



Cheshire West & Chester Council

Virtual School

Growing aspirations to reach potential

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The role of the Virtual School for Previously Looked-After Children

The role of the VSH for Previously Looked-After Children

1. Should promote their educational achievement through the provision of information and advice to their parents, educators and others who the VSH considers necessary.
2. VSHs are not expected to monitor the educational progress of individual children or be held to account for their educational attainment.
3. 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.

What does the term Previously Looked After mean?

Previously Looked After refers to 3 groups who have left authority care on a court order:

- **Special Guardianship Order - SGO**
- **Child Arrangement Order- CAO**
- **Adoption Order- AO**

Funding

- **PP+ is available for all PLAC children from reception age to year 11 attending publicly funded schools in England who have left care on one of the three care orders**
- **To qualify PLAC must have had at least 24 hours in care and left on one of the three care orders**
- **Schools can access £2,345 per pupil each academic year**
- **This additional funding is to help raise the attainment of PLAC children and close the gap between them and their peers**
- **It is not a ring fenced budget**
- **Schools need to use the funding to meet the identified needs of this cohort**



How to access funding

- Funding is drawn down from the October census return
- Parents/ guardians need to self declare
- Schools will need to satisfy information is correct by asking for evidence
- This information is confidential and not to be passed on between primary and secondary without parents/ guardians permission



Do you know who this cohort is in your school?

How do you use the funding?

Is it pooled with disadvantaged PP funding and if so does it benefit both cohorts? Are the needs the same in both cohorts??

Is the need of the adopted child the same as your disadvantaged child?

Identifying Children Previously Looked After -GDPR

Parents/guardians need to self identify to school:

- The school cannot request this information directly but they can send out general communications to parents to come forward
- Once a child is identified as qualifying for claiming additional funds school claim direct from the DfE.
- This fund does not come to local authorities

When a child moves school:

- Their information regarding previous care status cannot be passed on to the new school without permission
- Parents/guardians will need to again self identify

Data from census return in CW&C maintained schools and academies for Autumn 2020.

There has been an increase in self declarations from parents and guardians, especially adoption parents in the past two years.

Rising from 377 to 530 known PLAC children attending CW&C maintained schools and academies.

Data from census returns in CW&C maintained schools and academies

Autumn Census Data 2020

Total PLAC know in borough 530

Code	Description of Post Looked After Arrangement (PLAA)	No. of Pupils
A	Ceased to be looked after through adoption	366
C	Ceased to be looked after through a child arrangement order (CAO)	26
G	Ceased to be looked after through a special guardianship order (SGO)	128
R	Ceased to be looked after through a residence order (RO)	10



PP, PP+ and PLAC funding clarification



Pupil Premium

To support the additional needs of pupils within a school. The numbers of children accessing free school meals is used as an indicator of levels of deprivation in the school to inform the funding formula.

Pupil Premium Plus

Grant for CIC, paid to the local authority and managed by Virtual School Head.

An individual discretionary grant for the child to be used to 'close the gap' and raise attainment of this cohort of children so they achieve in school in relation to their peers. Applied for via the PEP.

PLAC Funding

For children who have been in care for at least 24 hours and now left care on SGO, AO or CAO. Paid to schools per number of PLAC declared on school census return by D OF E . Not given to independent schools/ private schools. Now drawn down from October census return.

Designated Teacher for Previously Looked After Children

All schools must now have in place a Designated teacher to promote education of CIC and PLAC.

For previously looked after children, the role of the DT includes:

- Ensuring that there are no barriers to school admission
- Tracking progress in relation to the pupil's starting point and in relation to their peers
- Monitoring exclusions to ensure this group is not over represented in this regard
- Ensuring that school policies are sensitive to the needs of these pupils, particularly behaviour and exclusions policies
- Monitor the impact of Pupil Premium Plus (PLAC funding) in supporting educational achievement
- The DT should ensure that other staff members have an understanding of the specific needs of Previously Looked After children. For example, by disseminating knowledge gained during training.

The Role of the Governing Body (Maintained) or Proprietors (Academies)

All schools must appoint a governor to promote and oversee the education of CIC and PLAC

- Governing bodies or proprietors must ensure that their school has a DT for Previously Looked After children and this person is suitably qualified for this role.
- Make sure DT has time to carry out their duties.
- Hold school to account on how they support PLAC and how PLAC funding is used.

