



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of
children who are looked after in Wales

Action plan 2015–16

www.gov.wales

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Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales

Audience

Local authorities; headteachers and governing bodies of maintained schools; headteachers and governing bodies of voluntary aided and foundation schools; teachers in charge of pupil referral units; church diocesan authorities; proprietors of independent schools; further education institutions; school staff unions; Governors Wales; Careers Wales; higher education authorities; directors of social services; heads of children's services and social workers. It should also be read by staff within those organisations with responsibility for looked after children, care leavers, fostering and adoption and third sector organisations whose work helps support children.

Overview

This document sets out theme by theme the Welsh Government's commitment to improve the educational outcomes of looked after children. It contains a timeframe of specific actions to be undertaken by the Welsh Government and its key partners. It should be read in conjunction with the strategy: Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales.

Action required

The actions in this action plan are to be undertaken by the Welsh Government and its key stakeholders including local authorities, regional consortia and schools and colleges supported by the third sector.

Further information

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Additional copies

This document can be accessed from the Welsh Government's website at www.gov.wales/educationandskills

Related documents

See Annex.

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Introduction

The following tables set out, theme by theme, the commitments to action by the Welsh Government and its key partners. The actions were developed and agreed following consultation with a wide range of stakeholders who have a responsibility for children who are looked after. The case for action is compelling as is the need for the system to work in partnership and at pace to deliver improvements in the educational outcomes for these learners.

A performance review will be conducted each year to check progress and to ensure the support which is in place is working effectively. These monitoring arrangements will be used by the Welsh Government to instigate further measures in circumstances where improvements are clearly not being made.

Effective leadership – roles and responsibilities

No.	Actions	Lead coordinating responsibility	Key partners	Delivery Timeframe / Priority: Short term, Medium term, Longer term Short term = 2016/17 Medium term = 2018 Longer term = 2019 and beyond
1	To support each regional consortium to identify a lead co-ordinator who will retain a strategic focus on looked after children in education and ensure the delivery of an agreed, strategic programme of work	Welsh Government	Regional education consortia	Spring term 2016
2	To develop and publish guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the lead co-ordinator	Welsh Government	Regional education consortia	Spring term 2016

3	<p>To develop and publish guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the designated lead member of staff in schools, and on governing bodies in supporting that function</p> <p>To support the implementation of the guidance, the Welsh Government will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • undertake a mapping exercise to establish what training is available for the designated lead member of staff and disseminate examples of good practice at stakeholder events • commission appropriate training modules to support schools and further education staff with a responsibility for young people who are looked after • deliver stakeholder events to promote the new training modules 	<p>Welsh Government</p> <p>Welsh Government</p> <p>Welsh Government</p>		<p>Summer term 2017</p> <p>Summer term 2018</p> <p>Summer term 2018</p>
4	<p>To reinforce corporate accountability for looked after children through a revised Code of Practice on the statutory role of the Director of Social Services</p>	<p>Welsh Government</p>		<p>Spring term 2017</p>

5	To consider the consultation responses to the draft <i>Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill</i> with a view to developing the further Bill provisions on children and young people who are looked after	Welsh Government		Autumn term 2017
6	To assess the feasibility of a pilot programme that will deliver a combined educational and social care approach that will help to improve placement stability and provide a stronger and better equipped workforce in Wales	Welsh Government		Spring term 2017
7	To develop a marketing, promotional and training drive to ensure all elected members are aware of the expectations placed on them in respect of children who are looked after	Welsh Government	Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA)	Spring term 2018
8	To review the roles of key workers and ensure that responsibility and accountability exists in all parts of the system. This should be in accordance with a consistent national context set by the Welsh Government to ensure that local authorities do not implement changes in isolation of one another. In particular local authorities should make arrangements to:	Local authorities & regional education consortia	Welsh Government	Spring term 2018

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure a designated elected member with a lead responsibility for the education of children who are looked after is in place and equipped to undertake the role. • examine the roles of social workers and Independent Review Officers (IRO) to ensure that plans are in place and progressed to meet the needs of the child. This includes reviewing the child’s educational needs, progress and development to support and strengthen the existing process • review the roles and responsibilities of the LACE Coordinator and the designated person with lead responsibility in schools to ensure alignment and collaboration to raise the level and quality of support provided. This should ensure that the learner’s progress is properly tracked in conjunction with schools, so that interventions are quickly applied where attainment appears to be in decline. The same high quality level of service and support should be considered for former looked after children who have been adopted or are subject to a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) • support foster carers, residential child care workers, kinship carers and parents so that the promotion of education is paramount and under-performance is not accepted. All carers must be equipped – through training 	<p>Local authorities & regional education consortia</p>	<p>Welsh Government</p>	
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	if necessary - with the skills necessary to challenge schools where the child's attainment is not at the expected level, and must be aware of the key personnel to approach to do so such as seeking advocacy support through the regional education consortia and school challenge advisors.			
9	To develop proposals to support foster carers and other carers with appropriate training which has a specific educational focus on children in their care	Regional education consortia	Third sector partners	Autumn term 2016
10	To promote the role of the looked after children link governor and encourage all governing bodies to select a governor to represent the interests of these young people as standard good practice	Schools / Governors Wales	Welsh Government	Summer term 2018
11	All further education institutions should continue to work to meet the quality mark criteria set by Buttle UK and to build on existing good practice. Institutes should continue to demonstrate strong leadership and work in partnership with local authorities and other agencies to secure the best possible support for learners from a care background	Further education institutions		Summer term 2017

