

## WIRRAL COUNCIL

WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM 20 October 2015

### REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

#### Update on the changes to The Looked after Children's Education Service

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##### **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 was reviewed as part of the Future Council process in 2014.

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.

“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 prioritized”. 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 and restructured in 2011, 2012 and 2014. The outcome of the 2014 Future Council process resulted in the full time senior educational progress officer post being made redundant. From September 2015, the LACES team will consist of one Virtual School Headteacher, five (3.8 FTE) educational progress officers and one admin assistant. The Virtual School Headteacher role will be part of the role of one of the current General Inspectors.

The focus of the roles of the LACES team is to:

#### 1. Track, Monitor and Challenge

To track attainment, progress, attendance and exclusions of all Wirral Children Looked After. The Educational Progress Officers will review the educational progress of each Child Looked After 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. These results also lead to challenging schools who are not meeting the needs of Children Looked After by recommending that meetings should take place between the school, Social Worker and Carer based on the data collected from schools – this aspect of the role is at an early stage of development.

#### 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 social care database, Liquid Logic. Social Workers 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. This is achieved via the Liquid Logic system. Completed PEPs are “sent to” the Virtual School and “finalized” by the LACES Progress Officers.

#### 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). Training for Foster Carers is achieved via direct courses where Foster Carers are invited to attend. Training for Designated Teachers is achieved via the one to one contact the Progress officers have with the Designated Teachers. Training for Social Workers is achieved via the Progress Officers being based in the Social Care Offices for part of their working week.

#### 4. Supporting Pupils

Schools requiring a service that delivers direct support to pupils are able to purchase a bespoke service direct through the LA traded service EQ. This facility has not been taken up by any school.

Arrangements 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 are managed and administered by the LACES team and recommendations are made to the appropriate Social Care manager for agreement.

Pupil Premium Plus (£PPP) – the Pupil Premium Plus for Children Looked After is allocated to schools via the Virtual School. Pupil Premium Plus payments to schools are directly linked to PEPs and appropriate targets for each Child Looked After. An agreed procedure to do this was introduced and agreed from April 2014. Just over £1 million was devolved to schools via this process in the Financial Year 2014-15.

#### Funding

The LACES budget for 2014-15 is £1,277,300. It is funded as follows:

	£
School's Budget	140,500
Children's Services	135,500
Pupil Premium (est)	1,001,300
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,277,300</b>

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That Schools Forum notes the report.

**Julia Hassall**  
**Director of Children's Services**