

## Protocol for Supporting Children/Young People in Care in Schools (including the Protocol for Eliminating Exclusions for Children/Young People in Care)

*Children/Young People in Care in Devon and those who have been in Care and have been adopted or placed under a Special Guardianship Order or a Child Arrangements Order should expect to benefit from a safe, happy and successful education so that they can reach their own potential in school and beyond. For this, our aim is that no Child in Care should be excluded from school, they should be able to attend the most appropriate school for them, regularly and full time and that all necessary and appropriate support is in place for them to be the best they can be. We support the following statement from the former Children's Minister:*

*'I want everyone who's involved in a vulnerable child's life; teachers, social workers, foster carers, health professionals, councillors, to have a real sense of parental responsibility for their prospects. To, not just focus on their narrow area, but look at the overall welfare. To ask themselves, before they make a decision or fill in a form, 'Would this be good enough for my own child?'*

Edward Timpson, Children's Minister (Jan 2015)

There is a strong commitment throughout Devon that the exclusion of Children/Young People in Care should be avoided, and this is upheld by Devon Head teachers, Principals and the Local Authority through the Virtual School and Childrens' Services. We have a shared recognition that Children/Young People in Care as a group are more likely to struggle in school because their early-life trauma and experiences of adverse childhood experiences can have a negative impact on their ability to manage the social, emotional and academic demands of school without a high level of support. Because traumatic life experiences often lead to Children/Young People in Care having increased difficulties in emotional development and regulation, they are unlikely to respond positively to punishment approaches. Devon exclusion statistics suggest that exclusion does not improve behaviour for Children/Young People in Care, as fixed-term exclusions are often repeated. Exclusion has a huge impact on a Child in Care and often leads to increased challenges within school, deterioration in relationships, reduced attainment alongside adding strain to care placements. We are committed to working in a multi-agency manner to support Children/Young People in Care to be successful in schools. The Virtual School will ensure that there is high quality training for Designated Teachers so that they are the experts on understanding the behaviour and needs of Children/Young People in Care and those formerly in Care. This will include building an understanding of attachment and mental health and restorative and relational approaches to behaviour. We recognise that success in school will also ensure that there is a higher likelihood of placement stability.

This protocol provides guidance on the following:

1. Supporting a Child/Young Person in Care in your school;
2. Supporting a Child/Young Person who is taken into Care while in your school;
3. Supporting a Child/Young Person in Care who transfers from one school to another;
4. Children and Young People at risk of exclusion;
5. Emergency Planning for serious incidents or risk of permanent exclusions.

The responsibility for supporting Children/Young People in Care does not lie with one individual but is shared by all adults who are involved with the him or her.

In partnership with the Virtual School, Devon primary and secondary, academy and maintained schools are committed to reducing school exclusions of Children/Young People in Care. Exclusions not only result in missed time in school but can also increase pressure on the care placement. It also can lead to further deterioration in the child's well-being.

This protocol was written by the Devon Inclusion Project: "Children/Young People in Care and those formerly in Care" group. The group included primary, secondary and alternative provision headteachers, as well as representatives of the Virtual School, Educational Psychology Service, School Admissions and social care. It has been written to ensure a gold standard of support for Devon's children and to avoid exclusion.

### **This is what our Children/Young People in Care say:**

*How do we try to reduce the number of children getting excluded from school in Devon?*

- Train teachers to be more understanding of things happening at home and how these sometimes make it hard for us to concentrate/'be good' at school.
- Understand that if a child and even their parents says nothing bad is happening at home/there are no problems, that doesn't necessarily mean it's true and so they still might not be 'being naughty.'
- There is one school we heard of (out of county) where instead of being sent to detention you get sent to see a counsellor who works at the school – that is a good idea.
- One local school always does detentions straight after school on the same day but if you have CAMHS or contact with your parents that night they move it to the next night – that is important to do.
- Tackle bullying in schools because there is a link between people being bullies, being bullied, and exclusion. Do talks on things that people get bullied for like being a migrant, being in care, having a learning difficulty etc. to help young people understand those topics and not be judgemental. Do more PSHE.
- Creative therapies, for example Lego therapy.
- Buddying schemes to help isolated children make friends.
- Plenty of PE to let energy out. On the other hand don't make PE compulsory for people who hate it/people who might be embarrassed about marks on their body.
- Make sure children aren't outed as being in care by teachers mentioning it, or by being taken out of lessons in a suspicious way for meetings.
- Have lots of nice class support workers, library staff, playground monitors, dinner ladies etc.

