

# **Supporting Looked After Children with English as an Additional Language in Schools**

## **Contents**

<b>Section</b>	<b>Page</b>
1 ..... Background .....	2
2 ..... Initial admissions meeting – good practice .....	2
3 ..... Support available for LAC with English as an additional language .....	3
4 ..... Role of the Designated Teacher for LAC – the PEP and beyond .....	4
5 ..... Curricular considerations .....	4
6 ..... SEN assessment considerations .....	5
7 ..... Cultural considerations .....	6
8 ..... Health and wellbeing of LAC with English as an additional language .....	6
9 ..... Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers as a group with particular needs .....	7
10 ..... Service user’s comments .....	7
11 ..... Private fostering arrangements .....	8
12 ..... Resources that schools, social workers and carers should consider obtaining for LAC with EAL .....	8
13 ..... Contacts .....	9
14 ..... Document contributors .....	9

## **Section 1: Background**

This document has been created by a range of professionals within Norfolk Children's Services including representatives from Education, Social Care and the English Language Support Service (ELSS).

The aim of this document is to support schools in successfully including Looked After Children (LAC) who have English as an additional language (EAL). As a group, the educational attainment of LAC is lower than that of children who live with their families, with far-reaching consequences for life chances.

Looked After status for children is legally defined. A number of interested parties form the team around the child (TAC), which will include the child's carer, birth family, social worker, independent reviewing officer, the LAC health team, school staff and other specialist professionals e.g. therapists.

Looked After Children face barriers to learning and this may be significantly greater for LAC who have English as an additional language when accessing education in a medium that is not their home language. Some children with EAL may come from backgrounds where cultural and educational expectations may be very different from those that they meet in Norfolk.

A number of LAC in Norfolk have English as an additional language. A broad range of languages are represented in this population, including languages from Europe, Africa, the Indian sub-continent and Asia.

## **Section 2: Initial admissions meeting – good practice**

Some LAC with English as an additional language will move between phases at the usual time with their school peer group. However, some Looked After Children with EAL may arrive unexpectedly at any point in the school year, specifically Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASCs), in which case there will need to be an initial admissions meeting.

### **Key Messages**

- EAL pupils are not a homogenous group (and neither are LAC pupils a homogenous group)
- Effective schools are proactive in collecting information to plan for pupil progress from day 1
- Prompt access to accurate pupil information is essential for planning for new EAL pupils – systems must be in place to ensure that all information collected is accurate and is disseminated before the pupil starts school. Delaying the start date is essential for this to occur.
- Other pupils have a key role to play in welcoming new arrivals

**Adapted from the National Strategies New Arrivals Excellence Programme: CPD Modules April 2008**  
Teaching and Learning DCSF ref 00041-2008DOM-EN by **Samia Malik and Jill Gambier**

*Norfolk English Language Support Service*

Transitions are often particularly difficult for Looked After Children and a positive start is paramount in promoting good academic progress and social inclusion. It is important that all known relevant information is shared at the admissions stage and that the initial interaction between the young person, the foster carers, social care and the school is both positive and supportive. Good, reliable information collected at the admissions stage enables the young person's transition into school to be smooth and problem free and appropriate support identified. It is also important to highlight any information that is not known about the child but which needs to be established, where possible, to support them. It is considered good practice for an interpreter to be present if the young person's English language level is not yet adequate for complete understanding; the child's Social Worker will be able to make a judgement about this. It should be agreed between the Social Worker and the relevant member of school staff (usually the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children) as to who should make the necessary arrangements to secure the interpreter but this would generally be the responsibility of the school to organise and pay for.

