

BSix Policy for Looked After Children and Care Leavers

1. Policy Statement

The senior members of staff with responsibility for Looked After Children (LAC) and Care Leavers (CL) are the Vice Principal of Student Services and the Inclusion & Wellbeing Manager (Designated Teacher for Looked After Children). It is their duty to inform the senior leadership team and Governors of the progress of students who are in care/care leavers on a regular basis.

2. Who are Looked After Children?

This policy refers to young people who are Looked After as defined by the Children Act 1989. That is students 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

A large number of 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 are unable to look after them properly because of illness. Others may have disabilities and many different needs. A very small number are in care because of criminal behaviour.

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 for the child 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.

3. Who are Young Care Leavers?

A Care Leaver is defined as a person aged 25 or under who has been looked after by a local authority for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14; and who was looked after by the local authority for at school leaving age or after that date. 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 remain with their Foster Carers or 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 Leaving Care Team.

4. Why is a specific policy necessary?

Although there have been slight improvements in outcomes for Looked After Children in recent years, these remain significantly lower than those for all children¹.

- Only 13% of Looked After children obtained five A*-C grade GCSEs including Mathematics and English in 2016 compared with 53% of all children (DfE 2016).
- Only 6% progressed on to higher education in 2014 compared to approximately 40% of the population (UCAS)
- Looked After Children are more than five times more likely to have a fixed term exclusion rate than all children (DfE 2016)
- 34% of Care Leavers aged 19 were not in education, employment or training, compared with 16% of all 19-24 year olds in 2014 (NSPCC).

¹https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/384781/Outcomes_SFR49_2014_Text.pdf

At BSix we aim to support all our people to succeed and progress to further education, higher education, employment and a better future. We acknowledge that, because of the issues outlined above, LACs need careful monitoring, and more support than other students. To further complicate this, they often have to leave care and begin to live independently during their education at sixth form, which of course creates further issues and a need for even more support.

Aims

The College's approach to supporting the achievements of Looked After Children and Young Care Leavers aims to support these students so that they achieve in line with, or above, national averages for LACs and Care Leavers.

We aim to do this through ensuring the following are achieved:

4.1. Before Entry

- Develop and maintain effective links with local authorities, Health and Social Care trusts, schools and other partners to publicise and make available information, advice and guidance (including financial and other forms of support) about progression and study in FE/HE
- Provide impartial, free and confidential pre-course guidance on FE/HE study options, including financial and other forms of support, to those in care and their carers. This could include travel and free meals.
- Provide accessible information about outreach activities: welcome days, taster days, summer schools or other events, to those in care and their carers
- Provide a range of informational materials relevant to study and support options and make them available and accessible through a range of formats
- Put systems in place that will help to identify those in care/care leavers either through the local authority, support agencies or through self-disclosure. We recognize that it is important to identify young people in care and care leavers early in the application process, in order to meet their academic and support needs.
- Any student who makes a declaration of 'care' status through the application and enrolment process will be allocated to a designated member of College staff and provide a clear outline and offer of the support available, including the 16-19 Guaranteed Bursary, specialist support, support at interviews, tours of College
- Inform the Personal Tutor, if consent is given by the young person, to facilitate effective support at transition to the College

4.2. On Course

- The College will have a designated members of staff, the Student Welfare Officer and Head of Student Support, to serve as key contacts for those in care/care leavers. These staff will also offer and provide support prior to entry and throughout the duration of the student's course.
- Following disclosure or identification, suitable support arrangements will be put in place and monitored by the designated staff in conjunction with the personal tutor and subject teachers.
- Looked after children in schools should have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) and local authorities should ensure they have a Pathway Plan which supports their progression to further education or training. It is now recommended that this is extended to post-16 providers. The College will endeavor to identify young people in care and care leavers and liaise with other agencies to obtain all available PEP paperwork to assist in assessing their support needs.
- Looked After Children's absence will be monitored in accordance with the College's existing policy for managing student absence. HODs, Senior Tutors and SAOs can request that the Student Welfare Officer investigate cases of longer absence on their behalf. Social workers and carers should both be contacted, as well as any other professionals involved with

supporting a young person. Requests for attendance information from social services or other organisations should be made to the Student Welfare Officer.

