

Education Department Policy

Title: Education for Children who are “Looked After” by the States of Jersey

Date: April 2016

1. Aim

The aim of this policy is to set out the joint commitment of both departments (Education and Health and Social Services) to the promotion of good educational outcomes for children and young people who enter and remain in public care.

The policy provides for each department to work together with other departments, schools and governing bodies, to ensure that the notion of “Corporate Parenting” is fully embraced.

The policy also acknowledges that whilst absence or exclusion from education is a common factor in family and placement breakdown, successful integration and inclusion into education can be an equally contributory determinant of successful placements, or to successful re-integration home.

2. Definitions

2.1 Corporate Parenting

Responsible parents hold together many strands of their children’s lives, caring about their safety, health, education, leisure interests, friendships and their future. Their main task is to enable their children to grow up into well-adjusted, law-abiding citizens. They play a particularly significant role in the education of their children.

The serious underachievement of children who are without this continuous, consistent parental advocacy is testimony to this. For Looked After Children, just as for children in settled families, care, health and education are closely linked.

Corporate Parenting emphasises the collective responsibilities of all agencies working with children and young people to achieve good parenting. Once the difficult decision is made to remove a child from his or her family or accept a child into its care, the States of Jersey effectively assumes the responsibility of providing good parenting. This will involve promoting the interests of the child for the period they are in care, and for as long as deemed necessary once they have left care. The Children’s Service has for some time now tried to put into practice the principles embedded in the UK Children Act 1989, which highlights the welfare of the child as

being paramount. From an educational perspective, these responsibilities are further clarified through the UK DfEE Guidance on the Education of Young People in Public Care (May 2000) and more recently Guidance from the Social Care Institute for Excellence “Promoting the quality of life of Looked After Children and Young People”.

The former defines Corporate Parenting as:

- Prioritising education
- Social and educational inclusion
- Continuity and stability
- High expectations
- Early intervention
- Listening to children and young people

The Children’s Service, Education Department (ED), school, Board of Governors (if the school has one), together with other partner agencies, constitute “***the Corporate Parent***”.

2.2 Children in Care

Looked After Children are cared for in a variety of circumstances. The term is used to apply to all children or young people who are subject to a Statutory Order via Care Proceedings. The term will apply whether they are placed in foster care, a residential facility (with or without educational provision), or with parents, friends or relatives. The term also applies to children who are placed in care on a voluntary basis.

Within the UK DfEE Guidance, the term “Children and Young People in Public Care” is used to describe those who are in care as stated above.

3. The Jersey Context

There is a need for information that provides some statistical data about the educational attainments of Looked After Children compared with other children in Jersey. In addition, data is required about exclusions, suspensions and absences of Looked After Children compared to other Jersey children, to be split into age bands relating to educational key stages.

A report completed by Dr Kathie Bull (December 2002) indicated that 80% of Looked After Children in Jersey have emotional and behavioural difficulties and a significant number have school related problems. Some children in Jersey have a Record of Need and have an Annual Review to ensure that the child’s ongoing educational needs are being addressed.

It is highly likely, despite the lack of statistical data to hand, that the picture in Jersey for Looked After Children will be similar to that in the UK in relation to educational attainment. The picture in the UK is grim to say the least:

- Three in five have no formal qualifications
- 4% achieve five good GCSE passes compared to 50% nationally

- 26% have a Statement of Special Educational Needs
- A quarter have missed 25 days or more in a school year
- 96% have emotional and behavioural difficulties
- Nearly a third miss out on basic annual health checks, including immunisation
- Most are in care because of abuse, neglect, family dysfunction or welfare concerns. Only 5% are in care because of their behaviour or criminal activity

Moreover, when they grow up, the prospects are worrying:

- One in three prisoners was in care as a child
- One in four children will be a parent by the time they leave care
- One in five will be homeless two years after leaving care

4. States of Jersey Responsibility

The States of Jersey recognises its responsibilities as a Corporate Parent; specifically, those representatives of the States departments who work directly with children and young people in care have a responsibility to maximise their overall development, including educational development.

The States recognises that Looked After Children are no different from children in the general population, but they are in need of greater effort and support to overcome the disadvantage attached to the obvious upheaval and disruption in their lives. Consequently, for the Corporate Parent to be an effective parent, it requires those involved with the education of a Looked After Child to be more deliberate in their role and more pro-active in advocating on their behalf.

5. The Needs of Looked After Children

The States of Jersey acknowledges that children in their care are likely to have needs greater than those in the general population, as a direct consequence of becoming Looked After Children. In addition, the risks of those needs being compounded or overlooked are increased due to a lack of continuity of home, family life, friends, social outlets, health care, personal identity and, not least, education.

The education of Looked After Children is essential to each child or young person's well being, and a passport to improved opportunities in adulthood.

The ED and Health and Social Services, in partnership with other relevant agencies, will work together to actively promote the educational interests of Looked After Children of compulsory school age, in mainstream education, or other appropriate setting.

6. Reducing the Incidence of Changes: Care and Education

There is a need for the ED and Health and Social Services to work together to promote continuity of care and education for Looked After Children. In so doing, it needs to consider care and education provision together, recognising that secure integration into school life is a major contributing factor to the maintenance of placement stability and the healthy development of personal identity and friendships.

The Children's Service will strive to ensure that a child in its care does not experience unnecessary placement changes. For those who cannot return home, it

will endeavour to find a permanent placement and appropriate school enrolment for each child as soon as practically possible.

7. Management of Changes

Arrangements for the child's education will be agreed wherever possible before the child's placement in care, or before any planned placement change occurs. In cases of emergency admission or placement change, arrangements for resuming or continuing education will be confirmed and actioned within 10 working days of the change.