	A designated lead person for young people in care or care leavers should be in place as part of the student support provision in every further education institution	Further education institutions		Summer term 2017
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Building effective partnerships and collaboration

No	Actions	Lead coordinating responsibility	Key partners	Delivery Timeframe / Priority
12	<p>To establish a national strategic group involving local authorities – in particular - LACE Coordinators and other key stakeholders to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support consistent practice in supporting children who are looked after • identify the interdependencies which exist between them • promote peer support for practitioners, sharing good practice, and • identifying and overcoming barriers to success 	Welsh Government	Local authorities	Spring term 2016
13	<p>To implement a 'community of practice' to build more effective working relationships and communications between designated lead members of staff in schools and further education institutions, LACE Coordinators, carers and social workers</p>	Welsh Government	WLGA / Association of Directors of Education Wales (ADEW)	Spring term 2016

14	To identify information which would better support collaboration and delivery at a local level, including the production of a thematic study, providing robust case studies and underpinning so that the LACE Coordinators and schools can draw on successful practices to help them provide better support	Welsh Government	Estyn	Spring term 2017
15	<p>To strengthen the role of the third and independent sectors to ensure a more holistic approach to delivery, and provide an advocate for children who are often difficult to engage in education.</p> <p>The Welsh Government's Strategic Steering Group will consider how outcomes for children who are looked after and care leavers can be improved through prevention and early intervention, improved collaborative working across agencies and through identifying and sharing good practice and making improvements where they are needed.</p>	Welsh Government	Third sector partners	Spring term 2018
16	Local authorities with similar learner profiles should work more collaboratively and to find more effective ways of sharing good practice, professional expertise and teaching support	Local authorities & regional education consortia		Spring term 2018

	across authorities. Local authorities – working with regional education consortia in planning strategic actions – should actively explore opportunities for greater collaboration to support better and more consistent practice, and in sharing of good practice			
17	To map and review existing local protocols, strengthening them where necessary using service level agreements and memoranda of understanding	Local authorities & regional education consortia	Schools & further education institutions	Spring term 2018
18	To collaborate with the third sector to map existing materials to help carers and foster parents understand the importance of engagement with schools and post-16 education providers.	Local authorities & regional education consortia / Third sector	Third sector partners	Spring term 2017
		Schools & further education institutions		

	To collaborate to develop material which is not already in place and where it is needed		Third sector partners	Spring term 2017
19	To build an effective network of all key personnel, via a series of regional events, to ensure a consistency of service provision for children who are looked after	Welsh Government	Local authorities	Spring term 2017
20	To improve data sharing between schools and post-16 education providers, considering the particular needs of children who are looked after and care leavers as part of this	Welsh Government	Schools and further education institutions	Spring term 2017

Effective teaching and learning

No	Actions	Lead coordinating responsibility	Key partners	Delivery Timeframe / Priority
21	To ensure children who are looked after are prioritised in the admissions process and that unexplained absences are dealt with promptly. The key factor is stability. This also means that exclusions must be considered only in the most extreme circumstances. Schools will work closely with the LACE Coordinator and the Education Welfare Officer to monitor the attendance of children who are looked after and respond immediately to first day absences	Local authorities & regional education consortia		Spring term 2017
		Schools & further education institutions		
22	To place emphasis on information sharing which needs to be timely. It should be accepted good practice to set up information sharing meetings prior to a pupil starting a new school or educational setting. The meetings should involve appropriate personnel from the receiving and previous school together with social workers and other agency staff	Local authorities & regional education consortia		Spring term 2018
		Schools & further education institutions		

