

Select Committee on Children's Services – 15 November 2007

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

Purpose of Report

1. To report to the Committee on the progress of performance of the local target regarding PEPs for looked after children.

Background

2. The Children Act 2004 places a duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children. PEPs contribute to the educational achievement of looked after children through prioritising the educational needs of the young person in care.
3. A PEP ensures access to services and support, contributes to stability, minimises disruption and broken schooling, signals particular and special needs, establishes clear goals and acts as a record of progress and achievement.
4. Although the Children Act 2004 states that all children in care should have PEP the DfES have advised that it is only obligatory for looked after children of compulsory school age (i.e. 5-16) to have an up-to-date PEP. The Act does encourage Local Authorities to draw up a pre-school PEP, which considers suitable educational opportunities for under 5's.
5. It also requires that a 16+ PEP is maintained as part of the preparation and review of the Pathway plan. In line with this expectation Dudley are currently undertaking Early Years PEPs (3 years+) and 16+ PEP's, which are not reflected in the performance target figures, reported to Cabinet.
6. The recent White Paper Care Matters: Time for Change has again emphasised the importance for all children in care to have a high quality PEP and strengthens the Designated Teacher role as being key in both the design and delivery of PEPs, by placing it on a statutory footing. It is the Social Worker who initiates PEPs but it is a shared

responsibility between the school, young person, carer and Social Worker to ensure that the PEP is in place with clear defined actions and outcomes.

7. To further promote the educational achievement of looked after children Dudley MBC has successfully received funding to appoint a Virtual School Headteacher as part of a pilot programme who will also help to review/monitor the local authority PEP process.
8. Improvement on PEPs has been targeted as a result of concerns for the continuing underperformance on the local target and the findings from our JAR report which states that too many children do not have personal education plans and are not engaged in education, training or employment pathways. (Dudley Joint Area Review 2006)
9. The PEP is a self-selected local indicator as contained within the Council plan. The definition is the percentage of looked after children in the care of Dudley MBC for a month or more having a current (up-to-date) PEP. We have a new and improved measure within the existing target and added a new measure that newly looked after children have a PEP in time for their first statutory review which is within the first month of becoming looked after.
10. However, the target addresses only quantity not quality of the PEP and for it to contribute to the outcomes for the child as well as the performance of the authority, quality will also need to be addressed.
11. Action to improve upon this local key performance indicator will therefore include:
 - Enhancing processes, policy and procedures
 - Reviewing/revising the local key performance indicator
 - Clarity regarding roles and responsibilities
 - Ensuring and developing the skills of contributors
 - Developing an improvement plan
12. A PEP Improvement Group has been established and is chaired by a Divisional Manager, Children's Specialist Services. The group is cross divisional and includes school representation
13. An improvement plan and graph showing trends has been established and is attached as Appendix 1

Finance

14. Whilst some no-cost and low-cost changes can be implemented immediately or in the near future there will need to be a more careful examination of the costs involved in the second or subsequent phases of this improvement plan, not least arising from Care Matters. Additional administration and business support has been identified as a key factor in driving forward the improvement agenda.
15. The first phase of the plan will involve social work admin in each district teams taking on new responsibilities in the process and other partners understanding their parts in the process.
16. Subsequent phases may involve more significant changes, particularly arising out of Care Matters (e.g. the changing role of the Designated Teacher and impact of the Virtual Head Teacher pilot).

Law

17. The Children Act 2004 places a duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children. PEPs contribute to the educational achievement of looked after children through prioritising the educational needs of the young person in care.
18. In May 2000 the Government issued guidance on the Education of Children and Young People in Public Care. It is supported by DH Circular LAC (2000) 13. The guidance introduced PEPs for all children in public care.
19. The recent White Paper Care Matters: Time for Change emphasises the importance for all children in care to have a high quality PEP.

Equality Impact

20. Implementation of PEPs contributes to improved outcomes for looked after children and it assists the Council in discharging its corporate parenting responsibilities to ensure that looked after children are not disadvantaged by being in care and that they are supported in their educational, emotional and social well-being.

Recommendations

21. That Select Committee note the contents of the report and approve the improvement plan – key actions relating to performance of PEPs.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Freeman'.