## 1: Supporting a Child/Young Person in your school

The Designated Teacher will lead on offering a higher level of support for Children/Young People in Care. This will require building a team of staff around them who are skilled at offering appropriate support. In this way the Child/Young Person will feel included and have a sense of belonging. This can make it less likely that behaviour will be challenging and, therefore, exclusions will be avoided.

Schools will:

- Complete a Personal Education Plan on a termly basis.
- Allocate a key adult (staff member) for the Child/Young Person who can get to know them and act as an advocate and mentor (where necessary) within the school
- Offer a supportive environment for the Personal Education Plan (PEP) to take place, involving the young person and other professionals in completing a high-quality document.
- Hold frequent meetings between the young person and Designated Teacher.
- Keep a chronological record of actions, interventions and support with their impact and outcomes.
- Offer mentoring (e.g. Attachment-based mentoring) to support the young person on a regular basis.
- Complete analysis of progress with regular feedback to the young person.
- Assess and support the Special Educational Needs of the young person and ensure they are met.
- Involve the carer and social worker in the education of the young person ensuring clear and frequent communication.
- Have a system of communicating any changes or issues for young people as soon as they are known.
- Have a system that collects information from all staff of the strengths and weaknesses of the Child/Young Person and the necessary support they need.
- Prioritise the needs of Children/Young People in Care for referral to other agencies, including the Educational Psychology (EP) service.
- Engage with 'early help' for young people who have previously been in Care and are in need of additional support.

Schools will consider:

- Academic mentoring and monitoring.
- The use of a relational support plan ([Appendix 3](#)).
- Frequent monitoring of attendance and school behaviour reports.
- A personalised timetable if required.
- Rewards to reinforce positive attitude and/or good progress.
- Liaison with alternative providers to discuss further support on a short-term basis if required.
- Partnership arrangements with other schools for managed moves and/or respite placement.
- Training for staff in Attachment Based Mentoring and ensuring that Children/Young People in Care are appropriately mentored.

- Using trained staff to support Children/Young People in Care during unstructured times such as lunch and breaks.
- The use of therapeutic approaches, such as therapy, art therapy, Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT).
- The use of alternative providers such as natural learning providers.
- Offering work placements for Key Stage 4 students to develop confidence and raise aspiration.

To ensure the young person is getting the most appropriate support all the relevant people must communicate effectively with clear aims and objectives. Everybody has an important role to play.

## 2. Supporting a Child/Young Person who is taken into care while in your school

When a child comes into Care they will experience a mix of emotions which are often unpredictable. How the school supports the Child/Young Person at this time is critical as their behaviour may put them at risk of exclusion.

The Area Learning Advocate and the Designated Teacher must:

- Call a 'Planning for Success meeting' of professionals at the earliest opportunity (typically within five days) which will include the social worker, Area Learning Advocate, carers, Designated Teacher, EP, previous school where possible and the Child/Young Person if appropriate.
- Ensure that all relevant staff are aware of the young person's new status.
- Ensure that the Designated Teacher begins to collect information from members of staff to identify support needs for the young person.
- Ensure that a mentor is appointed to begin a supportive relationship with the young person.
- Arrange a PEP meeting within twenty working days of the date that Care began.
- Ensure that appropriate training is provided to all staff to enhance their understanding of the necessary support for Children/Young People in Care.

## 3. Supporting a Child/Young Person who transfers from one school to another

Children/Young People in Care experience a great deal of loss in their lives. Moving schools is another loss which children may have to contend with. They will have left behind friends and staff who know them and have supported them. For a Child/Young Person in Care to succeed in their new school there needs to be an enhanced transition where the sending and receiving schools are fully committed to the sharing of information. Devon Admissions (CiC) will provide the new school with transfer information completed by the previous school. This information will be provided **after** an offer has been made. We do not expect Devon schools to refuse admission to a Child/Young Person in Care.

