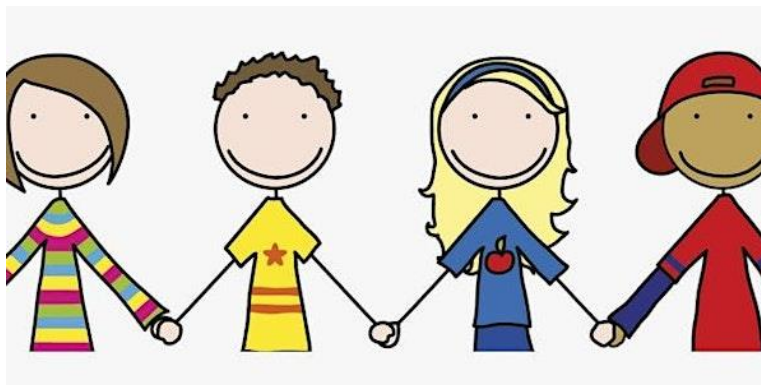


Support
Services for
Education

Supporting the Education and Promoting the Achievement of Children...

...With a Social Worker
...Who are Looked After
...Who are Previously Looked After

As taken from Somerset Children's Services Procedures Manual:
https://www.proceduresonline.com/somerset/cs/p_educ_lac.html



Date Written & Approved	Mar 2024	By	SCC edited by R.Eldred
Date of next review	Mar 2025	Approved by	Governing Body
Review Cycle	Reviewed and approved by the full governing board annually.		

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Scope

This chapter applies to all Looked After and Previously Looked After Children. It also sets out the role of the Virtual School Head in relation to all children with a social worker.

This chapter focuses on how professionals, carers, parents and relatives should seek to enable children to achieve, enjoy and learn and to benefit from their school curriculum and out of school activities. Enjoying school, feeling secure, achieving and earning praise and seeing and feeling their own progress all contribute to keeping children safe.

Note: that different provisions apply to children who acquire Looked After status because of a remand to local authority accommodation or youth detention accommodation. In relation to those children, please see [Remands to Local Authority Accommodation or to Youth Detention Accommodation Procedure, Care Planning for Young People on Remand or Youth Detention Accommodation](#).

Related Chapters

[Children and Young People Aged 0-25 with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Procedure](#)

[Safeguarding Children with a Social Worker, Looked After Children and Previously looked After Children at School](#) (Safeguarding Children Partnership Procedures)

Amendment

In January 2024, this chapter replaced "Education of Looked After and Previously Looked After Children" and should be re-read.

1. Key Responsibilities of Professionals and Carers

Enabling children with a social worker, children who are Looked After and Previously Looked After requires a commitment to working together. It is important to know what your role is and the roles of others.

This is a quick and brief guide to each professional's main responsibilities. More detail is set out in the main sections below.

Carers:

- To support the child and take an active interest in their educational progress;
- Try to ensure the child is 'ready' for school i.e. not tired, wearing school uniform etc.
- Attend PEP meetings and parents' evening with school staff;
- Inform the school of any problems or illness;
- Inform school if the child goes missing;
- Inform the social worker if there are concerns about the child's behaviour e.g. drug or alcohol abuse, going missing, mixing with unsuitable people.

Directors of Children's Services and Lead Members for Children's Services should ensure:

- Schools attended by Looked After and previously looked After children are registered;
- Closing the attainment and progress gap between Looked After and Previously Looked After Children and their peers;
- Looked After and Previously Looked After Children have access to a suitable range of high-quality education placement options;

- Virtual School Heads (VSHs) are in place and have the resources, time, training and support they need to discharge the duty effectively;
- The authority's Children in Care Council (CiCC) regularly addresses the educational experiences raised by Looked After and Previously Looked After Children.

The Virtual School Head (VSH) should:

- Ensure that arrangements are in place to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of the authority's Looked After Children, including those placed out-of-authority.
- Ensure the educational attainment and progress of children who are Looked After by the local authority is monitored and evaluated as if those children attended a single school.
- Create and ensure there is a culture of commitment to promoting the highest possible educational outcomes for unaccompanied children or child victims of modern slavery.

