

SECTION 17

THE EDUCATION OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (TELAC)

1. Introduction

This guidance is intended to

- Describe the work of Warwickshire's TELAC service and the support available to schools education children who are looked after
- Outline the main issues for schools arising from the new duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children which came into force on 1st July 2005.

2. Warwickshire's TELAC service

2.1 Background

The TELAC (The Education of Looked After Children) service became fully operational in September 2003. The service aims to make a direct impact on the educational attainment of looked after children and their life chances.

The service is based within the SEN Division of the Education Department and consists of:-

- A Head of Service
- 4 TELAC Officers (3.6 fte)
- An Administrative Assistant

2.2 Areas of work

In broad terms, there are three main areas of work. These areas are detailed below, together with indications of specific areas of concern.

Work with schools

- Advise schools on routine procedures which need to be in place regarding looked after pupils
- Provide support and information for Designated Teachers in schools
- Provide guidance and support in completion of Personal Education Plans
- Offer advice and support to individual teachers regarding the looked after children in their groups
- Monitor progress of looked after children
- Monitor attendance of looked after children
- Encourage the attendance of looked after children at exams
- Support the induction into school of looked after children
- Work to minimize the consequences of any disruption in education (eg through change of placement, exclusion etc.) through the design and co-ordination of alternative provision

Work with young people and their carers

- Promote the interests of looked after children
- Provide support and advice to looked after children about education
- Set appropriate targets; monitor attainment and achievement
- Support carers of looked after children and provide guidance in matters relating to education, including the process of admission
- Find schools places for looked after children when necessary
- Ensure that everything possible is done to overcome barriers to learning
- Provide individual tuition to supplement other interventions should this become necessary

Work with other agencies

- Liaise locally with key social workers, Connexions, other statutory agencies and, where appropriate, health professionals
- Where necessary, secure the active intervention of support services

2.3 Support offered to schools

The support offered to schools by the TELAC service has three main strands:

- direct work with schools in a particular geographical area by a named TELAC Officer
- resources allocated to schools via the delegation formula for Special Educational Needs
- support from Warwickshire's LABSS service (through the TELAC subscription)

Each of these three strands is described in more detail below.

2.3.1 Direct contact with a named TELAC Officer.

Each TELAC Officer takes responsibility for schools in a given area, as follows:-

Shirley Bracegirdle	North Warwickshire Nuneaton (Exhall Grange SEN base)
Tessa Verso	Bedworth South Warwickshire (Lillington SEN base)
Sandra Grafton	Central Warwickshire (Lillington SEN base)
Samantha Geehan	Eastern Warwickshire (Boughton Leigh SEN base)

Additionally, the Head of Service, Catherine Halsall (Lillington SEN base) takes overall responsibility for Warwickshire children placed out of county and is available to deal with general issues regarding the service.

TELAC Officers aim to visit schools with looked after children on roll at least once each half term in order to meet with the school's Designated Teacher for Looked After Children.

The purpose of these visits are to facilitate the discussion of current issues, share information or plan appropriate action/intervention regarding individual children.

The TELAC Officer will also collect information regarding current attendance levels of the looked after children on roll.

At times, the level of contact may vary; this is likely to be influenced by factors such as the number of looked after children in the school or issues requiring individual input.

TELAC Officers will also liaise between individual social workers and colleagues in schools to ensure that information is shared effectively, appropriate action is taken regarding educational issues and the processes of each professional discipline are more clearly understood.

2.3.2. Allocation of resources to schools

In 2002 the LEA consulted on changes to the funding mechanism for SEN. The proposals included recognition that while many looked-after children make few additional resource demands on schools, some present significant challenges.

Every school is required by law to nominate a 'Designated Teacher' to champion the interests of looked after children and every looked after child is required to have a Personal Education Plan. Recognising these requirements, the LEA now includes an element of funding within schools' delegated budget share to enable schools to respond effectively and promptly to the needs of looked after children on their rolls.

