

Children in care, children with previous care experience and children with a social worker policy



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Author/Contact:	Lisa Nelson Email: Lisa.Nelson@atlp.org.uk	
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Statement of intent

Throughout this policy the term 'children in care' refers to all children whose care is being provided by the local authority. As stated in the Children's Social Care National Framework, legislation uses the term 'looked-after children' to refer to children who are being cared for by the local authority, whether that is under section 20, or sections 22 and 31 of the Children Act 1989. Legally, the language of 'children in care' does not include children accommodated and looked after under section 20. However, children and young people often tell local and central government that the term 'looked-after children' is unhelpful, and we have made the deliberate choice to use 'children in care' to refer to all children, regardless of the legal provision under which they are being cared for by the local authority. Children and young people will, of course, have different views on the language used to talk about their care, and practitioners will want to explore these with individuals.

Educational achievement and subsequent life chances for children in care and children who have previous care experience are of real concern. Some children and young people who are in the care of the local authority, require additional support to help them to reach their potential. Children and young people who are on the edge of care and their families will also need additional support, and for all professionals to work collaboratively so that the family can stay together, where it is safe to do so.

All schools within the Arthur Terry Learning Partnership ("ATLP") endeavour to provide a place of safety and ensure that all children experience equity, understanding, belonging, and love. With this in mind, we aim to:

- Build our knowledge and understanding about the impact of trauma and attachment difficulties or disorders on children and young people, especially those who are in or have experienced care. We will then recognise how this may be displayed in school.
- Understand that behaviour is a form of communication.
- Develop genuine, safe, warm, respectful, calm, and kind relationships with children and young people.
- Support children and young people to build, maintain and repair positive relationships.
- Know our children well, this will support early identification of need and provision of support.
- Apply corporate parenting principles to all children in care.
- Support children and young people to safely express and understand their emotions.
- Encourage children and young people to reach their potential and to make good progress in relation to their professional, social, and emotional development.
- Ensure that children and young people enjoy high quality teaching and a curriculum which meets their needs and the requirements of legislation.
- Plan support for children in care realistically and use the school's resources efficiently to ensure the school meets their needs.
- Ensure that, when appropriate, care-experienced children are prioritised for catch-up tutoring.
- Promote a positive culture in all aspects of school life.
- Help children and young people develop their cultural, moral, and social understanding.

- Promote wider opportunities for children in care, particularly in the arts, sports, or extra-curricular activities.
- Ensure that children in care and children with previous care experience, are proportionately represented in the school e.g., school council etc.
- Ensure that all Trust policies reflect the needs of children in care and children with previous care experience and are sensitive to their needs.

1. Legal framework

1.1. This policy has due regard to legislation and statutory guidance, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Children Act 1989
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- The Designated Teacher (Looked-After Pupils etc.) (England) Regulations 2009
- DfE (2018) 'Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children'
- DfE (2018) 'The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children'
- DfE (2023) 'Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement'
- DfE (2023) 'Keeping children safe in education'
- DfE (2023) 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'

2. Definitions

2.1. **"Children in care"**, also known as looked after children (LAC), are defined as:

- Children or young people who are the subject of a Care Order or Interim Care Order under the Children Act 1989.
- Children in public care who are placed with foster carer, in children's residential homes, with parents or other relatives, in semi-independent or supported accommodation.
- Children subject to a Care or Interim Care Order whilst placed with a parent, where the Local Authority share parental responsibility.