For Looked After Children the VSH should:

- Ensure that the status of the child and their entitlement to support is made clear to all the professionals supporting that child;
- Maintain an up-to-date roll of its Looked After Children who are in school or college settings and gather information about their education placement, attendance and educational progress;
- Inform headteachers and Designated Teachers in schools if they have a child on roll who is a Looked After Child;
- Ensure that social workers, Designated Teachers and schools, carers and IROs understand their role and responsibilities in initiating, developing, reviewing and updating the child's PEP and how they help meet the needs identified in that PEP;
- Ensure that PEPs are up-to-date, effective and high quality with a focus on outcomes and that all Looked After Children, wherever they are placed, whether in school or not, have a PEP;
- Ensure that drift or delay in providing suitable educational provision is avoided;
- Ensure that the educational achievement of Looked After Children is seen as a priority by everyone who has responsibilities for promoting their welfare;
- Regularly report on the attainment of Looked After Children through the authority's corporate parenting structures.
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For Previously Looked After Children the VSH should ensure:

- They promote their educational achievement through the provision of information and advice to their parents, educators and others who the VSH considers necessary;
- With the Director they establish the extent of their offer to parents or those with Parental Responsibility;
- The child is eligible for support by asking the child's parents or, those who have Parental Responsibility, for evidence of their Previously Looked After status;
- They respond to requests for advice and information - e.g. advice on school admissions in their area and signpost them to other services that can offer support and advice;
- They 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;
- They develop/build on existing good working relationships with Designated Teachers for Previously Looked After Children in their area;
- They improve awareness of the vulnerability and needs of Previously Looked After Children by 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. This should include promoting good practice on identifying and meeting their needs, and guidance on effective use of the Pupil Premium+.

Social Worker:

- As soon as a child becomes Looked After (if not before), the child's social worker must notify the education service where the child is placed;
- If the child is known to have an Education, Health and Care Plan or to be under assessment, the social worker should ensure the relevant SEN adviser is informed;

- The child's social worker must also inform the Designated Teacher at the child's school within 48 hours of the child becoming Looked After and a Personal Education Plan meeting arranged. Regular liaison should then be maintained.

Head Teacher:

- Ensure that Pupil Premium+ is spent in accordance with its stated aims.

Designated Teacher:

- The Designated Teacher leads on how the child's PEP is developed and used in school to make sure the child's progress towards education targets is monitored;
- The Designated Teacher normally has overall responsibility for leading the process of target setting and monitoring for Looked After children in school;
- They are the 'go to' member of staff for all questions regarding the safeguarding of all children in the school.

2. Duty to promote the educational achievement of looked after and previously looked after children

Under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) schools and colleges that are public bodies have a general duty to have regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity between different groups and to foster good relations between different groups. The duty applies to all protected characteristics and means that whenever significant decisions are being made or policies developed, thought must be given to the equality implications such as, for example, the elimination of sexual violence and sexual harassment. Looked After Children may be classed as having protected characteristics as a result of disability, age, religious beliefs, sexual orientation and/or race.

2.1 Promoting the Education of Children with a Social Worker, Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children

Under section 22 (3A) and 23ZZA of the Children Act 1989 (as amended by section 4 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017), local authorities have a specific duty to promote the educational achievement of Looked After, Eligible and Previously Looked After Children. Section 99 of the Children and Families Act 2014 imposes a requirement for an officer to be appointed to discharge this duty – sometimes referred to as a 'Virtual School Head' ('VSH').

In addition the VSH has a strategic role in improving outcomes for all children who have, or have had, a social worker by, for example:

- Enhancing partnerships between education settings and the local authority so agencies can work together;
- Identify the needs of the cohort and addressing barriers to poor educational outcomes and ensure pupils make educational progress;
- Offering advice and support to key professionals.

2.2 Promoting the Educational Achievement of Previously Looked After Children

Previously Looked After Children are those children who are no longer Looked After in England and Wales because they are:

- The subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order which includes arrangements relating to with whom the child is to live, or when the child is to live with any person, or has been adopted from 'state care' outside England and Wales.
- (A child is in 'state care' outside England and Wales if they are in the care of, or accommodated by, a public authority, a religious organisation or any other organisation the sole or main purpose of which is to benefit society).

Local authorities have a duty under section 23ZZA of the Children Act 1989 (inserted by section 4 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017) to promote the educational achievement of Previously Looked After Children in their area by providing information and advice to:

- Any person who has Parental Responsibility for the child;
- Providers of funded early years education, Designated Teachers for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children in maintained schools and academies; and

- Any other person the authority considers appropriate for promoting the educational achievement of relevant children.