Information from the previous school will be based on the following general questions as a starting point. Some may not be relevant; there may be other questions that a new school should have answers to in order to help them to prepare for and to meet the child's needs:

1. Does the child exhibit any behaviour issues?
2. What behaviours have been experienced and how challenging are they? *Please give examples.*
3. What were the triggers that initiated the behaviour?

4. How have you managed the behaviour?
5. What has been the most successful strategy?
6. Are there any other barriers to learning and what are they? *Please give as much detail as possible.*
7. Does the child have any additional needs?
8. Have these needs been supported, if so by whom?
9. How was this followed up?
10. Is the child operating at educational age related expectations and to their potential in your opinion?
11. Are they due to sit any examinations and, if so, under which Board?
12. Are there any other issues that knowledge of would aid transition?

The Area Learning Advocate and the Designated Teacher of the receiving school must:

- Call a 'Planning for Success' meeting within five days of the offer of a school place. The sending school will send a member of staff (wherever possible) and provide a 'one-page profile' ([Appendix 4](#)) for the meeting. (There are two versions available, according to the age of the child.)
- Make use of specific guidance when planning for this transition ([Appendix 1](#))
- Ensure that all relevant staff are aware of the Child/Young Person's status.
- Ensure that a mentor is appointed to begin a supportive relationship with the Child/Young Person. (Relational Support Plan)
- Arrange a PEP meeting within twenty working days from the date of admission.

#### 4. Children/Young People at Risk of Exclusion

Where a school has concerns about the behaviour of a Child/Young Person in Care, the Virtual School Head teacher (VSH) should be informed and, where necessary, involved **at the earliest opportunity**. VSHs should be proactive in building relationships with Designated Teachers to enable this. Where a child is at risk of or has been given a fixed-term or permanent exclusion, the VSH, working with others, should:

- Consider what additional assessment and support (such as additional help for the classroom teacher, one-to-one therapeutic work or a suitable alternative placement) needs to be put in place to address the causes of the child's behaviour and prevent the need for exclusion. [The Department for Education's advice for school staff on mental health and behaviour in schools](#) may be helpful; and
- Make any additional arrangements to support the child's on-going education in the event of an exclusion. **DfE guidance for LAs 2017**

Children/Young People in Care may struggle with rigid behaviour policies and will need schools to be flexible and supportive. Despite this, a school may find that they decide to use a fixed term exclusion for a Child in Care. When there is a risk of exclusion or an exclusion is used schools must:

- Inform the Area Learning Advocate of the risk of exclusion or the exclusion;
- Send in the Annex B notification to [fixed-exclusions@devon.gov.uk](mailto:fixed-exclusions@devon.gov.uk) where there has been a fixed term exclusion;
- Call an interim PEP to focus on the areas which may need to change – attendees will include; Designated Teacher, Area Learning Advocate, EP, social worker, carer. It is important that this meeting uses the Relational Support Plan ([Appendix 3](#)) to explore in detail the behaviour, including an analysis of challenging behaviour and identification of the needs that are being communicated. A plan of agreed

action that develops from understanding the behaviour is essential to positive progress and development. At this meeting consider whether additional Pupil Premium+ or SEND funding can be used to support the young person and avoid further exclusions;

- Provide the detailed chronology of intervention and support;
- Ensure that there is an update of medical and care information from the social worker;
- Consider all options to support the young person and to prevent exclusions. This may include increased mentoring, changes to timetable and referrals for therapeutic intervention.

## 5. Emergency Planning for a serious incident or continued use of fixed term exclusions leading to a risk of a permanent exclusion

Where the school has serious concerns for the safety of the young person or of others because of the effect on others, an emergency planning meeting to determine the next steps for young person will be called. Attendees must include; the Designated Teacher, a senior member of the school staff, the Area Learning Advocate, the Inclusion officer, the EP, the social worker, the carers and the young person (if age-appropriate). The Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) must be invited and their views taken account whether they attend the meeting or not. The PEP will be reviewed to examine strategies that have worked or not worked. All parties recognise that a permanent exclusion of a Child in Care will be highly detrimental to the his or her well-being, education and stability of placement. One option that could be considered at this stage is whether the use of alternative provision could be considered on a temporary basis.