- Children who are not subject to an order but are accommodated by the Local Authority (section 20), due to absent parenting, or with the agreement of their parents (voluntary care).
- 2.2. **“Children with previous care experience”** also known as Previously Looked After or PLAC are defined as:
- Children who are no longer looked after by a local authority in England and Wales because they have either been adopted or are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship, or child arrangements order.
 - Children who were adopted outside of England and Wales from ‘state care’ (care that is provided by a public authority, religious organisation, or other organisation whose main purpose is to benefit society).
- 2.3. **Children with a social worker** are defined as:
- Children subject to a child in need plan
 - Children subject to a child protection plan

3. Roles and responsibilities

- 3.1. The **Trust Board** as a whole and through delegation to relevant subcommittees is responsible for:
- Ensuring the Trust has a coherent policy for children in care and those with previous care experience.
 - Reviewing the Trust’s policies and procedures in conjunction with legislation and statutory guidance.
 - Ensuring each school has a designated teacher for children in care and children who have previous care experience.
 - Ensuring the designated teacher for children in care and children who have previous care experience has received the appropriate training and is represented on the school’s senior leadership team.
 - Ensuring that appropriate staff have the information they need in relation to each child in care.
 - Promoting a culture of high expectations and aspirations.
 - Ensuring that sufficient training is in place to ensure all staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding to keep children in care and those with previous care experience safe.
 - Ensuring children in care and those with previous care experience have equal access to all areas of the curriculum and that reasonable adjustments are made, if necessary.
 - Reviewing termly data from the designated Trust Leader to have oversight of the experience of children in care across all schools.
 - Reviewing, on a biennial basis, the effectiveness of this policy.

3.2. The **Virtual School (VS)** is responsible for:

- Monitoring the attendance and educational progress of the children in care that their authority is responsible for.
- Supporting arrangements to improve the education and outcomes of the authority's children in care, including those placed out-of-authority.
- Building relationships with health, education, and social care partners, as well as other partners, so they and the designated teachers understand the support available to children in care, children who have previous care experience and children with a social worker.
- Working with the school to ensure all children in care in attendance are fully supported in reaching their full potential.
- Working with agencies to further understand and address the disadvantages that children with a social worker can experience.
- Acting as one of the educational advocates for children in care.
- Acting as a source of advice and information to help parents of previously care experienced children and children with a social worker as effectively as possible.
- Ensuring there are effective systems in place to:
 - Maintain an up-to-date roll of the children in care who are in school settings, and gather information about their educational placement, attendance, and progress.
 - Inform the headteacher and designated teacher if they have a pupil on roll who is cared for by the local authority.
 - Ensure social workers, schools, designated teachers, carers, and independent reviewing officers understand their role and responsibilities regarding children and young people's personal education plan (PEP).
 - Ensure that up-to-date and effective PEPs that focus on educational outcomes are maintained for all children in care.
 - Avoid delays in supporting suitable educational provision.
 - Ensure the education achievement of children in care is seen as a priority by everyone who has responsibilities for promoting their welfare.
 - Report regularly on the attainment, progress, and school attendance of children in care through the local authority's corporate parenting structures.

3.3. The **Headteacher** of each school is responsible for:

- Appointing the designated teacher for children in care and children who have previous care experience.
- Allowing the designated teacher, the time, and facilities to succeed in carrying out their duties including updating training and development.
- Promoting a culture of high expectations and aspirations.

- Ensuring good use of pupil premium plus (PP+) to raise academic attainment and providing any resources according to immediate need.
- Supporting strategies to raise academic attainment for children in care and diminish the difference compared to their peers.
- Allocating catch up funding appropriately and accessing tuition to support children in care following Covid 19.
- Overseeing this policy and monitoring its implementation, feeding back to the Trust Board on a termly basis through the designated Trust lead (Vulnerable Children) on the following:
 - The number of children in care, children with previous care experience and children with a social worker in the school.
 - An analysis of assessment scores as a cohort, compared to other pupil groups.
 - The attendance of children in care, children with previous care experience, and those with a social worker compared to other pupil groups.
- Avoiding fixed term or permanent exclusions for all children in care and previous care experienced children and exploring alternatives with the local authority to ensure this is a last resort. If children are excluded as a last resort, ensuring that the Virtual School Head is notified at the time of exclusion.
- Monitoring the level of suspensions and permanent exclusions if issued, compared to other pupil groups.
- Ensuring all members of staff are aware that supporting children in care is a key priority. This includes ensuring that training to understand the impact of trauma and/or emotion coaching is provided for all staff.
- Promoting the advantages of actively challenging negative stereotypes of children in care.

