

Barnet Virtual School Previously Looked After Children (PLAC) Policy

Rationale

Under the statutory guidelines 'Promoting the education of looked after and previously looked after children', Barnet Virtual School has a duty to provide information, advice and guidance for parents/carers and schools regarding education provision for a previously looked after child/young person.

This policy outlines the key duties and expectations linked to previously looked after children and additional key information for schools and parents.

Statutory Guidance

This provides local authorities with clear guidance relating to how Virtual School Heads [VSH] must meet their duties. The role of the VSH for previously looked-after children is to promote their educational achievement through the provision of information and advice to their parents, educators and others who the VSH considers necessary. VSHs must discharge their duty from the point at which the child becomes eligible for free early education, which is currently the start of the term following a child's second birthday, and conclude when s/he has completed the compulsory years of education. The duty relates to previously looked-after children who are in education in the area served by the VSH irrespective of where the child lives.

How we work

Barnet Virtual School will:

- respond to parental requests for advice and information – e.g. advice on school admissions in their area. Where appropriate, the VSH should signpost parents to other services that can offer advice and support;
- respond to requests for advice and information from providers of early education, designated teachers in maintained schools and academies, and providers of alternative provision in their area in respect of individual children supported by the local authority. In particular, the VSH should develop/ build on existing good working relationship with designated teachers for previously looked-after children in their area; and
- make general advice and information available to early years settings and schools to improve awareness of the vulnerability and needs of previously looked-after children. This should include promoting good practice on identifying and meeting their needs, and guidance on effective use of the PP+.

We may need to be clear that the child is eligible for support by asking the child's parents for evidence of their previously looked-after status. For children adopted outside England and Wales, the child must have been looked after by a public authority, a religious organisation or other provider of care whose sole purpose is to benefit society. Where parents are unable to provide clear evidence of their child's status, we will use our discretion. In such circumstance, the Virtual School will discuss eligibility with the designated teacher at the child's school to agree a consistent approach.

What might providing information and advice look like?

- Providing advice and information to frequently asked questions online.
- Providing advice to individual parents/ carers and schools where they have a query.
- Advising schools on how they can support previously looked after children to improve behaviour to help avoid exclusion becoming necessary.

- Advising schools on how to best use Pupil Premium to support previously looked-after children.

Working with Others

Barnet Virtual school will work with other professionals in supporting the education of previously looked-after children including:

- encouraging and supporting early education settings and schools to have high expectations in helping previously looked-after children to achieve their full potential in education;
- building relationships with health, education and social care partners and other partners, such as voluntary sector organisations in their area, so that we understand the support available to previously looked-after children (e.g. mental health services), and are able to effectively liaise with service providers and signpost parents to those services;
- encouraging education settings and professionals to share expertise on what works in supporting previously looked-after children's education.

Training for Those Involved in the Education of Previously Looked-After Children

Training provided by the Virtual School is open to all schools in Barnet, regardless of whether they have a looked after child. Barnet Virtual School provides training to a variety of colleagues every term and previously looked-after children are referred to in this training. As part of keeping our knowledge and skills current, we keep up-to date and engage with research and emerging good practice. We are members of the National Association of Virtual School Heads (NAVSH) which provides a useful network for professional support, peer challenge and practice sharing.

Promoting Mental Health and Well-being

There are a number of documents which are useful in relation to supporting looked after and previously looked after children's mental health.

- Mental health and behaviour in schools [Mental health and behaviour in schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)
- Promoting-the-health-and-wellbeing-of-looked-after-children [Promoting the health and wellbeing of looked-after children - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)
- Improving mental health support for our children and young people <https://www.scie.org.uk/children/care/mental-health/report#downloads>
- Children's attachment: attachment in children and young people who are adopted from care, in care or at high risk of going into care <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng26/resources/childrens-attachmentattachment-in-children-and-young-people-who-are-adopted-from-care-in-care-or-at-high-risk-of-going-into-care-1837335256261>
- Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health: [Unknown \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](http://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

A significant proportion of previously looked-after children have a Special Educational Need or Disability [SEND]. For previously looked-after children, the SENCO, class teacher, designated teacher and the specialists should involve parents when considering interventions to support their child's progress. They should agree the outcomes to be achieved through SEND support, including a date by which progress will be reviewed. Children and young people with SEND should be supported through processes detailed in the SEND Code of Practice. information can be located online for the Barnet Local Offer.