23	<p>To ensure there are specific professional learning opportunities in schools and further education institutions on managing challenging behaviour and recognising the needs of children suffering from trauma and attachment issues</p> <p>Schools should engage with regional education consortia and LACE Coordinators to consider how broader awareness training for school personnel in supporting vulnerable children could be commissioned and delivered regionally funded through the PDG. Personnel from further education institutions should also be included in the training wherever possible</p>	Schools & further education institutions	Local authorities & regional education consortia	Spring term 2018
24	<p>To implement arrangements to improve tracking to monitor the educational progress of children who are looked after and ensure meaningful Personal Education Plans and Individual Development Plans</p> <p>Regional education consortia should work with their LACE Coordinators to identify and</p>	Local authorities & regional education consortia		Spring term 2018
		Schools & further education institutions		

	share examples of good tracking in monitoring systems			
25	<p>To set realistic, but challenging targets in conjunction and consultation with children and young people and recognise that education may be low on the young person's personal agenda due to other emotional issues</p> <p>This information must be formalised within the education plan. Education plans must also monitor and record the personal development of the child in greater detail</p>	Schools & further education institutions		Spring term 2018
26	To maintain a national contact list of key personnel such as LACE Coordinators, Education and Progression Coordinators (EPCs), further education and higher education student support officers to improve communications	Welsh Government	All key partners	Spring term 2017
27	To ensure that the designated lead person for looked after children in further education institutions provides timely information about available courses and entry requirements to these prospective students in an appropriate environment which is non-stigmatising	Schools & further education institutions		Spring term 2017

28	To formalise service levels agreements and protocols between schools and post-16 institutions to facilitate the smooth transition from school to post-16 education for children who are looked after	Schools & further education institutions		Spring term 2018
29	To develop mentoring schemes for children who are looked after and care leavers to support stability in their lives and ensure they complete their studies	Higher education institutions		Spring term 2019

Making better use of data

No	Actions	Lead coordinating responsibility	Key partners	Delivery Timeframe / Priority
30	To review how the range of data on children who are looked after data is collected and analysed to consolidate numerous datasets and reduce complexity. This will also include considering the availability of benchmarks and comparison across local authorities and regional education consortia.	Welsh Government	Local authorities and Regional education consortia	Spring term 2019
31	To identify and capture statistical information on the educational attainment of former children who were looked after and have been adopted.	Welsh Government & partners	National Adoption Service / Adoption UK (Wales)	Summer term 2018

32	<p>To collate accurate information on the outcomes for children who are looked after once they leave the school system and move into other educational settings.</p> <p>The Welsh Government will commission an initial analysis which uses matched data to identify post-16 outcomes for children who are looked after, including retention, attainment and progression rates. This will help to identify the baseline provision which can then be used to carry out annual analysis, and to identify any crucial gaps in the available data</p>	Welsh Government	Further education institutions	Spring term 2018
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Strengthening funding arrangements

No	Actions	Lead coordinating responsibility	Key partners	Delivery Timeframe / Priority
33	<p>To reinforce the regional education consortia accountability for delivering results, a new reporting process will be introduced to better track and monitor expenditure.</p> <p>A rapid review process will be introduced to evaluate the effectiveness of the first year of a new approach to Pupil Deprivation Grant funding for children who are looked after.</p>	<p>Welsh Government</p>		<p>Summer term 2017</p> <p>Summer term 2016</p>
34	<p>To capture information on effective interventions which are proven to have the greatest impact on the educational outcomes of children who are looked after and adopted children.</p> <p>The Welsh Government and Adoption UK (Wales) will develop guidance to help schools support adopted children in education.</p>	<p>Welsh Government</p>	<p>Adoption UK (Wales)</p>	<p>Spring term 2017</p>

Participation of children who are looked after and adopted to inform strategic approaches and operational decision making

No	Actions	Lead coordinating responsibility	Key partners	Delivery Timeframe / Priority
35	To review the progress made against the action plan, seek the views of children who are looked after to measure the impact the strategy is having on their experience in education..	Welsh Government	Third sector partners	Spring term 2017
36	To support the Charter for children who are looked after and care leavers, which has been developed by the Care Forum Wales Looked After Children Network in conjunction with partners, and continue to push all agencies involved with these children to adopt a greater use of person centred thinking in delivering their services.	Welsh Government	Care Forum Wales Looked After Children Network	Spring term 2017
37	To ensure the views of these children are considered when planning and delivering targeted support	Welsh Government	Regional education consortia	Spring term 2017

Annex: Related documents

Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales - the Consultation (2015)

<http://gov.wales/consultations/education/raising-the-ambitions-and-educational-attainment-of-children/?lang=en>

Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales – Summary of responses (2015)

<http://gov.wales/consultations/education/raising-the-ambitions-and-educational-attainment-of-children/?status=closed&lang=en>

Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales – the Strategy (2016)

<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/deprivation/educational-attainment-of-looked-after-children/?lang=en>

Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales – the Strategy (Youth Friendly Version)(2016)

<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/deprivation/educational-attainment-of-looked-after-children/?lang=en>

CASCADE Research – Looked after Children and Education

<http://sites.cardiff.ac.uk/cascade/looked-after-children-and-education/>

Fostering Network Report

<https://www.fostering.net/wales/educationreportenglish>

Voices From Care Report

<http://www.voicesfromcarecymru.org.uk/news/201512/education-looked-after-children-report>