3.4. The **Designated Teacher** for children in care and those with previous care experience within each school is responsible for:

- Building a relationship with the child or young person and acting as their voice where necessary.
- Advocating for children in care and children with previous care experience.
- Building relationships with health, education, social care, and other partners so that they and the virtual school headteacher understand the support available to children in care and previously care experienced.
- Promoting the educational achievement of children in care and previously care experienced at the school; this includes those that left care through adoption, special guardianship or child arrangement orders or were adopted from state care outside England and Wales.
- Acting as the main contact for social services, carers, virtual schools and the DfE.

- Promoting a culture of high expectations and aspirations.
- Ensuring children in care are involved in setting their own targets and attending their PEP meetings.
- Advising staff on teaching strategies for children in care, children with previous care experience, and those with a social worker and sharing relevant, key information where appropriate.
- Ensuring all staff are provided with training to understand the impact of trauma and/or emotion coaching.
- Ensuring that children in care are prioritised for one-to-one tuition and support.
- Leading on how the child's PEP is developed and used in school to ensure the child's progress towards targets is monitored.
- Liaising with the special education needs and disability coordinator (SENDCO) to ensure all pupil needs are met.
- Working with the child's virtual school and social worker to develop and implement their PEP within timescales.
- Ensuring relevant academic data is provided on the e-pep for all subjects.
- Working with the headteacher to provide regular individual updates to the Trust Lead for Vulnerable Children & contribute to termly reporting for Trustees. The DSL in each school is responsible for:
- Keeping up-to-date records of children in care's respective social worker and virtual school.
- Liaising with the designated teacher and headteacher where there are concerns with a child in care.
- Where a child ceases to be cared for by the local authority and becomes a care leaver, keeping up-to-date contact details of their local authority personal advisor (PA) and liaising with the PA as necessary regarding any issues of concern affecting the care leaver.
- Maintaining records of children and young people who have, or have previously had, social work intervention. This will include adding the associated marker SWIlever to the relevant records.

3.5. The **SENDCO** in each school is responsible for:

- Ensuring they are involved in reviewing PEP and care plans for children in care, children with previous care experience, and those with a social worker where there are additional needs.
- Liaising with the class teacher, designated teacher, specialists, carers, and parents when considering interventions to support the progress of children in care, children with previous care experience and those with a social worker.
- Supporting the designated teacher and class teachers if an education, health and care needs assessment (EHCNA) is required.

3.6. The **Trust Vulnerable Children's Lead** is responsible for:

- Ensuring Trust policy regarding children in care and those with previous care experience is updated and implemented across schools.
- Advocating for children in care/previously care experienced/with a social worker, and promoting the advantages of actively challenging negative stereotypes of children in care.
- Supporting strategies to raise academic attainment for children in care and diminish the difference compared to their peers.
- Producing termly reports for the School Improvement Standards Scrutiny Committee regarding children in care, children with previous care experience, and children with a social worker's experiences in school.
- Ensuring all staff are provided with training to understand the impact of trauma and/or emotion coaching.
- Chairing the Trust's Vulnerable Children Advocate committee comprised of local governance representatives to support strong information flows between local governance and Trust Board levels.

3.7. **All staff**, across all schools, are responsible for:

- Being aware of children in care, children with previous care experience, and those with a social worker (where appropriate) and providing them with support and encouragement.
- Preserving confidentiality, where appropriate, and showing sensitivity and understanding.
- Being vigilant for any signs of bullying towards children in care, children with previous care experience, and those with a social worker.
- Reporting any concerns (however small) to the designated teacher and/ or headteacher.
- Promoting the self-esteem of children in care, children with previous care experience, and those with a social worker.
- Having high aspirations for all children in care, children with previous care experience, and those with a social worker.
- Being aware and implementing any strategies provided for individual pupils.
- Using relational and or restorative approaches with children in care, children with previous care experience, and those with a social worker.
- Showing empathy and understanding to all children in care, children with previous care experience, and those with a social worker.