For those Looked After Children who do not have a current educational placement when, or during the time, they become looked after, efforts will be made to ensure that a suitable educational placement is found within 10 working days. To facilitate speedy action, a Care Planning Meeting will be held within five working days, attended by all relevant parties who will be responsible for resolving any educational placement difficulties. This will invariably include the school with whom the child or young person is/should be registered, the allocated social worker, and any other significant other involved in the child's life.

It will be for the social worker and the relevant designated teacher to agree when a Care Planning Meeting for this purpose will be convened and who should be in attendance at the Care Planning Meeting. There should also be an invitation to the educational psychologist linked to the school in question.

Senior managers (Head of Service or above) of each respective department must be informed of any difficulties in achieving a desired outcome at an early stage with a view to securing a satisfactory outcome for the child/young person at the earliest juncture.

The States of Jersey recognises the damage caused through serious interruption in a child's education. It will ensure that unavoidable breaks in education are managed pro-actively to keep loss of educational provision to an absolute minimum.

A proposed measure is a commitment to keeping loss of education provision to an absolute minimum and no more than 25 days in any academic year.

8. Designated Teachers

Each school will identify a designated teacher for all Looked after Children within the school. This will be a member of staff of sufficient seniority to be an effective advocate for all Looked After Children within the school (e.g. head of year), and ensure their access to identified services and support. They will be responsible for liaising with all relevant parties and be pro-active in resolving any difficulties that may arise. The designated teacher will also be responsible for contributing to the completion of a Personal Education Plan for the child/young person, having sought relevant information from all those actively involved in the child's education. They will also be responsible for the speedy transfer of educational information between agencies and individuals to avoid unnecessary delays in progressing a child's overall "Care Plan" and promote continuity towards maximising educational potential and attainment. The designated teacher will also be responsible for tracking progress and feeding information regarding both academic and social development into formal Looked After Child Reviews.

9. Information Sharing

The ED and Health and Social Services will establish, develop, and maintain systems which facilitate shared access to all relevant information necessary for the promotion of educational attainment of Looked After Children, as well as quality planning.

The designated teacher will provide information pertaining to all Looked After Children for whom they have responsibility including attendance figures, periods of suspension/exclusion, alongside evidence of any academic and social progress made.

This information will be collated by the Education Support Team to assist in the provision of annual statistics which will be considered annually at a strategic level by the ED and Health and Social Services Department senior management.

10. Advocacy

All those involved in the care of a Looked After Child have a responsibility to ensure that the child has prompt access to services to meet any educational need identified. They equally have a responsibility in ensuring that being “in care” does not compromise the child’s access to additional opportunities arising within and in association with his/her education.

11. Role of Head teacher

Head teachers are responsible for:

- ensuring that a member of staff of sufficient seniority is identified as a designated teacher to represent the interests of all Looked After Children within their school
- ensuring that arrangements are in place within their school to support the role of the designated teacher (eg training on the needs of Looked After Children, the time needed to devote to children in our care and co-ordinate/attend relevant meetings as and when required, admin support etc)
- ensuring that the educational and emotional interests of Looked After Children are actively promoted

The headteacher will ensure the required information is provided to the Education Support Team on an annual basis. This information will include the number of Looked After Children in the school, any periods of suspension/exclusion and sufficient information about their educational development and ongoing needs. This will enable the Education Support Team to consider whether their contribution to the role of “Corporate Parent” is being effectively fulfilled.

12. Guidance for Consideration in Determining School Arrangements for “Looked After” Children

When children enter or move within the Care System, it is vitally important to ensure that their educational needs are addressed constructively within the context of overall Care Planning.

It is essential that the designated teacher and any other educational professional involved (eg educational psychologist, education welfare officer, etc) are consulted

regarding any proposed changes to a child's education arrangements.

Within the planning and reviewing process, the following issues should be addressed:

- What are the child/young person's views, wishes and feelings?
- How will carers support the child's education?
- What is the most suitable means of establishing appropriate communication between school/carer; school and other relevant professionals?
- How will the impact of change be managed to minimise disruption and promote positive educational outcomes for the child?
- Where a child is subject to a Record of Need, a change of school must not take place without a formal Review being held

The following guidance is intended to assist carers and professionals to focus on the child's educational needs and circumstances, and must be referred to in reaching decisions about the child's school enrolment.

13. General Principles

- As a general rule, continuity of education is crucial to all children and is particularly important for those children who become looked after.
- At a time of disruption, maintaining continuity and stability within a familiar school setting can help minimise the impact of disruption within the child's life.
- A change of school should only happen where the benefit of a change of school outweighs the educational disadvantages attached to such a move.
- A decision to change school for any child in care should not be made lightly and should give due consideration as to the potential impact of such a move.
- If a move of school is felt to be necessary, it is best to try and ensure this happens ideally at the beginning of a school year, or at the very least at the beginning of a school term, rather than part-way through a term.
- Efforts should be made to enable a farewell from the current school as well as a smooth, supported transition into the receiving school.

CHANGE HISTORY

| Version | Date Issued | Issued by | Reason for Change |
|---------|-------------|--|--|
| 0.1 | May 2011 | Educational Psychologist (ED), Team Manager of the Child Care Team (HSSD) | |
| 0.2 | May 2014 | Head of Inclusion | Change ownership to Head of Inclusion Remove last sentence from para 9 (specifying what time of year a meeting will take place) Remove table (summarizing key stages) from para 13 |
| 0.3 | April 2016 | Director of Inclusion and Family Support | Updated to reflect new Department name and job titles/contacts. |

APPROVAL

| Presented To | Approved by: | Date |
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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

| Planned review date: | Distribution: | |
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| Associated policies | Name | Reference |
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