The duty applies to children who are in early years' provision (secured by the local authority under section 7(1) of the Childcare Act 2006) and continues throughout the compulsory years of education where the child is in provision funded in part or in full by the state.

Foster carers, supported accommodation staff/hosts and residential staff must be ambitious for children and support children to attend and do well in their education.

There must be effective liaison with the school/college and the Virtual School Head.

2.3 Promoting the Educational Achievement of Children who Have, or Have Had, a Social Worker

The Children in Need Review (see [Promoting the education of children with a social worker](#)) identified that approximately one in ten children have needed a social worker and such children are present in the vast majority of schools. This cohort of children do worse than their peers at every stage of their education and are vastly less likely to go on to further or higher education than their peers. They are more likely to be persistently absent from school and also much more likely to be permanently excluded. Many of these children go on to become Looked After. For many, the Covid 19 pandemic will have increased some of the existing barriers that they faced in education across attendance, learning, behaviour and mental health and wellbeing.

Using their knowledge and expertise from promoting the educational outcomes of Looked After and Previously Looked After children, Virtual School Heads will become the strategic leader who champions the educational attendance, attainment and progress of children with a social worker. This non-statutory responsibility for promoting the educational outcomes of children with a social worker will be in addition to the existing statutory duties for Looked After and Previously Looked After children.

This means that the Virtual School Head will help to:

- Make visible the disadvantages that children with a social worker can experience, enhancing partnerships between education settings and local authorities to help all agencies hold high aspirations for these children;
- Promote practice that supports children's engagement in education, recognising that attending an education setting can be an important factor in helping to keep children safe from harm;
- Level up children's outcomes and narrow the attainment gap so every child can reach their potential. This will include helping to make sure that children with a social worker benefit from support to recover from the impact of COVID-19.

2.4 Role of the Local Authority, Virtual School Head (VSH), and School for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children

Governing bodies of schools and colleges must appoint a Designated Teacher to promote the educational achievement of Looked After and Previously Looked After Children and ensure that this person has appropriate training.

An up-to-date list of Designated Teachers should be maintained to assist with communications and assist other authorities that have placed children within the authority.

As leaders responsible for ensuring that the local authority discharges its duty to promote the educational achievement of their Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children, Directors of Children's Services and Lead Members for Children's Services should ensure that:

- Schools attended by Looked After and previously looked After children are registered. OFSTED's Chief Inspector has stressed the importance of ensuring that all placements of Looked After Children are made with due diligence. Before any placement the local authority should carry out all necessary checks to make certain that schools are registered with the Department for Education;
- Closing the attainment and progress gap between Looked After and Previously Looked After Children and their peers and creating a culture of high aspirations for them is a top priority;

- Looked After and Previously Looked After Children have access to a suitable range of high-quality education placement options and that commissioning services for them takes account of the duty to promote their educational achievement;
- VSHs are in place and have the resources, time, training and support they need to discharge the duty effectively;
- VSHs have robust procedures in place to monitor the attendance and educational progress of the children their authority looks after;
- The authority's Children in Care Council (CiCC) regularly addresses the educational experiences raised by Looked After and Previously Looked After Children and is able to respond effectively to such issues.

The Virtual School Head should be the lead responsible officer for ensuring that arrangements are in place to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of the authority's Looked After Children, including those placed out-of-authority.

VSHs should ensure the educational attainment and progress of children who are Looked After by the local authority is monitored and evaluated as if those children attended a single school.

For details of the key responsibilities of the VSH, see [Section 1.2, Virtual School Head \(VSH\)](#).

However, it is important to note that the local authority is no longer the corporate parent for Previously Looked After Children. Any intervention in the education of a Previously Looked After Child must be with the agreement of the person(s) who have Parental Responsibility for the child. They, like all parents, are responsible for overseeing their child's progress in education.

Social workers, Virtual School Heads and Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs), school admission officers and Special Educational Needs departments should work together to ensure that - except in an emergency - appropriate education provision for a child is arranged at the same time as a care placement.

Governing bodies should ensure that appropriate staff have the information they need in relation to a child's Looked After legal status. The Designated Safeguarding Lead, through the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children, should have details of the child's social worker and the name of the Virtual School Head.

