

 **Awena (To Inspire)**

**Cornwall Virtual School**

**Previously Looked After Children (PLAC) Frequently Asked Questions**

Cornwall Virtual School have put together a collection of answers to many frequently asked questions regarding the educational support around Previously Looked After Children.

If you have a question which is not answered here, please contact our PLAC Lead, Helen Waring, on 07873 704156 or at helen.waring@cornwall.gov.uk.

**Who are Previously Looked After Children?**

Previously looked after children are defined by The Department of Education as those who:

*“are no longer looked after by a local authority in England and Wales (as defined by the*

*children Act 1989 or Part 6 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014)*

*because they are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangement*

*order”*

**or**

*“Were adopted from ‘state care’ outside England and Wales. ‘State care’ is care provided*

*by a public authority, a religious organisation, or any other organisation whose sole or main*

*purpose is to benefit society.”*

**How can Cornwall Virtual School help previously looked after children?**

The role of the Virtual School for previously looked after children is to promote their educational achievement and welfare through the provision of information, support and guidance to their parents/ carers, educators and other professionals where necessary.

**How does a school know if a pupil is previously looked after?**

This information can only be disclosed by those with parental responsibility. Other professionals, including the Virtual School, cannot share or confirm this information with a school. It is suggested by the Virtual School that you include a question regarding previously in care status on your admissions form. We also recommend sending a whole school letter to parents and carers letting them know that there is support and funding for PLAC and who they should contact if they feel they fall into this category (this is usually the Designated Teacher) at the beginning of each school year. Please contact the Virtual School if you would like an example of this letter.

**Does a PLAC need a PEP?**

There is no statutory requirement for a PEP to be completed for PLAC. Cornwall Virtual School have created a PLAC PEP for schools and families who would like to support their PLAC in the best way. This is available from the Virtual School.

**Why was the PLAC PEP made and should we use it?**

The purpose of the PLAC PEP is to encourage positive collaboration and communication between

home and school and to raise awareness of the needs and issues faced by children and their parents/ carers. It also highly values the voice of the child and there are regular opportunities for this to be heard.

The majority of PLAC have experienced neglect and/or suffered significant trauma in their past and face ongoing, often complex needs as a result. The PLAC PEP was created to guide your provision for PLAC, ensure you are reviewing it frequently as well as creating evidence of what has and has not worked previously for that child.

PLAC PEP meetings are a useful way to information share, problem solve and set targets for the

future. If this is being achieved through other meetings, or you are happy with the support that

your child is getting, then there is no need to use it.

**Who is it shared with?**

It is vitally important that both parents/carers and school understand this is a highly confidential document and should only be shared with those approved by the holder of parental permission. You will be prompted at every meeting to decide who the document can be shared with.

**Are PLAC eligible for Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) Funding?**

In 2013 the DfE introduced Pupil Premium Plus for Looked After and Previously Looked After

Children. In doing this, the DfE acknowledged the enduring impact of trauma and loss in children’s

lives and the key role of schools in supporting children who have had a difficult start in life.

Pupil Premium Plus is available for pupils from Reception to Year 11 in state funded education in England if they have been in care in England or Wales. This includes maintained mainstream, special schools, academies and free schools. It is not available for children in private schools or home educated, unless the placement is funded by the local authority.

Schools will receive £2,345/year for any pupil:

identified in the January school census or the alternative provision census as having left local authority care as a result of adoption a special guardianship order or a child arrangement order.

**AND**

who has been in local authority care for 24hours or more.

**How does a school claim this funding?**

In order for schools to access the funding, parents/carers must declare their child’s

adoptive, SGO or CAO status directly to the school before the school completes the next

census. Parents/carers must provide evidence, for example, a copy of the legal order, or a

confirmation letter from the local authority which placed their child. Schools then disclose this status in every Census. This funding does not come through the Virtual School as it does for CiC but rather straight from the Government.

**As a school, how can I ensure the best use of Pupil Premium Plus Funding for PLAC?**

The DfE expects schools to use robust evidence when making decisions of how to spend the funding, much like for Pupil Premium. By completing the PLAC PEP at regular intervals, you can ensure the spending is proactive, measured and having impact. Pupil Premium Plus should be used specifically to address the needs resulting from children’s difficult early lives. Areas for how funding could be spent are:

* Building attachment relationships with adults
* Improving social skills and peer relationships
* Managing feelings and behaviour
* Buying in therapeutic services
* Coping with change and transition
* Developing executive functioning skills
* Funding assessments (such as Educational Phycologists)

When things are going well, a PLAC may not present with any obvious additional needs. It is wise to continue to complete the PEP for these children as periods of time where the child is not in crisis are good times to build their skills and resilience.

It is equally important to know what not to spend the funding on. Pupil Premium Plus should not be used for:

• meeting children’s special education needs

• meetings the needs of children with low attainment

These should still be addressed through the normal and additional funding streams.

**We have a previously looked after child who is not coping at school and/or displaying concerning behaviours, what should we do?**

In the first instance, increase communication with those with parental responsibility. Invite them into school and share a discussion as to where these behaviours might be coming from. Think about changes at home, school or something that could be making the child unhappy (social relationships, online use, their questions about their past).

Give an opportunity for the child to have an open, safe and honest conversation with a trusted adult to get the voice of the child. Ensure you avoid any feelings of shame or disapproval with what they choose to share. The child will need to have a trusted adult in school who is available to them when needed. Consider carefully who this may be.

Put in place a PLAC PEP so you can work together to provide intervention, consider resources and monitor impact.

Consider making a referral to your Educational Psychologist (you can fund this using PP+) to gain insight and child specific targets.

Consider involving therapeutic intervention to help both the child and the family. This can be accessed through the Family Plus Team (see below).

Make use of your PP+ funding to put in appropriate provision and support around the child.

If the child has an EHCP or an IEP, consider reviewing this and contacting the SEN caseworker.

Consider a referral to the Virtual School for more specialised support.

If you have tried these and are still concerned about behaviour or feel you are in a desperate situation, please get in touch with Helen Waring (PLAC Lead) at Cornwall Virtual School (virtualschool@cornwall.gov.uk).

**Is there anyone else who can support PLAC in Cornwall?**

The Adoption Service has a dedicated team for adoption support – the Family Plus Team. The team also supports families with a Special Guardianship Order and Child Arrangement Orders.

The Family Plus Team includes social workers who have expertise with children and adoption, youth workers, theraplay specialists and also expert psychologists specialising in working with adopted and looked after children and young people. They can be contacted by an adoptive/SGO/ CAO family on 01872 322200 or at adoption@cornwall.gov.uk.