John Freeman
Director of Children's Services

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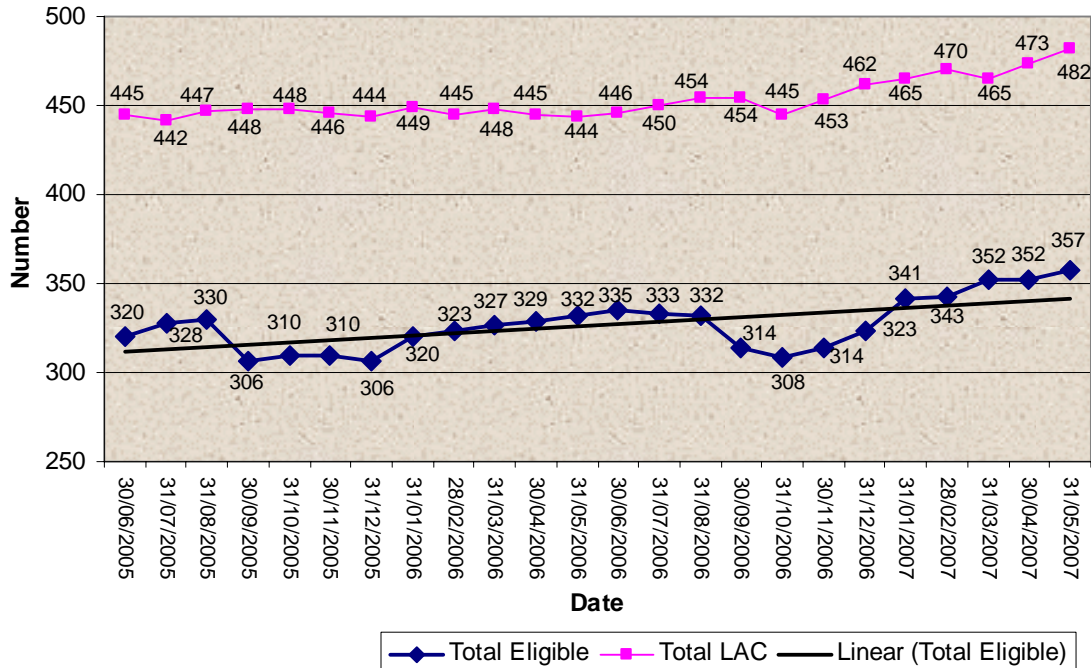
PEP Improvement Plan – Key Actions

What		Why	How
1.	Implement the revised PEP process	Critical driver of the overall system for ensuring PEPs are delivered as required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and agree the resource to enable implementation Bring forward the 'due date' to address school holidays Update procedure and advise staff to set review dates at the PEP meeting
2.	Monitor and review Local Performance Target (compulsory school age)	To ensure improvement is achieved and that proper comparison and accurate reports can be made	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 07/08 75% 08/09 85% 09/10 100%
3.	Improve management information	Ensure the monitoring and reporting of 'new' measures in order to accurately identify where individual contributions can deliver further improvements	Record reasons for non-compliance on SWIFT
4.	Revise PEP process for Early Years and 16+	To ensure all children's PEPs are covered	Identify task group to action
5.	Update the Joint Policy Statement 'Education of Children in the Care of DMBC – Roles and Responsibilities 2003'	Requires revision to take account of new developments and roles	PEP Group to identify a sub-group to undertake revision
6.	PEP form to be revised and electronic PEP form to be designed	Improve the quality of the PEP, enable more efficient production, monitoring and recording of PEPs	PEP Group to identify a sub-group to undertake revision and design work

7.	Agree a protocol to address the capacity of partners to attend meetings	To ensure that cancellation of meetings, due to resource pressures, is minimised	Draft a protocol Including quoracy
8.	Develop a communication strategy	To ensure an efficient and effective means to ensure knowledge and importance of PEPs is understood by all, including new staff and carers	LACES and partners to agree a strategy to include induction processes, workshops and visits to meetings/teams
9.	Improve the profile of PEPs	To ensure PEPs are prioritised appropriately and integrated into relevant practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education of looked after children to be included as a regular item on the Social Worker and school meeting agenda (including LACES where appropriate) • PEPs to be explicitly referred to within Court Care Plans Independent Reviewing Officer to report lack of/out of date PEPs to District Managers
10.	LACES to develop a young person's leaflet on their education entitlement	To ensure young people understand the importance of education/the PEP and their entitlement to education/an up-to-date PEP	Leaflet produced involving young people
11.	Care Matters (and other Government driven developments)	To ensure Dudley's PEP arrangements are in line with Government requirements	Dudley's PEP arrangements reviewed in line with Care Matters
12.	Standards for PEP meetings and the PEP document	To ensure PEPs are developed in a constructive and purposeful fashion that assists toward achieving the young person's educational outcomes	Produce a standards document

Dudley Trends (Local Performance Target)

Looked After Children Eligible For PEP's



Looked After Children With Up to Date PEP's