For EAL pupils there is specific information that will help the school to provide the necessary support for their learning. This information should include:

- Date of arrival in the UK
- Information relating to the first language and the pupils level of literacy in this language
- Previous educational experience in home or other country
- Community links – supplementary schools, community groups/religious practices
- Young person's view of their educational experience/what could help

The following should also be considered at the initial meeting:

- For secondary pupils, choice of options if in Year 10/11
- The identification of a 'buddy' who can support transition into school
- Placement in appropriate sets
- Assessment of English language level

The raised participation age should be taken into consideration when planning. From September 2013 young people will be involved in learning to the end of the academic year when they will turn 17. This will rise to age 18 in the academic year 2014/2015.

### **Section 3: Support available for LAC with English as an additional language**

The Virtual School for Looked After Children monitors the progress of all Norfolk Looked After Children and supports schools in promoting a positive educational experience and good academic attainment. This is done through a range of activities and interventions (including additional funding, extra-curricular opportunities, access to Specialist Support Assistant support, training for schools and other professionals).

All Schools have access to a Divisional Advisory Learning Support Teacher (ALST) for Looked After Children, who makes regular visits to schools with Looked After

Children in order to advise, support and signpost, as well as attend meetings where appropriate. The ALST for Looked After Children can assist schools in co-ordinating relevant support for individual children.

The English Language Support Service works in partnership with Norfolk schools to support the inclusion and attainment of students who are new to English, more advanced bilingual learners and refugees and asylum seekers. The Service offers a variety of advisory and teaching support options including guidance on admissions and induction for new arrivals, inclusive practice, target setting and intervention planning and delivery.

It is the responsibility of the school the child attends to ensure that the needs of Looked After Children with EAL are met within school; the above services are available to provide advice and support.

#### **Section 4: Role of the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children – the PEP and beyond**

It is a statutory requirement for all schools to appoint a Designated Teacher for Looked After Children, who must be a qualified teacher. The Personal Education Plan (PEP) is a legal requirement within the education strand of the overall Care Plan for a Looked After Child.

An initial PEP meeting should be requested by a child's Social Worker within 28 days of their joining a school. After this there should be six monthly meetings to update the PEP, with the responsibility for these meetings being the joint responsibility of the Designated Teacher for LAC, the Advisory Support Learning Teacher for LAC, the child's social worker and the ELSS Advisory or Support teacher, where appropriate.

The purpose of the PEP is to identify the educational needs of the child, with clear actions and strategies noted along with targets that are reviewed on a regular basis. The role of the DT for LAC goes far beyond the PEP meetings and paperwork. The Designated Teacher should have an overview of the learning experience and performance of all Looked After Children in the school. This includes sharing information about children with staff appropriately, keeping in mind issues of confidentiality and data protection. In addition the Designated Teacher for LAC has a responsibility to liaise with all relevant agencies and individuals who form the 'Team Around the Child', attending meetings and reviews as appropriate.

Designated Teachers for LAC are required to have regular training to enable them to fulfil this leadership role within school and help prepare them to support teaching and other staff to promote positive outcomes for Looked After Children. The Virtual School provides a range of training to schools to help support the successful inclusion of Looked After Children.

#### **Section 5: Curricular considerations**

- The curriculum should reflect as far as possible the cultural and linguistic heritage of the young person.
- Sensitivity should be exercised when selecting topics and activities for children who are Looked After and who have English as an additional

language, particularly where such children may have experienced very traumatic events and may not be in touch with their birth family or know their whereabouts.

- There should be specific language targets as well as curriculum targets for EAL pupils.
- When choosing options in Year 9 the language demands of the subject area should be taken into account. e.g. History requires a high level of English language fluency in both reading and writing.
- If the student has limited or no literacy in a first language and/or limited experience of school before arrival in the UK it may take them longer to develop literacy in English. An individualised programme should be devised to support the acquisition of basic literacy (and often numeracy) skills.
- Pupils who are literate in their first language may be able to take a GCSE in that language e.g. Polish, Portuguese, Arabic.
- The Looked After status of a child is not always common knowledge. Individual teachers should be sensitive to the presence (or possible presence) of Looked After Children in school, including LAC with English as an additional language.
- Occasionally the LAC status of a child is unknown to the school and where a member of staff learns about a child who is not living with their family, they should raise this with the Designated Teacher for LAC.