Within the SEN formula, every looked after pupil counts for funding as part of the attainment profile on intake mechanism. In the primary formula, each pupil has a weighing of X6 representing, in 2004-2005, an additional resource allocation to the schools of £2,112 in Key Stage 1 and £3,227 in Key Stage 2. For a secondary age student is X3 resulting in an allocation of £3,266. Although the sums are not related in any way to the cash grants attached to Statements, these sums broadly correspond to a statement grant at Level 4A.

2.3.3. Support from LABSS

TELAC purchases a subscription form LABSS each year. This subscription, accessed by TELAC Officers, allows for additional (time-limited) support to be provided for looked after children in any Warwickshire school.

To date, the LABSS subscription has been used to:

- enable observation and assessment of individual children
- offer individual teachers guidance on appropriate classroom strategies concerning both learning and behaviour needs
- provide direct classroom support for an agreed length of time for individual children. Such support may, for example, assist with the integration of looked after children into a new school placement.

In future, the subscription may also be used to provide 1:1 support for looked after children and young people identified as needing additional help in preparing for end of Key Stage assessment.

3. The new duty to promote the educational achievement of looked after children

3.1 The duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of Looked After Children under Section 52 of the Children Act comes into effect on 1st July 2005.

This means that in carrying out their duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children they look after, local authorities must give particular attention to the educational implications of any decision about the welfare of those children.

At this stage, the final guidance has not been published – it is due to be published in the summer at www.everychildmatters.gov.uk

Schools have an important part to play in supporting the successful implementation of the new duty, in this section some of the main issues relating to good practice schools are highlighted.

3.2 Issues for schools

3.2.1 School inspection

School inspections will, in future, specifically consider how far the education provided in schools meets the needs of the range of pupils at those schools. It is expected that vulnerable children, including those looked after, should be given specific attention within the context of the inspection.

3.2.2. School admissions

The local authority, as an admission authority, is required to give looked after children top priority in over subscription criteria as recommended by the School Admissions Code of Practice.

It is important that schools who are their own admissions authority also adopt a policy of prioritising looked after children for admission to the school.

In addition, where it is necessary to locate a school placement for a child who has recently been taken into care, it is expected that schools will co-operate fully with those representatives of the local authority (a social worker/TELAC Officer/member of the Admissions Department) attempting to secure appropriate education for the child.

The TELAC Officers for each area will always be happy to give advice around these issues.

3.2.2 Ensuring that all looked after children have an effective, high quality Personal Education Plan

In Warwickshire, TELAC Officers take the lead in co-ordinating the liaison necessary to compile a Personal Education Plan (PEP).

The new duty requires that a PEP should be in place within 20 days of becoming looked after or joining a new school, and that it should be available at the child's first statutory review.

The TELAC Officers work hard to ensure that good practice is followed; they depend on the co-operation of colleagues in school on this issue.

Good practice includes

- ensuring involvement of all relevant professionals (the designated teacher, social worker, foster carer and representatives for other agencies already involved with the child)
- enabling the child's views to be heard and incorporated in the PEP
- ensuring that the child's birth parents are appropriately involved/informed
- ensuring that dates for review of the PEP which link in to the care planning process are set, and that reviews take full account of current circumstances
- the setting of clear objectives or targets for the looked after child. Within this it is essential to make positive use of other target setting processes used by the school
- using the PEP as a means of supporting the personalised learning of the child.

3.2.3. Improving attainment

It has long been recognised that levels of educational achievement among looked after children are significantly lower than their peers and that looked after children are at significant risk of becoming disaffected with or disengaged from the education system.

Central Government targets continue to emphasise the need to narrow the gap in educational achievement between looked after children and their peers. Within this it is important to make every effort possible to ensure that this vulnerable group of young people are adequately supported in education.

4. Conclusion

It is intended that more detailed guidance on issues such as the role of the designated teacher, school policies for the education of looked after children will be issued once the DfES statutory duty is published in full.

In the meantime, schools should either contact their allocated TELAC Officer or Catherine Halsall, Head of Service with any queries or issues they wish to discuss further.