

Looked After Children and Care Leavers Policy 2023-2024



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INTRODUCTION

Hopwood Hall College is committed to supporting every learner to achieve their qualifications beyond their expectations and to raise their aspirations. This policy is designed to promote the educational achievement and welfare and successful progression of Looked After Children/Young People (LAC/YP) and Care Leavers (CL) who attend Hopwood Hall College. We recognise that each young person is unique, with different backgrounds, talents and aspirations. However, we recognise that LAC/YP and CL face serious disadvantage growing up and this can affect their long-term life chances.

SCOPE

This policy compliments the College's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and identifies further responsibilities that the College will undertake in relation to children who are Looked After and Care Leavers. Other policies, Learner Progress Policy, Careers Strategy, Learner Engagement Strategy, Learner attendance Policy and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy are also relevant.

The policy takes into account The Children and Social Work Act 2017, Children Act 1989 and Section 11 of the Children Act 2004, which brings all agencies into line with the duties placed on schools and colleges by section 175 of the Education Act 2002.

This policy refers to young people who are Looked After as defined by the Children Act 1989. That are those learners who are under the age of 18 and are:

- The subject of an Interim or Full-time Care or Emergency Protection Order. (Children Act 1989, Section 31)
- Unaccompanied minors who are Asylum Seekers. (Children Act 1989, Section 20)
- Accommodated by a local authority with the agreement of their parent(s) or legal guardian. (Children Act 1989, Section 20)
- Children in a placement that is either directly provided by the local authority or by an approved agency on behalf of the local authority.
- Compulsorily accommodated as a result of criminal proceedings.

In addition, if a young person has been in care for a total of 13 weeks between the ages of 14 and 16, and for at least 1 day after they are 16, they are:

- An eligible child if they are still 16 or 17 and still in care
- A relevant child if they are 16 or 17 and have left care
- A former relevant if they are 18 or over
- A young person privately fostered or in Special Guardianship arrangements are identified as qualifying young people.

The term Looked After Child (LAC) is interchangeable with Looked After Young person (LAYP) and Cared for Child (CFA). The terminology used varies across local authorities.

POLICY STATEMENT

This policy will not discriminate either directly or indirectly against any individual on grounds of sex, race or ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age, disability, inclusion need, gender identity, socio-economic status or any other protected characteristic.

AIM

This policy aims to:

- Express our full commitment to supporting young people who are defined as Looked After as in Section 1.4 (above)
- Outlines the roles and responsibilities of all staff with regard to fulfilling corporate parenting duties for Looked After Children and Young people and Care Leavers.
- To ensure all staff are aware of and understand the difficulties and issues faced by LAC/YP.
- State the commitment to improving outcomes for LAC/YP
- Describe the process and procedures in place to early identify LAC/YP and CL's and the support package and offer available to them
- To ensure consistent best practice is followed by all staff, thereby ensuring we respond appropriately and meet the needs of learners

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Principal/Senior Leadership team will:

- Identify a Designated Person for LAC/YP and CL, whose role is set out below.
- Support the Designated Person for LAC, the Safeguarding and Wellbeing staff and other staff in ensuring that the needs of LAC/YP and CL are recognised and met.
- Ensure that procedures are in place to monitor the admission, progress, attendance and to ensure that any withdrawals or exclusions of LAC/YP and CL is a last resort and all procedures have been followed.
- Ensure that all Governors are aware of the legal requirements and guidance on the education of LAC/YP and CL
- Allocate resources to meet the needs of LAC/YP and CL.
- Ensure that staff training time is enabled to allow updates on LAC/YP and relevant issues.
- Ensure that other policies and procedures support their needs.

The Designated Person will:

- Identify all the Looked After Children in College and those who have recently left care and who may therefore, still need support
- Ensure that all staff, both teaching and non-teaching are aware of the difficulties and educational disadvantage faced by young people who are looked after or care leavers.
- Work closely with other agencies, sharing information as appropriate and adhere to joint protocols including attendance at local forums and meetings.