A Previously Looked After Child potentially remains vulnerable and all staff should have the skills, knowledge and understanding to keep Previously Looked After Children safe. When dealing with Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children, it is important that all agencies work together and prompt action is taken on concerns to safeguard these children, who are a particularly vulnerable group.

The Virtual School Head is integral to ensuring that local authorities discharge their duty to provide suitable advice and information for the purpose of promoting the educational achievement of Previously Looked After Children. They can also undertake any activity they consider appropriate where that activity will promote the educational achievement of such children in their area. The VSH should promote a culture that takes account of the child's views according to age and understanding in identifying and meeting their educational needs.

For children who have or have had a social worker the VSH should particularly focus on issues such as: attendance, learning and mental health and wellbeing.

They will do this by:

- Enhancing partnerships between education settings and the local authority so agencies can work together;
- Identifying the needs of the cohort and addressing barriers to poor educational outcomes to ensure pupils make educational progress;
- Offering advice and support to key professionals to help children make progress, including through increasing their confidence in using evidence-based interventions.

Virtual School Heads are **not** being asked to:

- Work with individual children and their families - including tracking and monitoring educational progress of individual children or providing academic or other interventions;
- Respond to requests from parents or carers to offer advice, intervention and support in relation to individual children with a social worker;

- Take responsibility for children with Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) who do not require or need a social worker.

3. The personal education plan (PEP) for looked after children

The Personal Education Plan (PEP) allows the social worker, residential staff/carer and Designated Teacher at the child's school or, where the child has no school place, the education service, in conjunction with the child, to set out what needs to happen to meet the educational needs of the child.

The Personal Education Plan should be initiated as part of the Care Plan before the child becomes Looked After (or within 10 working days in the case of an emergency placement), and be available for the first Looked After Review meeting and all subsequent Looked After Reviews.

All Looked After Children must have a Care Plan, of which the PEP is an integral part. The PEP (pre-school age to 18) should be initiated as part of the Care Plan. It provides essential information to ensure that appropriate support is in place to enable the child to achieve the targets set. It is also a record of the child's leisure interests and educational achievement.

The Designated Teacher leads on how the PEP is developed and used in school to make sure the child's progress towards education targets is monitored, with the Virtual School Head having a quality assurance role.

All of those involved in the PEP process at all stages should involve the child (according to understanding and ability) and, where appropriate, the child's parent/carer and/or relevant family member.

The PEP is an evolving record, and arrangements for the flow of information to develop, review and update the PEP should be in place to ensure the VSH, Designated Teacher, carer and, where appropriate, child and parent have a copy of the latest version of the document. Virtual School Heads should make arrangements for PEPs to be reviewed each school term.

PEPs should:

- Identify developmental and educational needs in relation to skills, knowledge, subject areas and experiences;
- Set short and long-term educational attainment targets agreed in partnership with the child and the carer where appropriate;
- Include a record of planned actions, including milestones on homework, extra tuition and study support, that the school and others will take to promote the educational achievement of the child, based on an assessment of their educational needs;
- Include information on how the child's progress is to be rigorously monitored;
- Record details of specific interventions and targeted support that will be used to make sure personal education targets are met, especially at the end of Key Stage 2 in relation to English and Mathematics, and at Key Stage 4 in achieving success in public examinations;
- Say what will happen, or is already happening, to put in place any additional support which may be required - e.g. possible action to support special educational needs involving the SENCO, educational psychologist, or local authority education services (information contained within a EHC plan does not have to be duplicated in the PEP, a reference is sufficient as long as the plans work together to meet overall needs);
- Set out information on what will happen or is already happening to identify and support any mental health needs relevant to the child's education;
- Set out how a child's aspiration and self-confidence is being nurtured, especially in consideration of longer-term goals towards further and higher education, work experience and career plans. Discussions about longer-term goals should start early and ideally well before Year 9 (age 13-14) at school. High aspirations are crucial to successful planning for the future. They should focus on the young person's strengths and capabilities and the outcomes they want to achieve;
- Include the child's views on how they see they have progressed and what support they consider to be most effective;
- Be a record of the child's academic achievements and participation in the wider activities of the school and other out of school learning activities (e.g. sporting, personal development);

- Provide information which helps all who are supporting the child's educational achievement to understand what works for them, helping to substitute for the role that parents might otherwise provide; and
- Have clear accountability in terms of who within the school is responsible for making the actions identified in the plan happen.
-

The Designated Teacher would normally have overall responsibility for leading the process of target-setting for Looked After children in school, should monitor and track how their attainment progresses, and ensure that identified actions are put in place. The Designated Teacher will help the school and the local authority that looks after the child to decide what arrangements work best in the development and review of the PEP.