4. Personal Education Plan (PEP)

- 4.1. All children in care must have a care plan; PEPs are an integral part of this care plan. PEPs provide a record of the child's academic journey and are maintained for 75 years. The individual can access these at any time in their child or adult life.
- 4.2. The PEP is an evolving record of what needs to happen for a child to enable them to make the expected progress and fulfil their potential.
- 4.3. The PEP will reflect the importance of a personalised approach to learning which meets the identified educational needs of the child.
- 4.4. The school with other professionals and the child's carers will use the PEP to support the child's educational needs, raise the child's aspirations and improve their life chances.
- 4.5. PP+ is allocated through the PEP targets.
- 4.6. If additional funding is required for a young person, this needs to be discussed with the virtual school and an amount agreed.
- 4.7. All relevant bodies, such as the local authority, the designated teacher and carers, will involve the child in the PEP process at all stages.
- 4.8. The PEP will address the pupil's full range of education and development needs, including:
 - Access to nursery provision that is appropriate to the child's age. This is relevant for primary schools within the Partnership.
 - On-going catch-up support, which will be made available for children who have fallen behind with work.
 - Suitable education provided by the local authority, when the child is not in school because of suspension or exclusion.
 - Transitional support where needed, such as if a child is moving to a new school.
 - School attendance and behaviour support, where appropriate.
 - Support to help the child meet their aspirations, which includes:
 - Support to achieve expected levels of progress for the relevant national key stage and to complete an appropriate range of approved qualifications.
 - Careers advice, guidance and financial information about further education, training and employment, that focusses on the child's strengths, capabilities and the outcomes they want to achieve.
 - Out-of-school hours learning activities, study support and leisure interests.
- 4.9. 4.9 PEP targets should be aspirational and reflect the need to raise academic attainment.

5. Working with agencies and the Virtual School (VS)

- 5.1. Each school will ensure that for children in care, copies of all relevant reports are forwarded to the child's social worker, in addition to carers or residential workers and parents where requested.
- 5.2. Each school will coordinate their review meetings; for example, hold their annual review of children in care with their statutory care plan review (also may be known as LAC review) and PEP.
- 5.3. Each school will work with other agencies to exchange information, such as changes in circumstances, exclusions, or attendance issues, taking prompt action, where necessary, to safeguard children in care, children with previous care experience, and those with a social worker.
- 5.4. Behaviour management strategies will be agreed between the virtual school and the school, to ensure challenging behaviour is managed in the most effective way for that individual child. Reasonable adjustments will be made for children in care, children with previous care experience, and those with a social worker.
- 5.5. The designated teacher for children in care and children with previous care experience, will communicate with the virtual school and child's social worker to facilitate the completion of the PEP.
- 5.6. Through the designated teacher, each school will work with the virtual school, social worker and other relevant agencies to monitor any arrangements in place so that actions and activities recorded in the child's PEP are implemented without delay.
- 5.7. The designated teacher will communicate with the virtual school and agree on how pupil premium plus (PP+) can be used effectively to accommodate the child's educational attainment and progress.
- 5.8. PP+ for children with previous care experience will be allocated directly to, and managed by, the school. An appropriate pupil premium policy will be in place.
- 5.9. Each school will work with the virtual school to manage allocation of PP+ for the benefit of the cohort of children in care, and children with previous care experience, according to their needs.
- 5.10. If deemed necessary, the school will allocate an amount of funding to an individual to support their needs.
- 5.11. The designated teacher will ensure consistent and strong communication with the virtual school regarding children in care who are absent without authorisation.
- 5.12. Each school will share their expertise on what works in supporting the education of children in care, children with previous care experience, and those with a social worker.