In extreme circumstances and when all support has been exhausted or in the case of a serious one-off incident the school may inform the Virtual School that the Child/Young Person will be permanently excluded or request a managed transfer to another school. All parties must agree for the transfer. If so, the right of the Local Authority as corporate parent to a hearing of the disciplinary committee of governing body will be waived. If the Local Authority disagrees with the managed transfer proposal, a permanent exclusion will be issued and the procedures detailed in the DfE guidance for schools on exclusions will be followed, including the Independent Review Panel.

When a managed transfer is agreed the child will move to another mainstream school. The annex 'G' will be issued as part of the process which will ensure that the AWPU follows the child to the new school. If there is significant evidence that specialist provision is necessary and there is no EHCP, the Local Authority will arrange education without delay while there is a request for statutory assessment. In the case of a child with a statutory EHC Plan the child will remain on roll while the school conduct an interim annual review and communicate with the 0-25 SEN.

### Produced by a joint working party of the Devon Inclusion Project 2017/18

Alan Salt (King Edward VI Community College)  
 Sarah Acland (Schools Company South & West Devon Academy)  
 Tim Rutherford (West Exe School)  
 Ian Hemelik (Virtual School Head teacher)  
 Danny Mead (Area Learning Advocate)  
 Nicky Dunford (The Link Academy Trust)  
 Andrew Brent (DCC – Education Policy & Strategy Officer)  
 Dr Tim Cockerill (Babcock LDP – Educational Psychology Service)  
 Jenny-Ellen Scotland (Area Manager Children's Services)



## Supporting Children/Young People in Care Through Transitions: Good Practice Guidance

We are all familiar with the feelings experienced when we think about change. Anticipation, excitement and curiosity can be over-shadowed by feelings of anxiety, uncertainty and fear of the unknown. Transitions can be particularly difficult for children who have experienced past trauma. The loss involved can trigger strong emotions, including feelings of rejection and abandonment. If we fail to adequately support transition then a child's anxieties may grow as they increasingly feel overwhelmed and out of control. Restoring predictability can help. These brief notes aim to provide information for schools in supporting vulnerable children, particularly those in care, during times of transition.

### Planning for a Successful Transition for Vulnerable Children

#### Early Stages:

- Identify Children/Young People in Care facing transition and consider the likely impact upon them.
- Through dialogue with carers and outside agencies, aim to develop a good understanding of the emotional needs of individual children who are likely to struggle to cope with change. This will provide a basis for agreeing strategies and providing opportunities to adjust to each child's internal attachment model in specific ways which are safe for all concerned. It may be important to be aware that how a young person responds to a new environment can sometimes seem out of proportion or unexpected but it may make sense to the person's own experiences.
- From this dialogue and understanding, a written plan can then be shared with key people including carers/parents, receiving school and pupil. It can be incorporated into the PEP process for Children/Young People in Care.
- Talk with pupils about any imminent changes well in advance. Some may benefit from a visual representation of the transition process showing timescales. Through conversation, help children to balance the loss of the old with positive anticipation of the new. This may include the adult highlighting exciting new activities and opportunities available at the new school. Create jointly the positive features which will encourage the child to look forward to the transition.
- Set aside dedicated time for the child to say goodbye to significant individuals and groups within the old school - this will be essential.
- Provide opportunities to meet new teachers and key adults. Provision of associated photos and/or notes can be helpful to keep at home for reference.
- Remember the importance of being flexible and understanding that the emotional health and well-being of the young person can vary and fluctuate and the need to adapt where necessary.

### **Making the Most of Transition Visits**

- Enhanced transition arrangements may be required, including additional familiarisation visits, either individually or in a small group. These will provide an opportunity for the child to meet the key adult who will support them at their new school.
- The visits provide an opportunity for the child to take pictures and develop a transition photo book. Also consider providing images of key people and places.
- Some children may benefit from a safety tour of the school, explicitly identifying ways in which pupils are kept safe from accidents, outside adults and other sources of harm and the ways in which care is shown to pupils.

