

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

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Next Review Due: December 2020

Definition - Who are Looked after Children?

This policy refers to young people who are Looked After as defined by the Children Act 1989. That is those learners who are under the age of 18 and are:

- The subject of an interim or full time Care or emergency protection order;
- Unaccompanied minors who are asylum seekers;
- Accommodated by a local authority with the agreement of their parent (s) or legal guardian;
- Compulsorily accommodated as a result of criminal proceedings

Why do young people become Looked After?

A large number of those children coming into care will have a history of physical sexual or emotional abuse. Some may have suffered the death of a parent or have parents who can't look after them properly because of illness. Others may have disabilities and many different needs. A very small number are in care because of the crimes they have committed.

How does a young person become Looked After?

Children come into care by two main routes; because the parents have asked for this help or because the child is in danger of being harmed.

- Under section 20 of the Children Act 1989: where parents have asked for help; because for some reason their child can no longer stay at home, suitable accommodation will be provided. Parental Responsibility remains with the parent/guardian
- Under section 31 of the Children Act 1989: if the child is in danger of being harmed, a care order will be made by a court. The court will take all the circumstances into careful consideration before doing this. When a care order is made, children's services acquire parental responsibility and become a legal parent alongside the parent/guardian.

What happens when a young person leaves Foster Care?

Between the ages of sixteen to eighteen a young person who has been Looked After will be expected to begin the transition towards independent living to become a Young Care Leaver. They may move into supported lodgings or into a bedsit or flat depending on the provision available. From the age of sixteen they will be supported by their local Authority.

Introduction

- Looked-after children have poorer educational outcomes than non-looked-after children. A high proportion (67.8%), have special educational needs and their emotional and behavioural health is often a cause for concern. However, despite poor outcomes, there have been improvements for nearly all of the measures in this statistical release.
- The percentage of looked-after children achieving 5 or more A* to C GCSEs or equivalent including English and mathematics has increased from 11.0% in 2009 to 15.3% in 2013.

- The attainment gaps between looked-after and non-looked-after children for the main key stage 1, 2 and 4 measures have decreased or remained the same from 2012 to 2013. However, the gaps are still large, especially for key stage 4, where 15.3% of looked after children achieved 5 or more A* to C GCSEs or equivalent including English and mathematics compared with 58.0% of non-looked-after children. Although this gap has narrowed in recent years to 42.7 percentage points, it is still higher than it was in 2009.

Supporting Looked after Children to succeed and progress into Higher Education, employment and a better future is a priority of the Trust and its colleges.

Policy Statement

The Trust and its Colleges approach to supporting the achievements of Looked after Children and Care Leavers will focus on:

Pre enrolment

- Work closely with Wakefield REACH Team and Bradford's Specialist Children's Services which include the LAC Team to establish a solid working relationship
- Attend any events through the REACH Team/Bradford's Specialist Children's Services to actively promote the Trust and its colleges
- Offer 1-1 guided tours of the academy to LAC
- Closely support LAC's with applying for 16-19 bursary (if not already done so)
- Look at appointing a progress tutor prior to enrolment (this tutor will then be continuous throughout the LAC's time at college)
- Support with any travel queries

On- Course

- Progress Tutor or Safeguarding Lead to attend all LAC reviews for students as required.
- Identify any support needs and work closely with departments in college e.g. Study Support.
- Raise self-esteem, confidence wherever possible in LAC.
- Work closely with foster parents, children's homes etc. to establish solid relationships and to make them aware of LAC's progress in college.
- Support alongside a member of the Leaving Care Team applications to Employment, Further Education or Higher Education; highlight all financial support that will be on offer for university education.
- Support with any financial applications that need to be completed e.g. student finance.
- Monitor and track the achievement and attainment of Looked after Children and regular intervals and if necessary put in any supportive measures as required.

End of Course

- Make student aware that support from REACH Team/Bradford's Specialist Children's Services will still be provided to support further with transition.
- Meet with LAC for last review to look at if any further support can be offered until their transition to Higher Education, Further Education or Employment has been achieved.

- Record all destination information as to where LAC have progressed to.

Record Keeping and Information Sharing

The Safeguarding Lead will co-ordinate record keeping for all Looked after Children in College. Looked After Children status will be appropriately “flagged” on Cedar.

Sensitivity is a priority in sharing information with members of the college staff. We are guided by best practice and on the “need to know”. Wherever possible students’ wishes are taken into account in sharing information within the staff team.

Partnership Working

The Trust and its colleges values the views of parents/carers. We firmly believe in developing strong partnerships with carer’s parents and residential care workers to enable students to achieve their full potential.

We recognise the essential contributions that external support services make in assisting Looked after Children. We are committed to developing positive partnerships with all involved.