4.3. End of Course

- Provide free and impartial career guidance relating to progression within FE/HE or careers and support with applications
- Obtain feedback from students who are in care/care leavers about our support offer, delivery and their distance travelled. This information will be fed back to SMT
- Maintain records of the recruitment, retention, achievement and progression of our students in care/care leavers
- Offer information and training to College staff about issues affecting young people in or leaving care

5. Responsibilities

5.1. Responsibility of Governors

There is a named Governor for safeguarding, who takes responsibility for Looked After Children and Care Leavers within this overall responsibility. This Governor will monitor the College's implementation of this policy and work with SMT towards improving outcomes for these students.

5.2. Responsibility of Vice principal Student Services

The Vice Principal for Student Services, as designated safeguarding lead, has lead responsibility for Looked After Children and Care Leavers. They will work closely with the Inclusion & Wellbeing Manager and the Student Welfare Officer towards the above aims. They will monitor the College's implementation of its LAC/CL policy through the Annual Self-Assessment Report. They will ensure there is a member of management with responsibility for LAC/CL.

5.3. Responsibility of Inclusion & Wellbeing Manager

The Inclusion & Wellbeing Manager will monitor LAC/CL progress. They will report to SMT and Governors on the fulfilment of this policy and the progress of students who are LAC or Care Leavers. They will also ensure that all College Staff with LAC/YCL responsibility have received appropriate training.

5.4. Responsibility of Student Welfare Officer

The Student Welfare Officer will have day to day responsibility for the support for Looked After Children and Young Carers. They will liaise with the Local Authority to ensure that we have as much information about which students are LAC/YCL, and that their transition to College is as smooth as possible. They will:

- Inform the Inclusion & Wellbeing Manager and Tutor of any external PEP meeting requests.
- Coordinate the gathering of relevant information for PEP meetings from tutors and other relevant staff.
- Attend relevant CPD around supporting students that are LAC/CL.
- Check LAC/CL student is in receipt of Full Bursary.
- Monitor attendance of LAC/CL and inform allocated Tutor of any LAC/CL students with attendance concerns.
- Update 'External Professionals' section of ProMonitor to include LAC/CL Virtual School and Scoil Worker details.
- Assign the student with a LAC badge.
- Contact all identified students that are LAC/CL to inform them about the student bursary available to them.
- Maintain an accurate and updated LAC/CL register.

5.5. Responsibility of all other staff

All Heads of Department, teachers and tutors have responsibility for the students in their group, for knowing about their particular needs, and for providing the appropriate differentiated support. Teachers and tutors therefore have responsibility for meeting the needs of LACs and Care Leavers, and HODs have responsibility for ensuring that monitoring systems are in place for ensuring all students make expected progress.

6. Data Protection

All data relating to Looked After Children will be held in accordance with the College's Data Protection Policy. This policy conforms to Data Protection. Information on Looked After Children will be held for the specific purpose of enabling the College to put in place any specific support, guidance and advice which these learners may need.

Students can give permission for this information to be given to all staff who deal with them. Otherwise the information will only be shared on a "need to know basis" and only with appropriate staff, such as the Designated Safeguarding Officer and Student Welfare Officer.

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Appendix A: LAC/CL Annual Procedure

Timeframe	Action
May - July	Student Welfare Officer to liaise with Local Authorities to identify any future student applicant information and share with Inclusion & Wellbeing Manager.
August – September	<p>Local Authorities to send through lists of confirmed applicants to the college.</p> <p>Inclusion & Wellbeing Manager to monitor LAC/CL students identified at enrolment through self-declaration and bursary applications.</p> <p>Clear signposting for LAC/CL students to self-declare during enrolment and induction.</p> <p>LAC/CL students invited to 1:1 meeting with Student Welfare Officer to share contact details of social worker, and to receive IAG, including bursary support.</p> <p>Student Welfare Officer to assign LAC/CL with LAC/CL badge on ProMonitor.</p>
September – October	Student Welfare Officer to liaise with Local Authorities to arrange Autumn Term PEP meetings. They will notify Inclusion & Wellbeing Manager and tutors of PEP dates, and coordinate the gathering of relevant information for PEP meetings from tutors and other relevant staff.
October - July	Early identification procedures to be in place at all student interview and open days. Clear signposting for LAC/CL students to self-declare.

Appendix B FINANCIAL SUPPORT INFORMATION FOR CLA/CARELEAVER

The Full Bursary of £1,200 per year is available to students who meet the following criteria:

- Are in Care/a Care Leaver
- Are enrolled on a full-time further education government funded course
- Are aged 16-18 on 31st August
- Have 'home' student status or have been granted full 'refugee' or 'asylum seeker' status
- Have been 'ordinary resident' in the UK, EU or EEA continuously for the last three years with 'settled status' which means having indefinite leave to remain.
- Maintain at least 85% attendance

The Bursary is paid weekly, directly into the student bank account, provided they have at least 85% attendance.