### **Later Stages**

- Some children will benefit from the use of transitional objects. These may take many different forms but essentially they represent the security of a significant adult when that adult is not physically present. During major transitions the importance of objects that children and young people can take away with them to their new situation should be recognised. Such items might include: familiar toys, photo key fobs, books, scrapbook diaries, autographs, photographs and special work.
- It may be helpful to provide a continued connection with a key adult from the old school – perhaps through a couple of visits and then a card to wish the child well.
- At times of major transition, provide opportunities for such adults to identify shared memories and reflect on successes and challenges, celebrating shared work.
- Help pupils to make a difference to others. Involve children and young people in providing support to their peers as part of everyday friendships and relationships.
- Consider how a sense of belonging can be fostered in the new environment; e.g. the child could leave a picture or piece of work with the new key adult.
- Create a secure base for the child to go to with familiar and trusted members of staff.
- Provide support from an adult trusted by the child to meet and greet them at points of difficulty, such as the start of the school day.
- In containing anxiety, supporting adults will need to be able to recognise the anxieties underlying behaviour which may be an expression of it, for example: aggression, difficult social relationships, and/or withdrawal.
- Plan situations in which vulnerable pupils can be actively encouraged to express their feelings and emotions and to have these validated as appropriate.
- Consider implementing long-term teaching programmes to help pupils to develop and maintain the capacity to cope with change. Activities which promote resilience and the application of explicit coping strategies will be appropriate.



## Supporting Transitions for Children/Young People in Care: Good Practice Guidelines for Schools and Settings

### Background

Children/Young People in Care can find transitions and change very distressing and difficult. This can often happen suddenly, for example when there is a change of care placement or when a child first goes into care. The following guidelines should be considered when supporting a school move for a child in care that occurs outside of the usual primary to secondary transition. Please see

### Factors that support success

- The development of a clear and thorough transition plan that is developed in advance where possible and collects the views of settings, parents/carers and the student. The plan will need to be bespoke and personalised to reflect the student's interests and current needs.
- The transition should be phased and designed to minimise anxiety. Often, having expectations for children to enter full school life immediately is unrealistic and this can lead to challenges.
- The pupil should visit the new setting for an initial visit where they are supported by a trusted adult (e.g. from their current setting) who stays with them. During this visit, the pupil should be introduced to their keyworker and be told where to find this person.
- In advance of the transition, the pupil should be able to access their proposed timetable and be able to visit key physical locations at the school.
- If the transition is sudden and unexpected, staff at the receiving setting should prioritise gaining as much information as possible from carers, social worker and the previous setting prior to the child starting. When a child in care leaves a school suddenly, it is important that staff at the leaving school support a positive ending/goodbye even if the child is no longer on roll.
- Use the Relational Support Plan as a framework for exploring the child's needs and the support required. Identify a key adult member of staff as a point of contact.
- When starting, the pupil is likely to need higher support than usual, e.g. through a peer mentor, adult support or buddy system.
- Ensure the pupil has somewhere they can go to ask about worries or concerns.
- For secondary aged pupils, it is possible that the student will need to develop a sense of security within the school before accessing the range of subjects. For example, through the use of small group, flexible provision for vulnerable students.
- Consider scheduling regular mentoring to support the student
- Review regularly and monitor the young person for signs they are finding something hard. Consider what skills they need to develop to enhance their ability to cope and develop a plan to teach and support them to develop that skill.
- If challenges persist, carefully analyse the reasons for this and identify whether aspects of the environment are stressful or overwhelming. Make use of structured provision during break times where necessary.
- Liaise regularly with parents and carers and ensure the student is aware of this open and regular communication. Plans, sanctions and rewards should be jointly agreed by staff, parents/carers and students and applied consistently.

# Planning for Success: A Relational Support Plan

<b>Name of Pupil:</b>	<b>School:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
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**Attendees:**

*Ensure that the views of the child/young person have been gained prior to meeting.  
Staff that have completed the Attachment-based Mentoring training are well placed to contribute to this meeting.*

The Relational Support Plan provides a framework for exploring the needs of vulnerable children and young people, including those in care. It draws upon evidence showing that feeling secure and having positive relationships are essential to wellbeing, behaviour and learning.

