



**Guidance for Schools and Children's Services Networks**

**WORKING TOGETHER TO  
SUPPORT CHILDREN &  
YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE  
LOOKED AFTER**



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## Introduction

These guidelines have been developed collaboratively through partnership working between representatives of Aberdeenshire Education Learning & Leisure Service, Housing & Social Work Service and other services/agencies. They are set in the context of the **Pathways to Policy** framework and have drawn upon national guidance and local expertise.

Aberdeenshire Education, Learning & Leisure Service works collaboratively with parents, carers, partners in Health and Social Work and voluntary agencies to provide appropriate support for all children and young people, including those who are Looked After. The purpose of this document is to improve the practice of all practitioners, teachers and managers, to ensure a consistent approach and improved outcomes for **ALL** Looked After children.

**The Additional Support for Learning (ASfL) Act (2004)** clearly states that being Looked After is an additional support need and therefore it is the responsibility of **ALL** staff to ensure **ALL** Looked After children are well supported.

**ALL** children, unless exceptional circumstances apply, should be educated in their local children's services network (CSN). Each child should be encouraged to develop so that he or she may achieve success and become a responsible citizen equipped for the transition to adult life. To achieve this, schools should provide a safe and a supportive environment in which pupils can learn and develop. Within this environment, pupils will receive opportunities, encouragement and direction to make the most of their abilities, and to develop personally and socially.

There have been a significant number of reports in Scotland which comment on the educational progress of Looked After children. These include:

**Learning with Care (2001)**

**Count Us In (2008)**

**Getting it Right for Every Child (2006)**

**Core Tasks for Designated Managers (2008)**

**How Good Is Our School? (2006)**

**These Are Our Bairns (2008)**

**Extraordinary Lives (2006)**

**Looked After Children Training DVD (2009)**

**Looked After Children and Young People: We Can and Must Do Better (2007)**

**Improving the Education of Looked After Children (A guide for local authorities and service providers) (2009)**

Evidence consistently indicates that Looked After children are more likely to be excluded, be placed in non-mainstream settings and be in part-time education.

For many, attending school at all may be a challenge and events such as becoming Looked After, moving placement or even a change of social worker may cause significant disruption to important relationships and this can be detrimental to their well-being and educational achievement.

Supporting transitions is also very important. Effective post school multi-agency planning should take account of any necessary practical assistance which a Looked After young person may require.

Young people who are Looked After often have access to and use supports specifically provided for them when they cease to be Looked After between the ages of 16 to 21. The planning for this commences prior to the young person ceasing to be Looked After and, as such, all involved in the young person's life whilst Looked After should contribute to the forward planning and supports to be offered when they are no longer Looked After.

## Who are our Looked After children and young people?

The majority of children and young people who become Looked After normally do so following a decision by a Children's Panel who place a Supervision Requirement on a child or young person under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. The most common routes by which a child or young person can become Looked After are when:

- a child or young person remains at home, under Section 70 (1) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, frequently referred to as Looked After at home.

or

- a child or young person becomes Looked After and Accommodated i.e. away from their normal place of residence, under Section 70 (3) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. If this is the case they will become part of the Looked After Children system which requires regular review by the Local Authority of the child or young person's care, including their current location, care plan, education, health and other areas.

or

- a child or young person can also be Looked After and Accommodated when they are provided with accommodation by the Local Authority under Section 25 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, which is sometimes referred to as a 'voluntary agreement'.

or

- a child or young person is the subject of a Permanence Order, Section 80 of the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act.

Children and young people Looked After away from home may be accommodated in:

- kinship care, living with family or close friends
- foster care, provided by local authority carers or an independent foster care provider
- residential care, in a local authority home or private/independent children's home or residential school
- secure accommodation

In Aberdeenshire there are in excess of 500 Looked After children and young people at any time, with the trend upward.

Of these, around:

- 33% may be Looked After at home
- 29% may be in foster care
- 21% may be in kinship care
- 17% may be in residential, secure or other specialist care, including placements outside Aberdeenshire

# Corporate Parenting and our responsibilities

## The Role of Corporate Parent

It is widely recognised that the role of the Corporate Parent is crucial in improving outcomes for Looked After children. Being an effective Corporate Parent means:

- accepting responsibility for Looked After children
- making their needs a priority
- ensuring appropriate outcomes in our role as 'parent'

*These Are Our Bairns, 2008*

Collectively, all those working for Aberdeenshire Council have a role as a Corporate Parent and therefore have responsibilities as if they were the parent of a Looked After child. These responsibilities are shared by all those in the public and voluntary sector, including the Police and NHS Boards. The key issues for teachers are outlined in **Appendix 1**.

Five key factors important in achieving success have been identified:

- having people in your life who care about you
- experiencing stability
- being given high expectations
- receiving encouragement and support
- being able to participate and achieve

*Celebrating Success: What helps Looked After children succeed, 2006*

These apply to all aspects of Looked After children's lives, including school.

## Schools' Responsibilities

All schools must have a designated senior manager with specific responsibility for Looked After children and young people. This person holds a co-ordinating brief in relation to all the Looked After children and young people in their establishment. A list of designated senior managers is available on Arcadia.

## Key Tasks Include:

- identifying all Looked After children and young people and making themselves known to the children and young people.
- working with colleagues to raise awareness of the needs, issues, challenges and experiences of Looked After children, individually and collectively as appropriate.
- fostering a culture in which children and young people who are Looked After can achieve the same as their non-Looked After peers.
- promoting positive experiences and outcomes and having high expectations whilst recognising and addressing their additional support needs.
- making sure that any decisions to exclude or remove the young person from their peers, takes account of the individual circumstances of the child.
- measuring effectiveness through review, tracking and monitoring systems of outcomes for individuals and identifying any trends.
- representing the views of **ALL** Looked After children and young people.