In addition, the PEP should have:

- An up-to-date and accurate chronology of education and training history which provides a record of the child's educational experience and progress in terms of [National Curriculum Assessments](#), including information about educational institutions attended and the reasons for leaving, attendance and conduct record, academic and other achievements, any special educational needs, an indication of the extent to which the child's education has been disrupted before entering care or accommodation;
- A clear statement clarifying existing arrangements for education and training, including details of any special educational provision and any other provision to meet the child's educational or training needs and promote educational achievement;
- A description of any planned changes to existing arrangements and provision to minimise disruption;
- A description of the child's leisure interests;
- A description of the role of the appropriate person and any other person who cares for the child in promoting the child's educational achievements and leisure interests;
- A description of how the Pupil Premium is assisting the child's progress and applications for bursaries should be discussed as part of PEP Meetings;
- Details of who will take the plan forward, with timescales for action and review are an essential aspect of all PEP planning.

Unaccompanied Migrant Children

- Unaccompanied migrant children looked after by a local authority are entitled to the same local authority support as any other Looked After Child: to have a safe and stable placement; to receive the care that they need to thrive; and the support they need to fulfil their educational and other outcomes. Some unaccompanied children who have recently arrived in the country may never have had access to education before;
- Appropriate education for unaccompanied children may include a period in a setting where their full educational needs can be assessed and integrated into the Personal Education Plan (PEP). They may need time to be prepared for and then become used to formal education, and their initial educational outcomes may include cultural orientation and life skills appropriate to their age. Virtual School Heads, Independent Reviewing Officers, school admission officers and Special Educational Needs departments should work together to ensure that appropriate education provision for the child is arranged at the same time as a placement;
- The local authority should ensure robust procedures are in place to monitor educational progress. This includes securing a culture of commitment to promoting the highest possible educational outcomes for unaccompanied children or child victims of modern slavery. Achieving and implementing the above should be monitored by a senior manager, such as the VSH, who is responsible for making sure their local authority promotes the educational achievement of its Looked After and Previously Looked After Children.

Monitoring and Reviewing the PEP in School

Designated Teachers should work closely with other staff in school to make sure the child's progress is rigorously monitored and evaluated. They should be able to:

- Judge whether the teaching and learning and intervention strategies being used are working to support achievement and wellbeing; and
- Know whether the young person is likely to meet the attainment targets in their PEP.

If the young person is not on track to meet targets, the Designated Teacher should be instrumental in agreeing the best way forward with them to make progress and ensure that this is reflected in the PEP.

A child's Care Plan is reviewed regularly by the authority that looks after them, the first being within 20 working days of being Accommodated. The Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) will ask about the child's educational progress as part of the overall Care Plan review and should have access to the most up-to-date PEP (see [Looked After Reviews Procedure](#)).

So that there can be an informed discussion at the statutory review of the Care Plan about the child's progress in school, the Designated Teacher is responsible for ensuring that:

- They review the PEP before the statutory review of the Care Plan, it is up-to-date and contains any new information since the last PEP review, including whether agreed provision is being delivered;
- The PEP is clear about what has or has not been taken forward, noting what resources may be required to further support the child and from where these may be sourced; and
- They pass the updated PEP to the child's social worker and VSH ahead of the statutory review of the Care Plan.

The school and the local authority which looks after the child have a shared responsibility for helping Looked After Children to achieve and enjoy. The content, implementation and review of the PEP enable both the school and local authority to discuss how they can help achieve this. The PEP review should be done through a meeting involving the social worker, the young person, carers and others, such as the VSH.

The PEP must include the contact details of the Virtual School Head for the authority that looks after the child.

4. Avoidance of Disruption in Education

The Nominated Officer must approve of any change of placement affecting a child in Key Stage 4, except in an emergency/where the placement is terminated because of an immediate risk of serious harm to the child or to protect others from serious injury.

In those circumstances, the local authority must make appropriate arrangements to promote the child's educational achievement as soon as reasonably practicable.

