

Promoting Looked After Children's Education (PLACE) Panel Procedures

We, as professionals, need to change our viewpoint to that of the children and young people we serve so that the services we organise on their behalf are based on what works in their interests and leads to a better life for young people. As has been said before a mark of a civilised society is how well we treat our children and help them to shape and take part in our society. We have yet to reach that standard for children in the public care. Platt, 2003

Background

The poor educational attainment of looked after young people during and after care is well documented. However, recent statistical evidence shows that 41% of care leavers aged 16 or over gained at least 1 GCSE or GNVQ. The equivalent figure across the whole population is 90%. There is still a long way to go.

The Social Exclusion Unit, in their forthcoming report on the education of looked after children, consulted young people who had experience of being in care, and identified five key problems that must be tackled in order to improve educational outcomes for children in care and care leavers;

- Instability – frequent unplanned moves in care
- Too much time out of school
- Not enough help to catch up in their education and in schooling
- Insufficient support for education in school and outside school
- Insufficient help to overcome particular traumas (e.g. break up of parents).

Schools should designate teachers to act as a resource and advocate for young people in care and liaise with other services.

All looked after children should have a Personal Education Plan (PEP). These plans should "ensure access to services and support; contribute to stability, minimise disruption and broken schooling; signal particular and special needs; establish clear goals and act as a record of progress and achievement". (Platt, 2003)

But Personal Educational Plans will only work when agencies and services work effectively in partnership to deliver the contents of the plans. The PLACE panel is there to help this happen.

Which Cases should be brought to the PLACE Panel?

The role of the panel is to problem solve complex cases defined as follows:

- Looked after pupils who are the responsibility of Leicestershire SSD or who have been adopted, and
- There are difficulties in securing a school placement, or
- There are long term delays in providing full time provision, or
- There are non-attendance issues, or
- There has been a failure to secure education in an out county placement/school, or
- There is a serious risk of permanent exclusion from school

What will the PLACE Panel Do?

- Ensure that looked after children are not out of school (education) for more than 20-days
- Problem solve educational difficulties for Looked After Children
- Agree joint action plans with timescales and accountabilities for each case
- Have an overview of the most complex educational difficulties
- Inform strategic planning for Looked After Children from casework experience via the Education for Looked After Children Steering Group

Core Membership of the Group
Social Services

- Service Manager, Placements
- Child Care Operation Service Manager

Education

- Senior Education Officer, SEN and Inclusion
- Team Leader, LAC Education Support Team
- Principal Education Welfare Officer
- Deputy Service Manager, Access and Welfare

Co-opted Members

- Educational Psychologist
- Special Educational Needs Assessment Service Casework Officer
- Education Placement Representative

Meetings

The Panel will meet on the first Friday morning of each month (except August), from 9.00 - 12.00.

Most meetings will be at Bassett Street Social Services Office, South Wigston

Referral Process

Most referrals will come from social workers but some may come through education. Referrals (see referral form) should be received by Student Support Service, (☎ 0116 275 9150) 10 working days before a Panel meeting.

Each case will have a timed slot on the agenda of approximately 35 minutes. Minutes will be sent to case specific workers by following Friday. A maximum of three cases will be discussed in any one meeting. Each meeting will begin with a review of previous cases.