- reviewing practice and ensuring development opportunities are built in, ensuring:
  - stability
  - equality of opportunity with peer group
  - all needs are met within a positive ethos
  - parental involvement includes the Corporate Parent
  - all policies make specific reference to Looked After children
  - adequate access to targeted support
  - well being

For further information and guidance please see the Scottish Government publications ***Core Tasks for Designated Managers*** and ***These are Our Bairns***. The key issues for designated managers are outlined in ***Appendix 2***.

## Looked After Children Reviews

Reviews are the mechanism through which the Local Authority undertakes its statutory obligation to establish, examine, confirm or modify Care Plans for children who are Looked After and accommodated by the Local Authority. They are part of a continuous process of planning for children in such circumstances and are therefore intended to assist and complement other decision-making forums.

Looked After Children Reviews (LAC Reviews) are convened by the Social Work Service who will issue invitations and requests for reports to partner agencies who are working with the child or young person. For further information please refer to the ***Procedures for Looked After Child Reviews*** found in the Children's Services section of Social Work on Arcadia.

Present at LAC Reviews there will be representatives from the Education Learning & Leisure Service, Housing & Social Work Services and other relevant agencies. Normally, the Education representative will be a member of the school staff. At these meetings issues relevant to the care and education of the child will be discussed. Recommendations from LAC Reviews may be presented to the Children's Hearing if relevant to the Supervision Requirement.

As a result of a LAC Review, further discussion to plan for learning will be essential at school level. This process should be supported by discussion between pupil, teachers, parents/carers and other relevant staff/workers. The process of personal learning planning increases pupil motivation to learn, encourages independence, participation and partnership working. Refer to ***Pathways to Policy Book 3, Planning for Learning*** for further advice on planning, including guidance on Individualised Educational Programmes (IEPs) and Co-ordinated Support Plans (CSPs).

Transport Arrangements to and from school should also be discussed and a funding recommendation agreed. This should be recorded on the form, ***Transport Funding Proposal for Looked After Children (Appendix 3)*** and passed to the relevant Head Teacher or Housing & Social Work Office.

Any amendment to the transport arrangements requires to be authorised by an Education Head of Service through the completion of a PTU 500 (4).



## Transport arrangements

This section of the policy deals with the agreement of and funding arrangements for transport for Looked After children and young people living away from home.

Becoming 'Looked After' may be a very traumatic experience for a child and therefore, initially, continuing education at his/her own school may be reassuring.

### Procedure for putting transport arrangements in place

#### a) Where a child remains at his/her own school and requires transport in line with policy

The school should complete the PTU 500 (4) form for transport (**Appendix 4**) and then forward it to their Quality Improvement Officer (QIO). If the QIO recommends that the transport should be put in place, s/he will forward the request to the Head of Service for authorisation who will, in turn, forward it to the Public Transport Unit (PTU) to organise transport. The Education, Learning & Leisure Service will provide funding.

#### b) Where a child moves to another school and requires transport

When a child becomes Looked After away from home or there is a placement change, the following procedures must be put in place as quickly as possible. These emergency arrangements will be funded by the Education, Learning & Leisure Service for up to three months to link in with the statutory review arrangements for Looked After Children away from home.

The receiving school should complete the PTU 500 (4) form for transport and forward it to their QIO. If the QIO recommends that the transport should be put in place, s/he will forward the request to the Head of Service for authorisation who will, in turn, forward it to the PTU to organise transport.

Where there is agreement about the continuation of educational provision then the costs will be shared equally between Education, Learning & Leisure Service and Housing & Social Work Services.

It is imperative that Head Teachers monitor transport arrangements on, at least, a termly basis and ensure that any necessary amendments to the arrangements are made, including cessation, if transport is no longer required.



## Quality Assurance

### How will we know if we have made a difference?

- When pre-five centres, schools or other educational establishments are places where Looked After children and young people and care leavers feel happy, safe and valued, through teaching and learning approaches which are sensitive to their needs.
- When young people who are, or have been, Looked After make the transition from school into sustained placements in further or higher education, employment or training.
- When you can give a positive answer to the question “Would this be good enough for my child?”
- When there is no difference in the rate of attendance or exclusion of Looked After children and young people as compared to their peers who are not Looked After.
- When Looked After children and young people and care leavers are just as likely as their peers to participate in out of school activities and wider school community activities such as sporting competitions.
- When Looked After children and young people and care leavers receive the additional support they require to participate in mainstream education, regardless of whether they are placed out of authority.
- When the educational outcomes for Looked After children and young people and care leavers, in terms of attainment and achievement, are the same as those for their peers who are not Looked After.

***Ref: These Are Our Bairns: page 40***

## Refer also to 'How Good Is Our School?' Quality Indicators

- 2.1 Learner's experiences
- 2.2 The school's success in involving parents, carers and families
- 5.1 The curriculum
- 5.2 Teaching for effective learning
- 5.3 Meeting learning needs
- 5.4 Assessment for learning
- 5.5 Expectations and promoting achievement
- 5.6 Quality and fairness
- 5.7 Partnerships with learners and parents
- 5.8 Care, welfare and development
- 5.9 Improvement through self-evaluation
- 8.1 Partnerships with the community, educational establishments, agencies and employers
- 8.4 Managing information