This form should be completed when a student first goes into care or when a child or young person starts a new school and is already in care. It is supplementary to the PEP process and should be reviewed on a regular basis.

**Early Development and Life Experiences**

Briefly outline the life experiences of the child/young person that may be relevant e.g. history of trauma, loss, abuse, multiple care moves, bereavement, multiple school moves.

The student's behaviour and communication will have been influenced by their life experiences. It is important to remember that young people will present in different ways – some may show challenging behaviours and have a need to control, others can be overly-compliant, attempt to avoid interaction and appear withdrawn.

In the next section, consider the key prompts for discussion and note down actions under the 4 headings: Protection, Connection, Understanding and Care.

**The significant adult/adults**

Who is best placed to be the significant adult?

Does the child need a team of adults supporting them with someone available to them at all times throughout the day? If so, who will form this team?

**Protection**

This explains the need for safety and security. Children who have had adverse life experiences may not automatically feel safe. They can find school threatening and require relationships, support and structure to develop feelings of security and safety, which are essential to effective learning and behaviour.

**Key Question Prompts:**

How will the child be helped to feel safe by the significant adults? What safety cues will be helpful?

How will other adults in school help the child to feel safe?

Are there times in the day when the child feels particularly unsafe, Beginnings, endings, transition? How can these times be managed?

How can the environment be adapted to help the child feel safe?

How can the day be structured to help the child feel safe?

**Actions:**

**Connection**

Meaningful connections with others promote feelings of safety, trust and belonging. Experiences of connection are important in developing the cortex, higher level thinking and regulation. For children who have had interrupted experiences of care, there is a need for a high level of connection within school.

**Key Question prompts:**

- What is the best way to connect with the child?
- How will the significant adults provide meaningful connection with the child?
- How will other adults in school connect with the child?
- How will the development of positive peer friendships be promoted?
- What activities may help the child to develop their sense of belonging in school?

**Actions:**

**Understanding**

Children need adults to understand them and communicate this understanding in an empathetic way, whilst also maintaining clear rules, boundaries and expectations. Understanding and co-regulation from an adult will support children to develop their ability to regulate themselves.

**Key Question prompts:**

- What does the child's behaviour tell us about how they are feeling?
- What is our understanding of the child's feelings?
- If the student is finding something hard or displaying challenging behaviour, how will adults respond and show understanding?
- How will the child be co-regulated and calmed?
- What empathic responses might be helpful?
- How will the understanding of other adults in school be supported / developed? How will they respond to incidents?
- What will happen to ensure that relationships are repaired?

**Actions:**

<p><b>Care</b> For children who have had insufficient experiences of caregiving, adults at school need to be particularly mindful of providing a high level of care. This includes meeting the child's basic needs, enabling them to experience comfort and joy and showing them that they are liked.</p>	
<p><b>Key Question prompts:</b></p> <p>How will adults communicate care to the child/young person?</p> <p>How will the child know that they are liked?</p> <p>What activities may foster shared enjoyment?</p> <p>How can we ensure the child knows they are being held in mind?</p> <p>How will the child be soothed?</p>	<p><b>Actions:</b></p>
<p>What skills are we going to support the child to develop in their areas of need?</p>	
<p><b>Prompts:</b></p> <p>Control-related e.g. accepting an adult lead, co-operative working, turn-taking, requesting help</p> <p>Social skills e.g. explicit teaching of listening skills, responding to others, starting conversations, proximity,</p> <p>Identity-based e.g. ability to take risks in learning, accept challenges, make mistakes</p> <p>Self-regulation and sensory regulation e.g. emotional literacy, self-soothing, managing sensory input</p> <p>Behaviours for learning e.g. Planning, organisation, managing transitions</p> <p>Building on strengths How can we enable the pupil to build on their strengths?</p>	<p><b>Actions:</b></p>

**My One-Page Profile**

**Your Name:**

**Age :**



**What people appreciate about me**

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**What is important to me**

Large empty rounded rectangular box for writing.

**How to support me**

Large empty rounded rectangular box for writing.



