

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN POLICY

Oct Review Oct 2018

Introduction

Looked after children are one of the most vulnerable groups in Society.

There are two routes into public care, one is through the courts under S 31 of the Children Act 1989 via a Care Order awarded to the Local Authority. For the Courts to grant a Care Order they have to be satisfied that a child is suffering, or likely to suffer significant harm without one.

The mother of a child automatically assumes parental responsibility as does the father of the child, if his name appears on the child's birth certificate. This means that those parents are responsible for that child and are expected to keep the child safe from harm and promote his/her welfare.

The Local Authority shares the 'Parental Responsibility' of children who are the subject of a Care Order with their parents or caregivers and assume the role of a 'Corporate Parent'. This duty means that the Local Authority must strive to offer everything that a responsible and a good parent would in order to make sure that the children they look after reach their full potential.

The second route into public care is on a voluntary basis with agreement from the child's parents or caregivers and this is under S 20 of the Children Act 1989. This route does not demand that the Local Authority shares parental responsibility for the child but there remains clear statutory duties to look after the child well and promote their achievement, well being and welfare.

The majority of children who are looked after is because they have suffered abuse and neglect from their parents/carers and are not in public care due to their own behaviour.

Wherever possible children remain within their family or within their family network and many are returned to their parents and caregivers, if it is safe to do so, following assessment and intervention work being undertaken.

Other children and young people may remain in long term public care or may proceed to adoption and the stability of their placements is critical in ensuring that all children reach their full future potential and are well functioning adults.

However, it is well documented that public care and dislocation from their parents/carers and significant others can mean that looked after children are extremely vulnerable who may have attachment and relationship difficulties

and suffer from grief/anxiety and have low self esteem. It may be that their behaviour is challenging which may mean many placement breakdowns that may only compound difficulties.

The consistency, responsiveness, understanding and stability of their school and their education may make all the difference and can be a real protective factor in promoting the positive outcomes necessary to achieve promising futures and successful lives.

Priorities

- Raise educational attainment of looked after children
- Promote and maximise life chances
- Profile corporate parenting in the Council

Role of LAC Designated Teachers

- As a liaison with other agencies and individuals
- As an advocate for all looked after children in school
- To ensure that staff have relevant information on looked after children who they teach
- To manage the Personal Education Plans (PEP's) for each looked after child
- To ensure high expectations for looked after children
- Have sufficient authority to influence policy and practice for looked after children.
- To undertake appropriate training and disseminate as required to other staff.
- To report on LAC to school governors at least once each year as described in the statutory guidance.

Personal Education Plans and why they are important

All looked after children must have a care plan which is drawn up by the Local Authority and reviewed by an Independent Reviewing Officer. There are clear statutory timescales for reviews.

A 72 hour review from the date of initially being placed should be convened, then a three month review and then six monthly reviews thereafter all chaired by the Independent Reviewing Officer. In certain circumstances a review can be brought forward.

The care plan identifies intended outcomes and objectives for the child and carers in relation to his/her emotional and behavioural development, identity, relationships and self care skills. Care Plans must include a health plan (PHP) and an education plan (PEP) that are developed and reviewed in partnership with relevant professionals.

The PEP is the responsibility of the designated teacher when the child is on the roll of a particular school. The PEP, as well as being part of the overall care plan, is part of the looked after child's official school record. If the child moves schools it should be forwarded, along with other school records and the main contact (usually the child's social worker) in the Authority that looks after the child, to their new school, if known.

Leaving Care

When a child/young person is 16 years old and is a looked after child, as part of their review there will be a 'Pathway Plan' which will have clear plans for their future. The young person will help write the plan and it will cover where to live, the young person's education, training and work, their health, how to look after themselves and most importantly what money will be available to finance their future. This pathway plan will be in place and reviewed up until they are at least 21 years to continue to help the young person after leaving care.

Children's Rights

Looked after children can speak to an advocate or have an independent visitor appointed who will support them and ensure that their rights are maintained and that the child/young person has an active voice on the care they receive. The child/young person should be consulted and be an active part of their review.

Complaints and Compliments

This allows for the child/young person to complain if they need to or feel that the quality of the service from social care is poor. It would also allow for positive feedback to build up a picture of what success looks like and what works well.

Beth Bliss Interim Safeguarding Children Manager Children and Young People's Services Social Care and Health October 2010

RELEVANT LINKS:

CHILDREN ACT 1989

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents>

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN PROCEDURES FROM THE NSCB

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PROCEDURES 2010 (CHAPTER 5)

<http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/home/learningandwork/caringforchildren/socialcareandhealth/nscb/childprotectionpoliciesproceduresandpracticeguidance.htm>

STATUTORY DUTIES ON LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND THE ROLE OF CORPORATE PARENTS – PROMOTING THE EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN, STATUTORY GUIDANCE FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES.

VIRTUAL SCHOOL TOOLKIT

STATUTORY GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES, SETTING OUT THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DESIGNATED TEACHER FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN, THERE IS SEPARATE GUIDANCE FOR PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/safeguardingandsocialcare/childrenincare/educationalachievement/educationalachievement/>

PEP TEMPLATE

CONTACT DETAILS OF THE LAC VIRTUAL TEAM:

Head of Virtual School for LAC: Pauline Inwood
Tel: 01623 434149

Pauline's role is to raise attainment and ensure progression of all looked after children and young people from the authority, or being educated within the authority. This is achieved through strategic working across the authority and with schools, to monitor and support the educational achievement of looked after children.

Senior Educational Psychologist: Elaine Hack
Tel: 0115 846 5550

LAC Advisors, Behaviour and Attendance Service:
Paul Addison for Broxtowe, Gedling, Rushcliffe and Newark
Tel: 0115 984 4600
Susan Denholm for Mansfield and Ashfield
Tel: 01623 433433
Joan Wilkinson for Bassetlaw
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