- The child's wishes and feelings have been ascertained and given due consideration;
- The wishes and feelings of the parent(s) have been ascertained where the child is accommodated (where possible) and where appropriate where the child is subject to a Care Order;
- The educational provision will promote educational achievement and is consistent with the PEP;
- The Independent Reviewing Officer has been consulted;
- The Designated Teacher at the child's school has been consulted.

Other than in Key Stage 4, where the local authority proposes making any change to the child's placement that would have the effect of disrupting the arrangements made for education and training, they must ensure that other arrangements are made for education or training that meet the child's needs and are consistent with the PEP.

5. When a Children First becomes Looked After

5.1 Notification

As soon as a child becomes Looked After (if not before), the child's social worker must notify the education service where the child is placed.

If the child is known to have an Education, Health and Care Plan or to be under assessment, the social worker should ensure the relevant SEN adviser is informed.

The child's social worker must also inform the Designated Teacher at the child's school within 48 hours of the child becoming Looked After and a Personal Education Plan meeting arranged. Regular liaison should then be maintained.

5.2 Pupil Premium Plus Funding

All Looked After and Previously Looked After Children are eligible for PP+ funding. This is additional funding provided to help improve the attainment of Looked After and Previously Looked After Children and close the attainment gap between this group and their peers. It is not a personal budget for individual children. The extra funding provided by the PP+ reflects the significant additional barriers faced by Looked After and Previously Looked After Children. The Designated Teacher has an important role in ensuring the specific needs of Looked After and Previously Looked After Children are understood by the school's staff and reflected in how the school uses PP+ to support these children.

The PP+ for Looked After Children is managed by the VSH. However, the PP+ for Previously Looked After Children is managed by the school.

The PP+ is a key component in ensuring resources are available to support the child's Personal Education Plan and the plan should clarify what the support is and how it will be delivered.

5.3 The First Personal Education Plan

The first PEP should be in place as part of a Care Plan within 10 working days of a child becoming Looked After.

The child's social worker should arrange a meeting to draw up the first PEP which should include the Designated Teacher at the school (where the child has a school place), the residential staff/carers and any other relevant professionals; and should involve the child and parents as far as is appropriate and possible.

Where the child is excluded from school, the Head Teacher should be invited.

Where the child has no school place, the relevant education officer should be invited and asked to assist in the search for a school place. The SEN adviser should also be asked to assist as appropriate.

The first PEP should:

- Identify the educational and social factors that may have caused or may cause in the future a detrimental effect on the child's educational achievement;
- Identify the support required to reduce the impact of these factors;
- Identify the child's immediate and priority needs and targets, (e.g. to maintain the current school place, make transport arrangements, find a new school, obtain short-term interim education);
- Incorporate any SEN Support Plan or other school-based plan;
- Identify a named person for the day-to-day management of the PEP and establish lines of communication between the staff/carers, school/education staff and social worker - the basis of a working partnership;
- Establish boundaries of confidentiality;
- Agree a date for the next PEP review meeting and how and when the next (full) PEP is going to be drawn up.

The completed PEP should be distributed to the child, parents, staff/carers and all others invited to the meeting. A copy should also be sent to the child's Independent Reviewing Officer.

N.B. The provision of education for pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans can only be changed if the child's plan has been amended at an annual review.

6. When a Child Moves to a New Local Authority

If a child is placed in the area of a different local authority but continues to attend the same school as before, the procedure outlined in [Section 5.3, The First Personal Education Plan](#) applies.

If the child is to be placed in the area of a different local authority and will need a new school, efforts to obtain a school place should (unless it is an emergency placement) begin well BEFORE they move to a new placement. The relevant

Education Officer and, if appropriate, the SEN adviser, should be provided with a full educational history and asked to assist in the search for a school place.

Whenever possible a child should not be moved to a new placement until they also have a school place.

Where the child does not have a school place - see [Section 9, When a Child has No School Place](#).

Pupils With Education, Health and Care Plans

Where a child has an education, health and Care Plan (previously a statement of special educational needs), the Plan must be transferred – see the [Children and Young People Aged 0-25 with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Procedure](#).

7. When a Child Needs or Joins a New School

The choice of school requires skilled working between relevant people. It should be based on a discussion between the child's social worker, their carers and, if appropriate, birth parents. The VSH should normally be consulted to avoid choosing a school that is unlikely to meet the child's needs. Looked After and Previously Looked After Children have been given the highest priority within school admission arrangements. VSHs, working with education settings, should implement Pupil Premium arrangements for Looked After Children.