6. Training

- 6.1. The designated teacher and other school staff involved in the education of children in care, children with previous care experience, and those with a social worker should receive appropriate training. This includes information about the following:
 - New designated teacher training
 - Designated teacher network meetings held by virtual school

- School admissions arrangements
- SEND
- Attendance
- Exclusions
- Homework
- GCSE options
- Managing behaviour that challenges us
- Promoting positive educational and recreational activities
- Supporting pupils to be aspirational for their future education, training, and employment
- Safeguarding
- Training to understand the impact of trauma and/or emotion coaching
- Peer on peer abuse
- Domestic Violence
- Substance misuse
- Child sexual exploitation (CSE)
- Specific training where individuals have received a diagnosis or there is a need
- The ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant)

7. Children and young people's mental health

- 7.1. Children in care, children with previous care experience, and those with a social worker are more likely to experience the challenge of social, emotional and mental health issues which can impact their behaviour and education. Designated teachers will have awareness, training, and skills regarding a child's needs and how to support them in relation to behaviour management and mental health.
- 7.2. The designated teacher will work with the virtual school to ensure the school is able to identify signs of potential mental health issues, understand the impact issues can have on children in care, children with previous care experience, and those with a social worker, and knows how to access further assessment and support, where necessary.
- 7.3. A strengths and difficulties questionnaire will be used on an annual basis to help social workers and other relevant professionals to form a view about children in care and children with previous care experience's current emotional wellbeing. Teachers will complete their element of the questionnaire to assist social workers in their assessment.
- 7.4. The impact of Covid will be considered and additional support will be accessed for those children who continue to have gaps in their learning or continue to face additional barriers as a result of the pandemic.

8. Suspensions and exclusions

- 8.1. Past experiences of children in care, children with previous care experience, and those with a social worker will be considered when designing and implementing the school's Relationships and Behaviour Policy.
- 8.2. Each school will have regard to the DfE's statutory guidance 'Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement' and, as far as possible, avoid suspending and excluding any children in care.
- 8.3. Where a school has concerns about a child's behaviour, the virtual school will be informed at the earliest opportunity.
- 8.4. Exclusion will be avoided for all children in care and only be used as a last resort, after the school and virtual school have considered what additional support can be provided to prevent exclusion, and any additional arrangements to support the child's education in the event of exclusion.
- 8.5. Each school will inform parents that they can seek the advice of the virtual school on strategies to support their child to avoid exclusion.
- 8.6. 1st day provision should be explored in the event of an exclusion to ensure pressure on the care placement is minimised and an appropriate educational setting can be accessed by the young person.

9. Children and young people with SEND

- 9.1. Support for children in care with SEND, who do not need an education, health and care plan (EHCP), will be covered as part of the child's PEP and care plan reviews.
- 9.2. The SENDCO, class teacher, designated teacher and specialists will involve parents and carers when considering interventions to support their child's progress.
- 9.3. If appropriate, the virtual school coordinator for children with previous care experience will be invited to comment on proposed SEND provision for those children.

10. Information sharing

- 10.1. Appropriate and specific arrangements for sharing reliable data are in place to ensure that the education needs of children in care, children with previous care experience, and those with a social worker are understood and met.
- 10.2. The arrangements set out include:
 - Who has access to information about children in care, children with previous care experience, and those with a social worker and how data will remain secure.
 - How children and young people, carers, and parents are informed of, and allowed to challenge, information that is kept about them.
 - How carers contribute to and receive information.

- Mechanisms for sharing information between the school and relevant local authority departments.
- How relevant information about individual children is passed between local authority departments and the school when children move.

11. Monitoring and review

- 11.1. This policy will be reviewed on a bi-annual basis by the Trust Board
- 11.2. The next scheduled review date for this policy is April 2024.