

Supporting Looked After Children and Care Leavers

Definition

The term 'Looked After Children' (LAC) applies to a child who is looked after by a local authority if they are:

- Accommodated by the local authority for more than 24 hours in a continuous period
- Subject to a Care Order, putting them in the care of the local authority
- Subject to a Placement Order and awaiting adoption
- Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

A 'Care Leaver' (CL) is someone who has been in the care of the local authority for a period of 13 weeks or more spanning their 16th birthday.

Introduction

In 2019/20 there were approximately 109,538 children in Care at any one time in the UK (659 in Lincolnshire).

Statistics show that nationally the number of Looked After Children has risen by 7.4% since 2019.

Children and young people enter care for many different reasons. Many will come from complicated backgrounds, have experienced trauma, or moved many times while in Care. They can feel isolated and detached from family and friends.

Identified issues for LAC/CL

- Many children in care have suffered from disturbing experiences, including neglect and physical abuse
- Children in care are five times more likely than other pupils to be excluded from education
- While half of all young people achieve five or more good GCSEs, less than one in twelve children in Care do so
- Almost six in ten children in Care leave school with no qualifications

Aims and Objectives

Boston College believes that being a LAC/CL in itself should not be a barrier to applying for, starting or completing a programme of study.

The College recognises its obligations under the Equality Act 2010, but also firmly believes that all young people should be able to access education to fulfil their potential and long term career goals.

Following statutory guidance provided by the Department for Education (Promoting the Education of Looked After Children and previously Looked After Children, February 2018), Boston College has developed a strategy to support young people in Care and Leaving Care. These young people are vulnerable and require additional support within education, particularly to ensure that they attend and achieve, and to ensure that they are given the same opportunities as others.

All identified LAC and CL who attend Boston College on any full/part time or apprenticeship/traineeship will be provided with a positive experience to reach their full potential, and to prepare them for progression into work, HE or further education.

The college will take a flexible approach to facilitating LAC and CL where reasonable adjustments can be made to suit individual learners. This could be reducing timetables, arranging extra days for support, extra tuition sessions, allowing LAC & CL time out of college for meetings and reviews with external agencies.

The Learner Support Officer's (LSO's) team within the college, which includes the Designated Teacher for looked after children, will work closely with foster families, Social Workers and young people to ensure that all needs are being met while in education and in the process of application.

The Role of the Designated Teacher

The Designated Teacher's role is to have lead responsibility for the development and implementation of the child's personal education plan (PEP) within the college. They work together with The Virtual School (VS), carers and local authority, and are the central point of contact within the college.

The role of the Learner Support Officers

The college has appointed the Learner Support Officers in Learner Services as the designated contact responsible for LAC/CL on mainstream courses.

Learner Services will provide pre-entry support to LAC and CL's, offering impartial careers guidance and support with the admissions/interview stage. This is provided as early as the

young people or Carers are identified, and can include meeting with LSO's, arranging a tour around the college, invites to taster days and attending relevant reviews if required.

The designated contact acts as an advocate for the young person. They are also responsible for communication between Social Workers, Leaving Care Team, and Housing Support Workers, which ensures a wider support network of professionals to call on and a more effective means of communication to immediately address any issues / needs of the young person. All LAC are offered regular meetings to discuss their Personal Education Plan, or E-PEP, and to give them the opportunity to raise any issues they have.

The designated contact monitors all LAC/CL and provides reports on the enrolment, retention and attainment to the Head of Learner Services. To help prevent early withdrawal the Designated Contact monitors the attendance of this group of learners through the College's electronic attendance registers, regular contact with Social Workers, Housing Support Workers and Tutors. This enables early intervention to solve any issues. In addition, through the designated contact, Social Workers also have a point of contact to raise any concerns, discuss progress and receive information for reviews. Regular telephone contact and meetings are held to ensure that the Social Workers are fully informed of any issues so that the additional support these young people need is provided to help them remain on programme.

Young people will be offered the opportunity to apply for their vulnerable bursary, a grant provided by the government to assist with costs of learning (e.g. transport, kit/equipment, trips, meals etc.). An LSO will meet with them to discuss how they want to use the bursary and to ensure that everything is in place for their course.

The Designated Teacher will complete E-PEPS or PEPS as relevant to the local authority, and draw down the funding for each LAC for vulnerable bursary. They will also provide information as requested from the local authority about attendance and who we have enrolled.

The Role of the Virtual School

The Virtual School acts as a local authority champion to promote the progress and educational attainment of children and young people who are or have been in care so that they achieve educational outcomes comparable to their peers. They will co-originate support that may be required and monitor, support any special educational support provided by the college.

The role of Teaching Staff

The teaching staff play an important role in improving the outcomes of LAC/CL. To ensure that role is effective teaching staff will:

1. Ascertain whether the young person is or has ever been in care at interview stage to ensure that they get support from Learner Services at the earliest opportunity.
2. If a member of staff becomes aware that a young person is looked after or in leaving care, they should report this to the designated teacher or one of the LSO's. The designated teacher for LAC's role is to ensure that we meet the roles and responsibilities set by the statutory guidance provided by Department for Children, Schools and Families
3. When supporting LAC and CL on their study programme, staff will acknowledge any learning or support needs for individuals and have a flexible approach to supporting them. Staff do not always need to be aware of the background of LAC or CL's, as this information is sometimes sensitive and confidential, however where appropriate and relevant, and with the young person's permissions information can be shared.
4. Ensure that any issues are resolved within a timely manner in partnership with Learner Support Officers.
5. Ensure that the learner is allowed the appropriate time for meetings internally and externally and are not disadvantaged for this time out of learning.
6. Produce reports or attend meetings as requested by LSO team

Data Collection

The college routinely collects data on LAC/CL. This is shared with the Local Authority as appropriate. As the outcomes for this group have been historically poorer than other groups, it is important it is maintained throughout the year.

The data is presented to Senior Lead Team members at performance monitoring and self-assessment review.

The challenge in implementing the support service

The main challenge is identifying all LAC/CL that are coming to the College. The Local Authority can confidentially provide a list of names to the designated contact to ensure that potential LAC/CL learners are identified early. This allows the College to ensure support is in place before the start date and also gives learners, Social Workers and other external agencies a point of contact.

In addition, those young people who do not want to be identified as a LAC/CL can receive discreet and confidential support from the designated contact.

