

WIRRAL COUNCIL

WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM June 2021

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILY AND EDUCATION

LACES and LAC Pupil Premium

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Local authorities have a duty under the Children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of a child looked after by them. This includes a specific duty to promote the child's educational achievement, wherever they live or are educated. The authority must, therefore, give particular attention to the educational implications of any decision about the welfare of those children.

The Children and Families Act 2014 requires local authorities in England to appoint at least one person for the purpose of discharging the local authority's duty to promote the educational achievement of its looked after children. That person – the Virtual School Head (VSH) - must be an officer employed by the local authority or, where local authorities agree to collaborate or share the role, another local authority in England.

Directors of Children's Services (DCS) and Lead Members should be aware of the risks of identifying a VSH without creating sufficient Virtual School capacity to deliver the duties placed on the local authority by statute.

Looked-after children attract Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) funding. This is additional funding provided to help improve the attainment of looked-after children and close the attainment gap between them and their peers. Local authorities receive a PP+ grant allocation based on the number of children looked after for at least one day and aged 4 to 15 at 31 August, as recorded in the latest looked-after children data return. This funding currently stands at £2345 per pupil, per annum.

2. BACKGROUND - Wirral Virtual School

Also known as Looked After Children Education Services (**LACES**) and made up, in Wirral's case of Education Progress Officers (EPO's) who's responsibility it is to ensure that all children in care have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) which recognizes the child's strengths and areas for development and includes smart targets to enable the child to make accelerated progress through targeted use of funding.

Current staffing arrangements for LACES are as follows:

EPO	Time	Cohort	Number of children on caseload
Virtual Head	Full time	VSH	
Education Lead	Full time	Secondary	148
Education Progress Officer	Full time		164
Education Progress Officer	0.8	OOB	91
Education Progress Officer	Full time	Primary	147 (24 OOB)
Education Progress Officer	Full time		139 (21 OOB)
Education Progress Officer	Full time	Early Years	126

Previously, PP+ funding was distributed to schools upon production of a PEP on a termly basis. LACES were engaged in trying to get PEPs completed and on the system in order to distribute the funding accordingly.

The process has changed considerably over the past 2 years and EPO's now provide much more **support and challenge** to schools regarding improved educational outcomes for children in care of the local authority. The PEP process now includes a PEP in the first weeks of the academic year setting out how school will use additional funding to support accelerated progress, every school is visited by LACES during the Spring Term to discuss progress of each child and provide both support and challenge to ensure schools are prioritising the children and maintaining high aspirations towards academic and pastoral outcomes. There is a further plan in the Summer term to evaluate progress and consider support going forward.

Since 2018 financial year, LACES have 'top sliced' PP+ by £400 per child in order to support the most vulnerable children in times of crisis and also to strengthen the team and therefore the service provided. This has recently been reduced to £395 per child meaning that the schools receive £1950 per child in 2 allocations, £1000 in the Autumn term and £950 in the Summer term providing progress has been made to accelerate learning.

Table 1 identifies expected spending of Top Slice in the 2021/22 financial year

Money to be paid	
644 x 395 = 254,380	
Looked after call Attendance collection tool	£40,000.00
Resources for Teachers	£20,000.00
Alternative Provision – Utopia, NexGen, Cornerstones -	£50,000.00
Virtual school staffing	£67,000.00
Randstad Supply Agency for Tuition and Teacher support	£50,000.00
Rossall Boarding School	£10,000.00
Unallocated funds for unidentified needs	£17,380.00
Total £237,282	£254,380.00

The impact of the *new and improved LACES* has been:

