educational Progress Officers will review the educational progress of each Looked After Child on a termly basis. 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 a 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, are able to purchase a bespoke service direct through the LA traded service EQ. During the Academic year 2011-12 this facility was not taken up by any school. During the current academic year and where capacity allows the LACES team will support pupils in negotiation with schools.

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. Applications for PEA will be managed by the LACES team and recommendations will be made to the appropriate Social Care manager for agreement.

Pupil Premium – the LACES budget also records the grants paid to Looked After Children who do not attend Wirral Schools (estimated to be £36,200). Grants are allocated based on information received as part of Census data. Pupil Premium in respect of LAC at Wirral Schools is paid directly to the schools concerned (£162,000 in 2011-12)

Funding

The LACES budget for 2012-13 is £423,800. It is funded as follows:

	£
Schools Budget	185,500
Children's Services	202,100
Pupil Premium	<u>36,200</u>
Total	423,800

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Schools Forum notes the report.

Julia Hassall
Acting Director of Children's Services