The [School Admissions Code](#) provides that children being raised by family and friends carers under a Special Guardianship Order or Child Arrangements Order, who struggle to get a school place during the year, will be supported in finding one.

Schools judged by Ofsted to be 'good' or 'outstanding' should be prioritised for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children in need of a new school. Unless there are exceptional evidence-based reasons, Looked After Children should never be placed in a school judged by Ofsted to be 'inadequate'.

The child's wishes and feelings should be considered and the suitability of the education setting tested by arranging an informal visit with the child. (**Note:** for those children who have been Previously Looked After, the parents or those who have Parental Responsibility should receive information and advice regarding this, as they will make the decision as to which school the child will attend).

Changes of school should be minimised to avoid disruption to the child's education and should not take place in the middle of a school year or in years 10 and 11, unless this is unavoidable.

School details will need to be amended on the electronic record.

7.1 Notification

At least one member of staff in the school - the Designated Teacher or the Head Teacher - must be informed by the social worker within 48 hours that the child is Looked After and be provided with a copy of the child's current PEP.

Other members of staff who need to know should be identified at the PEP meeting, considering the child's wishes concerning confidentiality.

Where the child is a Previously Looked After Child, sharing of information regarding the child's status is an issue that should be discussed with the parent or person with Parental Responsibility, but impressing upon them the importance of sharing such information where it is assessed the child has educational needs because of being Previously Looked After, or where a previous school has supported the child on this basis.

7.2 Pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans

A change of school at any time needs the agreement of the relevant local education service maintaining the Education, Health and Care Plan. This needs to be planned for as early as possible as it can cause long delays.

The child's social worker should ensure that they are aware of the current position regarding the Plan, including any additional support provided and by whom.

7.3 The First PEP in a new school

A meeting should be held at the new school as soon as practicable.

A new or updated PEP should be in place within the first 20 days of a child joining a new school. Subsequent PEPs should correspond with the Looked After Review cycle.

The first PEP in a new school should:

- Identify the child's immediate and priority needs (e.g. English as an additional language, literacy support, behaviour management, mental health issues);
- Establish contact between residential staff/carers, school staff and social worker - the basis of a working partnership;
- Identify a named person for the day to day management of the PEP and agree who contacts whom about what;
- Establish boundaries of confidentiality;
- Share important information - perhaps including the Placement Plan;
- Clarify how PP+ will be used to support the child;
- Ensure records are forwarded from the previous school and/or carer;
- Agree a date for the next PEP review meeting and how and when the next full PEP is going to be drawn up (this needs to take account of the Looked After Review cycle because the PEP has to be ready before or at the Review; but also term dates, parents' evenings, school target setting days, reviews of the SEN Support Plans, annual reviews of Education, Health and Care Plans etc.).

The completed PEP should be distributed to those invited to the meeting and the child's Independent Reviewing Officer.

8. Celebrating a Child's Achievements

Children's educational (and other) achievements should be acknowledged at one or more of the following times: at Looked After Reviews; in the PEP, at school-based meetings; in school reports; and after exams.

Recording a Child's Achievements

A Looked After Child's educational attainments at Key Stages 1-3, GCSE, A Level and GNVQ should be recorded, including on the electronic record and in the PEP.

9. When a Child has No School Place

Finding a school place is primarily the social worker's responsibility but may be delegated to or shared with others.

9.1 PEPs

Children without a school place should still have an up-to-date PEP. It should address the child's immediate educational needs and the longer-term planning.

9.2 Children Placed within the local authority area

Where the child does not have a school place because one cannot be found, or because mainstream school is not appropriate to their needs, the child's social worker should notify and seek assistance from the education service (and the SEN adviser, in appropriate cases). The local education service should identify a school place within 20 working days at the latest; and should be asked to provide alternative education if a school place cannot be found immediately or is not appropriate.

9.3 Children Placed in a different local authority area

Where the child does not have a school place because one cannot be found, or the child has been placed at very short notice, the child's social worker should notify the education service in the area where the child is placed and request that a school be identified for the child as soon as possible. The assistance of the local education service (and the local SEN adviser if appropriate) should also be sought. Unless [Section 9.4, Pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans](#) applies, the education service local to the placement should identify a school place within 20 working days at the latest, and should be asked to provide alternative education if a school place cannot be found immediately or is not appropriate.