Some examples of good practice shared by schools

- PLAC funding pooled in a large secondary school to fund an extra members of pastoral staff to assist PLAC pupils who need extra support in terms of their executive functioning skills, a morning meet and greet, 'time in' etc
- PLAC funding used to run sensory circuits to aid sensory needs
- Purchase of a variety of story books to share with class to normalise different family structures
- Funding used to provide therapy
- CPD training for whole school staff around attachment and trauma
- Nurture group or setting up a nurture nest or safe space
- Social interventions such as circle of friends
- Academic Interventions such as pre learning, tutoring, small group teaching
- To provide a mentor
- To fund an extra curricular activity which will boost esteem and raise resilience.

Support for PLAC

Adoptive families living in CW&C can access support via the agency their child was adopted from. After three years the support then falls to the regional adoption agency in the area they live, in Cheshire West this is Together for Adoption.

TFA organises training events, support groups and families can access support from their adoption support team if needed which can lead to assessment of needs and funding for specialised services.

If a family are struggling please remind them of this service:

Together for Adoption 01942 487272 email: PA Support@wigan.gov.uk

Details are also on Virtual School website



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and Chester



Support for Special Guardians

- **New support team will be in place in January 2022**
 - **Until then assess for support is via the front door**
- **SGO Support Team will be part of the Connected People's Team**
 - **SGO plans are in place until the young person reaches 18**
- **Yearly reviews of SG with financial support to help with early intervention and maintain contact**
- **As with adoptive parents SG can access support fund if assessment of needs warrants this**



Support for Staff in School

Remember your own well being is important!

Staff in CW&C schools working with PLA young children can access free consultations from the Virtual School person centred therapist: Anke Jones.

This could take the form of reflection time or discussing strategies to support PLA young people in a trauma informed way.

If you wish to access this service then please email Alison Ismail to discuss your referral.

Reflections on education from families and young people in CWA&C

Young person aged 17, adopted –

"I wish I'd had a support group in my school for adopted teenagers as I always felt different and wanted to connect with others who had had the same experiences as me."

Reflections on education from families and young people in CWA&C

Special guardian

"I find the regular meetings with school to be incredibly helpful so that we all work as a team around my child. Working in partnership has really helped at home and what is working at school and vice versa at home is then harnessed"

Reflections on education from families and young people in CWA&C

Adoptive parent

"Getting my child dressed and ready for school is a major expedition every morning. It so helpful now that the school are more flexible on start times and that pastoral support are there to greet my child into school, this is really helping with their separation anxiety."

Reflections on education from families and young people in CWA&C

Special guardian

“Friendships are so difficult for my granddaughter, she finds it hard to trust and needs to control and then friends give up on her because she can be so demanding. Unstructured times at school are when situations arise and then we struggle to get her to go back in the next day. It is like a never ending cycle but causes so much stress at home.”

Reflections on education from families and young people in CWA&C

Adopted teen

“I found it hard to concentrate in school as I worried that my mum will be there at the end of the day to pick me up. I couldn’t control the fear as I had been left alone in the past – it just started to take hold of me and I could not think about anything else after lunchtime.”

Reflections on education from families and young people in CWA&C

Special guardian

“I never expected to have to parent again at my age. School has changed so much and I need help to understand how to help my son access things like homework. Apps never mind the homework.”

Reflections on education from families and young people in CWA&C

Adoptive parent

“My daughter is like a different person in school as she tries really hard to self regulate in the school day but when she comes home it is a different story. She has spent all day avoiding the radar, that in the evening she is exhausted and needs therapeutic parenting which means homework time is low priority.”

Reflections on education from families and young people in CWA&C

Adoptive dads

“School are really supportive and have really helped us. Parenting two children is so new to us and we didn't know anything about accessing school places, DOJOS, how to plait hair never mind phonics!”

What can help them:

- Ensure good communication
- Provide a key contact in school
- Plan together to meet the different needs
- Celebrate what's working
- Understand the importance of taking care of yourself
- Good team work
- Access good supervision from an empathetic professional
- Be aware of your own needs – **as educational professionals we need to work on this skill!!!**

A Case Study of Multi Partnership Working

Key points that made it successful:

- Partnership working with social care, adoption social worker, foster carer and Virtual Schools
- Partnership working with schools in and out of borough
- Recognised need for timely support for children and PP+ utilised effectively
- Planned move to minimise disruption to school but also support new parents with three young children
- SAL intervention not delayed due to moves
- Key person for contact for new parents and relationship building for children
- Use of outdoor learning to aid regulation and well being
- PLAC support in place after they left care and Virtual School in new authority to support

Thank you for listening.

I hope you found some of this information useful.

Please note this presentation and the information it contains will be available on the Virtual School website but feel free to contact me if you have any further questions.

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