Pupil Premium Plus Funding Grant for Previously Looked-After Children

Schools that have children who:

- were looked after by a local authority or other state care immediately before being adopted
- left local authority or other state care on a special guardianship order or child arrangements order (previously known as a residence order).

are eligible to claim Pupil Premium Plus funding. The funding will include pupils recorded in the January school census and alternative provision census. From 1 April 2023, PP grant eligibility for pupils who have been adopted from care or have left care includes children adopted from state care or equivalent from outside England and Wales.

These are collectively referred to as post-LAC in these conditions of grant.

Pupil Premium is allocated to post-LAC pupils in general hospital schools and alternative provision (including non-maintained special schools) not maintained by the local council but where the local council pays full tuition fees. The grant is for students from Reception class up to Year 11.

In order for schools to access the funding, parents and guardians must declare their child's adoptive, SGO or CAO status directly to the school before the school completes the January census. Parents and guardians must provide evidence, for example, a copy of the legal order, or a confirmation letter from the local council which placed their child. Parents should not need to declare their child's status again until the child changes school. Parents are not obliged to declare this information.

Unlike the Pupil Premium that was accessed through the Virtual School when the child was still legally in care, Pupil Premium money for previously looked after children comes directly from the government to the school and is not ring-fenced for the individual child. It is good practice for schools to include parents in discussions around the most effective use of Pupil Premium Plus and it is important that interventions supported by pupil premium should be evidence based and in the best interests of the child.

Early Years Provision and Pupil Premium Funding

Early years provision is available to 2, 3 and 4 year olds who have been adopted from care or who left care under a Special Guardianship Order or Residence Order. They are entitled to 570 hours of free education per year which is usually taken as 15 hours a week over 38 weeks of the year but providers who offer all year round provision may spread the hours over a longer period.

Early Years Pupil Premium is available for 3 and 4 year olds who were adopted from care or who left care under a Special Guardianship Order or Residence Order. Parents and guardians will need to provide relevant information to the education provider who will then receive an additional 53p per hour on top of the free education that the children access. The maximum a provider can currently receive per year is £302.

Support for Out of Borough Previously Looked-After Children

When a child is adopted and leaves Barnet care they may be placed out of borough. The Virtual School provides support, information, advice and guidance for adoptive families and social care colleagues until the adoption process has completed. Children will still have a Personal Education Plan until the adoption is finalised. The Virtual School will also remain as a point of contact if required and will work with Virtual School teams in the relevant area that the child is placed where appropriate.

Suspensions/Exclusions of Previously Looked-After Children

Children who are previously looked-after are more likely to be excluded than their non-looked after or looked-after peers. Where possible, schools should avoid excluding previously looked-after children and should work closely with parents to promote positive pathways in education. Additional guidance can be

found at [School suspensions and permanent exclusions - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk). Additionally parents and schools can contact the local authority for advice and guidance.

Designated Teachers Working with the Virtual School

For previously looked-after children, the VSHs are no longer acting as the part of their corporate parent: their role is limited to providing information and advice to parents and schools, including training to raise awareness and understanding of their needs. The designated teacher may, however, seek the advice about meeting the needs of individual children with the agreement of the child's parents or guardians.

The Virtual school are aware of the importance of listening to the voice of the child and will encourage schools to do this with post looked after children. These 5 tips are helpful in doing this:

1. Be available, take the time to get to know me
2. Notice if I am upset or angry and listen to me when I need help
3. Understand that even though I've had a different past than most people, it doesn't mean I need to be treated differently
4. Understand my experience of being looked-after
5. Understand that my past will affect my present and my future behaviour even if I don't notice

Useful Guidance for Schools and Parents

Welcoming an adopted child to your primary school/nursery/secondary school

<https://www.adoptionuk.org/free-information-downloads>

Meeting the needs of adopted and permanently placed children.

A guide for school staff

<https://www.pac-uk.org/our-services/education/education-resources/>

Meeting the needs of adopted and permanently placed children - A guide for parents and carers of children in education in England including those previously looked after in England and Wales but who left care through an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order (formally known as a residence order)

<https://www.adoptionuk.org/free-information-downloads>

Whole school resources for children or trusted adults in schools

http://www.innerworldwork.co.uk/?page_id=45

Useful case studies with strategies

<https://www.adoptionuk.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=06211143-c8c7-4270-ae8e-e5ea6cb9a56f>

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