9.4 Pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans

Applications for school places for pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan should be made through the special needs section of the local education service maintaining the statement, not directly. This needs to be planned for as early as possible as it can cause long delays.

See: [Children and Young People Aged 0-25 with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Procedure](#).

10. School Transport

To maintain continuity of school, those with responsibility for school transport should be approached to provide assistance with transport. A decision will be made considering the child's age and the distance from the child's address to the nearest suitable school.

11. Children and Young People with Medical Conditions

Governing bodies have a statutory duty to make arrangements to support pupils at school with medical conditions. The Designated Medical Officer can support schools with these duties. For more information see [Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions: Statutory Guidance for Governing Bodies of Maintained Schools and Proprietors of Academies in England](#).

12. Mental Health

Looked After and Previously Looked After Children are more likely to experience the challenge of social, emotional and mental health issues than their peers. For example, they may struggle with executive functioning skills, forming trusting relationships, social skills, managing strong feelings (e.g. shame, sadness, anxiety and anger), sensory processing difficulties, foetal alcohol syndrome and coping with transitions and change. This can impact on their behaviour and education.

Designated Teachers are not expected to be mental health experts; however, they have an important role in ensuring they and other school staff can identify signs of potential issues and understand where the school can draw on specialist services, such as Children and Young People's Mental Health Services (CYPMHS) and educational psychologists. In addition, many schools have an officer responsible for making links with mental health services, with whom Designated Teachers can work closely. Where such an officer is available, Designated Teachers should work with them, and the VSH to ensure that they, and other school staff, have the skills to:

- Identify signs of potential mental health issues, and know how to access further assessment and support where necessary, making full use of the SENCO and local authority support team where applicable; and

- Understand the impact trauma, attachment disorder and other mental health issues can have on Looked After and Previously Looked After Children and their ability to engage in learning. It is also important that the Designated Teacher and other school staff are aware that these issues will continue to affect Previously Looked After Children, and that the school will need to continue to respond appropriately to their needs.

13. Training for those involved in the care and education of looked after and previously looked after children

The VSH should ensure that there are appropriate arrangements in place to meet the training needs of those responsible for promoting the educational achievement of Looked After and Previously Looked After Children. This includes carers, social workers, Designated Teachers and IROs.

Such training, among other things, should include information about school admission arrangements; Special Educational Needs; attendance and exclusions; homework; choosing GCSE options; managing any challenging behaviour in relation to education settings; promoting positive educational and recreational activities and supporting children to be aspirational for their future education; training and employment, and the importance of listening to and taking account of the child's wishes and feelings about education and the PEP process.

The VSH should ensure that school governing bodies understand the importance of specific professional development for, as a minimum, their senior leaders and Designated Teachers in supporting the achievement of Looked After and Previously Looked After Children.

14. Information Sharing

VSHs should have access to a secure email account that enables them to exchange information securely with other VSHs in whose area they have placed children.

Arrangements for sharing reliable data must be in place, particularly in relation to the tracking and monitoring of attainment data and notifications of where children, including those placed out-of-authority, are being educated, and must set out:

- Who has access to what information and how the security of data will be ensured;
- How children 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 relevant local authority departments and schools;
- How relevant information about individual children is passed promptly between authorities, departments and schools when young people move. Relevant information includes the PEP, which as part of the Looked After Child's educational record should be transferred with them to the new school.

For further information regarding sharing of information, please see: [**Safeguarding Children with a Social Worker, Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children at School Procedure, Information Sharing and Managing the Child Protection File.**](#)

Further Information

Legislation, Statutory Guidance and Government Non-Statutory Guidance:

[**Keeping Children Safe in Education**](#)

[**Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years: Statutory Guidance for Organisations who work with and Support Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities**](#)

[**Guidance: Working Together to Improve School Attendance**](#)

[**Promoting the Education of Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children**](#)

[**Promoting the Education of Children with a Social Worker: Virtual School Head Role Extension**](#)

[**Designated Teacher for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children**](#)

Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions: Statutory Guidance for Governing Bodies of Maintained Schools and Proprietors of Academies in England

Statutory Guidance: Education for Children with Health Needs who Cannot Attend School

Guidance: Promoting and Supporting Mental Health and Wellbeing in Schools and Colleges

Guidance: Working Together to Improve School Attendance - guidance to help schools, academy trusts, governing bodies and local authorities maintain high levels of school attendance, including roles and responsibilities.