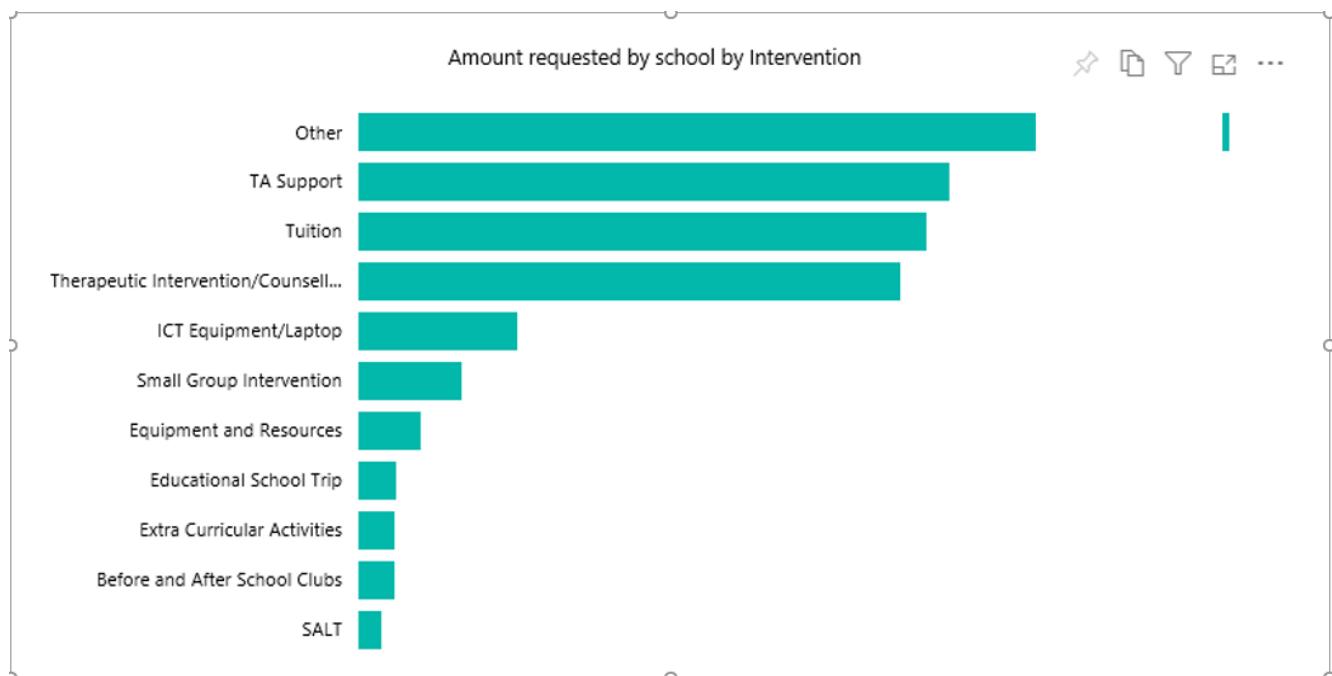
- 98% completion of PEPs
- 85% good or better quality
- There have been no children Permanently Excluded from school
- Every Wirral School visited and 90% of out of borough schools to develop relationships and provide support and challenge to raise aspirations and progress of looked after children
- Wirral children in care make better progress generally than their peers (most recent data) new reporting systems in progress will inform further regarding groups and percentages
- We have worked with colleagues in data teams to produce reports showing the educational progress of all Wirral CLA in GLD, Phonics, Key Stages 1, 2 and 4 assessment data. This allows us to see at a glance, who is making progress and to share good practice across the authority. It also allows us to identify those not making progress and to provide further support and challenge to school and settings.

3. LAC Pupil Premium Plus Funding

The number of statutory school age children in care in Wirral currently stands at 644 meaning that the total Government funding allocated last financial year stood at £2345 x 644 = £1,510,180 split as follows:

- Funding distributed to schools = £1950 x 644 = £1,255,800
Tables 1 indicates the many uses schools have put this to.
- Top Sliced Funding used by LACES = £395 x 644 = £254,380
The document below shows how this has been used. (table 2)

Table 2 Funding distributed to Schools:



Source: PowerBi

The chart shows that the biggest category is 'other'. This is because LACES use this section to record any gaps in the information provided by schools. Either they have not requested PP+ or there is a shortfall in the amount requested and the amount we are sending to school. Although there are marked improvements in the quality of PEPs overall, there is still room for improvement in how schools are completing the sections relating to use of PP+ and we have a training day planned to develop this.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Forum notes the Report**
2. **Forum recommends that further information is provided by schools as to how they are using PP+ particularly in relation to 'other'.**
3. **Further investigation of the impact of the spending of PP+**

Simone White
Director of Children, Family and Education