

Promoting the education of looked after children – statutory guidance for local authorities (July 2014)**Key points:**

1. The guidance is for local authority officers, in particular Directors of Children's Services; VSHs; social workers; officers carrying out a local authority's function as a school admission authority; special educational needs departments; Independent Reviewing Officers; personal advisers; care leaving services and Lead Members for Children's Services.
2. VSH should ensure the educational attainment and progress of LAC are monitored and evaluated as if those children attended a single school.
3. VSH should ensure the educational achievement of LAC is seen as a priority by everyone who has responsibilities for promoting their welfare.
4. Social workers, VSHs and IROs, school admission officers and SEN departments should work together to ensure that – except in an emergency – appropriate education provision for a child is arranged at the same time as a care placement.
5. The VSH has primary responsibility for ensuring that there is suitable education in place for all children looked after by the local authority. Their views should be given appropriate weight as part of decisions on placement moves.
6. PEPs are to cover ages 0-18.
7. VSH and social worker should work together to ensure that monitoring arrangements are in place so that actions and activities recorded in the PEP are implemented without delay.
8. VSHs should make arrangements for PEPs to be reviewed each school term. The nature of these arrangements and who to involve are for the VSH to decide in partnership with others.
9. Some children may have undiagnosed special needs when they start to be looked after. As part of the PEP process there should be robust arrangements in place to ensure that any undiagnosed special educational needs are addressed through the SEND framework as soon as possible.
10. It is the responsibility of the VSH to ensure that:

- a. Admission authorities understand that Fair Access Protocols do not apply to looked after children
 - b. The local authority, as a corporate parent, does not tolerate drift and delay where children the authority looks after are without an education placement that is appropriate to their assessed needs. This includes their powers of direction in a timely way rather than delay issuing a direction as a result of protracted negotiation.
11. VSH should ensure there are effective arrangements in place to work with a range of professionals who will play a role in supporting the education of LAC:
- a. Encouraging social workers and carers to have high expectations re education from pre-school to post-16 EET
 - b. Help IROs and social workers understand the importance they need to place on education as part of care planning
 - c. Ensure that whenever a child is likely to move schools that there is an informed discussion about the choice of school that will best meet their needs.
 - d. Ensure, through commissioners, that:
 - i. Providers of fostering services and residential care have a robust evidence base that demonstrates they prioritise the educational achievement of looked after children and help them achieve their full potential.
 - ii. When commissioning education services for a looked-after child from independent providers, commissioning decisions are based on the quality of the educational support provided and its ability to meet the needs of each individual.