Process for applying:

- All applicants who declare CLA/CL status will be contacted with application details, consent forms and evidence requirements (letter from Social Worker confirming status as LAC/CL)
- All Local Authorities / Virtual Schools will be sent information on Bursary so they can support young people in applying and provide appropriate evidence
- Bursary will be promoted to all students to encourage LAC/CL to declare and apply

Personal Education Plan – Personal Education Allowance

Students that are LAC may be eligible for additional financial support through the PEP meeting process (dependant on age and local authority policy). The Personal Education Allowance is a sum of money available each year to help young people progress in their education. There is different financial help available for those aiming to attend University.

Examples of PEA expenditure:

- Educational Books
- Equipment /specialist kit
- 1:1 Tuition
- Additional support for vocational training
- Educational trips or visits
- Extracurricular activities that will build confidence and self-esteem

All PEA requests need to be discussed and agreed with the local authority Virtual School/Social Worker and student at the PEP meeting in line with the educational targets set; PEA request procedures will vary between boroughs. PEAs are not intended to replace services, support or resources already provided by local authorities or other agencies.

Appendix C: PEP Guidance for Personal Tutors

What is a Personal Education Plan (PEP)?

All Looked after Children must have a care plan, of which the PEP is an integral part. All of those involved in the process of developing the PEP should use it to support the personalised learning of the child.

The PEP (pre-school to age 18) is an evolving record of what needs to happen for Looked After Children to enable them to make expected progress and fulfil their potential. The PEP should reflect the importance of personalised approaches to learning that meets the identified educational needs of the young person, raises aspirations and builds life chances.

The quality of the PEP is the joint responsibility of the local authority that looks after the child and the Education provider. All professionals involved should work closely together at each stage of the PEP process and should involve the student and their carer where appropriate.

Who has ultimate responsibility for the PEP?

The Local Authority/Social Worker has responsibility for the PEP as part of their Care Plan.

What is a Virtual School?

Each Local Authority has a Virtual School, it does not exist in real terms as a building, and children and young people do not attend. It is a service provided by dedicated professionals within the Children, Schools and Families Directorate whose work is to promote and coordinate educational support for Looked After Children and Care Leavers to succeed and have high educational aspirations for them at nursery, school, college and university; wherever their place of learning.

Who should initiate a PEP?

The Local Authority/Social Worker/Virtual School has a duty to initiate the PEP. The completion of the PEP takes place at the PEP meeting and professionals within the meeting negotiate who takes the lead to complete the PEP form. The Social Worker may take the lead for some parts and the Personal Tutor for others.

PEP content and format?

Each Local Authority has a different process for gathering data and writing PEPs, some use paperwork which they complete, others now use E-PEP which they require Schools and Colleges to complete. In order to have a consistent and efficient approach as an organisation, BSix College staff are required to complete an education and welfare report before the PEP date, which will be sent out by the Student Welfare Officer.

Typical targets/outcomes of a PEP meeting may involve:

- Ongoing catch-up support for those that have fallen behind with coursework (including use of effective intervention strategies)
- Identify short-term targets around attendance, learning needs/skills, or knowledge.
- Identify longer-term aspirational targets around managing money, HE, work experience, careers.
- Identify any additional support needs and subsequent referral.
- Agreement of payment by the Local Authority for additional 1-1 tuition or equipment required for studies.
- Transition support from Social Care where a young person is on a new course or in a new residential placement.
- Change or review of residential placement / increased support in placement.
- Referral by Social Worker to specialist agencies e.g. CAMHS/Substance Misuse team. Careers advice and guidance appointment or financial information about higher education.
- Learner consent / agreement of information sharing and review date.
- Equipment identified / to support with learning needs.

How often should it be written?

The PEP process should be integrated into the ILP and Progress review meeting cycles of the Personal Tutor. If a student has recently joined a setting a PEP should be completed within four weeks. It is useful to have a PEP meeting prior to the young person's statutory LAC/CL review, so that any issues raised in the PEP can be highlighted to the Social Worker at the LAC/CL review. Plans should be amended if there is a major change to the young person's situation e.g. placement or authority.

Who needs to be present?

The young person, Personal Tutor and Social Worker/Virtual School and if appropriate carer/other specialist professional e.g. Support Student Engagement Advisor or Cultural Capital.

Where should it take place and for how long?

Meetings should take place at the College (not offsite). College staff need to be time specific as to the time they have available with the local authority representatives