- Identify the child's looked after legal status (whether they are looked after under voluntary arrangements with consent of parents or on an interim or full care order) and contact arrangements with birth parents or those with parental responsibility.
- Identify the child's care arrangements and the levels of authority delegated to the carer by the authority looking after them.
- Liaise with other local agencies to ensure there are well supported plans to meet the needs of the post-16 transition of young people in care and care leavers, including impartial IAG, identification of additional learning Support needs, Transition Program, Financial support, bespoke Taster Days and Information Events, training sessions for staff.
- Ensure that an up to date, complete and high quality post-16 Personal Education Plan (PEP) is in place for all young people.
- Ensure Transition, Progress and Academic reviews and appropriate interventions and assessments are carried out so barriers to learning are overcome and that these are recorded on the ILP and in the PEP.
- Oversee the monitoring and tracking of young people in care and care leavers including attendance, academic progress and progression and promote a culture of high expectations and aspirations for achievement.
- Ensure that all staff have a clear understanding of confidentiality and issues that affect Looked After Children and Care Leavers and co-ordinate information sharing and take responsibility for the confidentiality and security of information.
- Ensure that LAC/YP voices are actively sought out and reflected in appropriate college media
- Ensure that all staff meet their responsibilities
- Keep Governors and the College Senior Management Team up to date with the needs, issues and outcomes for Looked after Children and Care Leavers.

The Program Managers will:

- Know all LAC/YP and CL in their area and ensure their staff are aware of how to locate information and support for this cohort.
- Act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of the LAC/YP promoting high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those young people in their area.
- Ensure reasonable adjustments to program are made where required to support achievement and retention of the LAC/YP
- Ensure Academic Reviews are carried out
- Keep Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO)) / Pastoral Welfare Officer (PWO) fully informed of any issue or problem.
- Ensure every option has exhausted before considering withdrawal or disciplinary procedure.
- Not withdraw any LAC/YP or CL without the agreement of DP/Safeguarding and Wellbeing Manager
- No early completion of program without the agreement of DP/Safeguarding and Wellbeing Manager
- Ensure all meetings and interventions are recorded on Learner ILP.

The Safeguarding and Wellbeing Team will:

- Work in a Multi-agency way to identify and support LAC/CL prior to enrolment in college, liaising with: Children's Social Care, Social Worker, Foster carers/Care home.
- Undertake Transition work with Secondary Schools to identify LAC/CL. Attend school meetings, LAC Reviews, PEPs, and Child Protection Conferences, Child in Need meetings where relevant prior to enrolment at college to ensure support is in place.
- Support transition through Summer Transition Project, arrange transition visits, activities and meetings with staff to ensure a successful transition
- Gather all required evidence and complete documentation to have bursary and kit in place prior to learner starting course
- Ensure that all staff, both teaching and non-teaching are aware of the difficulties and educational disadvantage faced by young people who are looked after or care leavers. Share information on a need to know basis, especially where it may affect learning
- Ensure that each LAC/YP has a Transition Review within first two weeks to check all support is in place and follow with a minimum of termly Pastoral reviews.
- Attend and play active role in PEP, setting relevant attendance and academic targets and support learner to achieve these.
- Instigate appropriate interventions and assessments so that barriers to learning are identified and overcome and that these are recorded on the ILP and in the PEP.
- Monitor attendance, instigate timely interventions, working with Social Worker, keyworker, PA and Care Home/foster carer to address attendance issues. Work with Retention Improvement Officer (RIO) and Program Manager to address poor attendance.
- Be first point of contact for any issue and sign post to appropriate services
- Liaise with Social Worker and Foster carers/care home.
- Ensure ILP is accurate and all interventions are recorded
- Support and mentor LAC/YP throughout their time at Hopwood Hall College

All staff will:

- Act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of the LAC/YP promoting high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those young people.
- Make reasonable adjustments on program to support achievement of the LAC/YP
- Alert Safeguarding, Welfare and Pastoral team in a timely fashion to any issue or problem.
- Record all meetings and interventions on ILP

PROCEDURE

PRIOR TO ENTRY AND APPLICATION

Hopwood Hall College has a partnership approach to sharing information. We adhere to and support Rochdale Local Authority Protocol for Transferring records between

educational establishments. We seek to replicate this with other local authorities. The Safeguarding manager and Officers will:

- Work with stakeholders and attend Safeguarding Transition Meetings with local Secondary Schools where LAC/YP are identified.
- Attend LAC Review's and PEP Meetings prior to young person enrolling in college.
- Record, track and monitor all identified learners on college systems well in advance of application and enrolment. Ensuring there are plenty of opportunities for YP to identify as LAC/YP
- Support learners with application (system allows ease of identifying).
- A LAC/YP is guaranteed an interview, this will be flexible, by way of meeting young person's needs and situation e.g. telephone interview, at young person's placement.
- Provide financial advice and support and priority process for Student Financial Support. Pre-application help including paper application forms for access to Guaranteed Bursary.
- Offer a place on Summer Transition Project

Hopwood Hall College will make links with local Fostering support teams in order to highlight to Foster Carers the support and proactive approach that the college takes to meet the needs of LAC/YP

A named member of the Safeguarding and Wellbeing team will identify themselves to young person prior to enrolment, to let them know who they are, how they can help and put in place tailored support.

Pastoral support is crucial in ensuring a smooth transition and wherever possible the PWO should arrange to meet the LAC/YP prior to enrolment.

Hopwood Hall College's website provides clear and accessible information to LAC/YP and CL, parents, carers and local authorities on support offered to LAC/YP and CL's and the access to independent and impartial AIG and career support.

ENTRY AND INDUCTION

Enrolment. Safeguarding, Welfare and Pastoral (SWAP) team and Learning Support staff will be clearly visible on enrolment day, should the young person need them. The enrolment process should be a positive experience for the LAC/YP to ensure their needs are met and curriculum teams should be flexible in their approach to enrolling LAC/YP. The designated staff member will be available to informally/formally liaise with social workers so that individual circumstances and support needs can be explored prior to enrolment.

Information and Welfare Screening record is completed for each student at enrolment. This process further supports the identification of LAC/YP and CL.

College understands that LAC/YP may need intensive support at the beginning of their course and a dialogue between PWO, Learning Support staff and academic staff is crucial to minimise the risk of withdrawals or a sense of failure on the young person's part. The college is clear that it is worth investing the time to look for and remove the

barriers to learning and the importance of quick interventions to ensure the young person can continue on program cannot be overestimated.

Induction. A 1-1 Transition meeting will be carried out within first 2 weeks to ensure that YP is on the right course for them and priority IAG arranged if required. That bursary has been applied for and is being received. All information is recorded on ILP. Inform young person of all support available and book in regular meetings.

ONGOING SUPPORT ON PROGRAM

PWO is first point of contact and is responsible for monitoring the young person and intervening quickly when barriers or issues are identified. PWO's are clear that the young person is not always able to ask for help, so regular monitoring is crucial to spot any signs.

Wellbeing and Pastoral care. PWO is responsible for providing pastoral care and guidance, referrals and signposting to relevant services including mental health internally the College Counselling service and Social Prescriber. External services for mental health - Healthy Young Minds, #Thrive and Thinking Ahead. Further support services are available: Sexual Health Team, Early Break, School Nursing team, IAG/Careers Support.

Risk Assessments/Care Plan/s and Crises management plans are held by Safeguarding and Wellbeing team and are responsible for ensuring all teaching staff are aware. DSO is responsible for ensuring these are adhered to and monitored.

Financial support in form of Guaranteed Bursary in place and the flexibility to administer it to meet the individual's needs. Access to the Attendance bonus scheme for excellent attendance.

In line with Government Careers Strategy and The Gatsby benchmarks we will provide a high-quality career education, information and guidance (CEIAG) supporting the differing needs of LAC/YP.

A comprehensive and bespoke CEIAG programme is in place for LAC/YP and CL to support their career path, progression routes and to raise their aspirations. To ensure they have individual career consultations throughout the program, with support from Positive Steps careers advisor.

Where difficulties identified PWO/DSO and Program manager are responsible for ensuring all reasonable adjustments have been made and supportive strategies have been put in place to keep the young person on program. All interventions must be recorded on ILP and input will be made as appropriate at individual post 16 PEP Meetings. Every available means should be exhausted and Designated Person for LAC Tracey Marrow informed before any decisions are made regarding the LAC/YP place on the course.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

LAC/YP will be identified as a specific vulnerable cohort for data collection, collation and analysis. Data will be shared with SMT in order to explore trends and monitor year on year analysis and thereby assess and target resources as required.

DOCUMENTS ASSOCIATED WITH THIS POLICY

- The Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Education Act 2002

DOCUMENT REVIEW INFORMATION

Policy Date: March 2023

Policy Author: Tracey Marrow (Safeguarding and Wellbeing Manager)

Date of SLT Sign Off:

Equality Impact Assessment Completed? Yes

Equality Impact Assessment Date:

Next Policy Review Date: July 2024