For further advice and support, schools may wish to contact the ALST for LAC, the Senior Educational Psychologist for LAC, or the ELSS.

## **Section 6: SEN assessment considerations**

It is important that having English as an additional language is **not** viewed as: -

- a deficit
- constituting a learning difficulty

However, it is possible for a child who has English as an additional language to also have a learning problem or disability, or to be developmentally delayed. Such difficulties should not be overlooked or remain unexplored. In addition, many Looked After Children have a history of poor or disrupted attachments, which can influence learning style.

Children who are new to English will often go through a 'silent phase' which may raise concern among teachers and support staff that this suggests a learning difficulty. It can take up to a year before pupils have developed their speaking skills in English and this should be taken into consideration when deciding whether to investigate the possibility of a learning difficulty. Just as for all children where there is a suspected special educational need, evidence needs to be gathered over time. This is particularly important for EAL pupils who are LAC because sometimes records may be incomplete or unavailable and the concept of what constitutes a 'learning difficulty' varies between cultures. However, some Looked After Children with EAL may have a clearly identified or obvious difficulty or disability, which requires support. Furthermore, some Looked After Children (e.g. refugee children or

UASCs) may be suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder as a result of experiences and this may be impacting on their ability to study in a school setting.

Learning assessments of children with English as an additional language should take into consideration cultural and linguistic background, and the services of an interpreter should be secured. It is good practice to provide a report in the home language as well as in English if the pupil is literate in that language. For all Looked After Children, discussions about education will take place at PEP meetings and statutory reviews where any considerations relating to the need for a learning assessment should be explored.

It is important that the 'team around the child' work closely together when deciding how best to approach any exploration of special educational needs.

## **Section 7: Cultural considerations**

Helping children to understand and comply with school rules and expectations is very important. However, it is equally important that school staff gain an understanding of and explicitly value the cultural background of any Looked After Child who has English as an additional language. There are a number of areas that may need to be considered, some of which are mentioned below: -

- Religion: ensuring that religious needs are met – for schools this might mean providing a separate room in school for worship, an awareness of the specific religious festivals that the young person may wish to celebrate. Some Muslim children may wish to attend mosque on Fridays, and this will need to be agreed through discussion between the Designated Teacher and the child's Social Worker, with suitable arrangements in place to ensure safeguarding of the child.
- Diet: providing clear information about food ingredients e.g. pork. This should be done in such a way as to ensure the child can receive relevant information e.g. written labels may not be understood by some children.
- Gender issues: some cultures have strict rules about contact between the sexes and different cultural expectations exist with regard to gender relations.
- Clothing: some cultures require females to cover their body to a larger degree than others. There may be implications for PE (e.g. girls wishing to wear leggings whilst swimming) as well as those children wearing particular styles of dress to comply with their cultural or religious background (e.g. the hijab).
- Body language: this varies between cultures and may be misinterpreted.

This is not an exhaustive list but an illustration of some cultural issues that may influence how Looked After Children from another culture may behave or experience school life. Caution should be exercised when considering the influence of a child's cultural background as it is important not to stereotype or jump to conclusions about a child's beliefs or what they may have experienced in their home country. It is important to remember that individual differences exist within groups as well as between groups.

## **Section 8: Health & wellbeing of LAC with English as an additional language**

All children who join the care system have an initial health assessment and an annual health check thereafter as part of their overall Care Plan. Medical

assessments for the purposes of the Care Plan are carried out by a member of the LAC health team. For day to day medical care, Looked After Children should be registered with a GP in the usual way. Any health concerns about a Looked After Child in school should be passed to the Designated Teacher for LAC.

As for all children, school staff should be vigilant to signs of existing and emerging of mental health problems and again, any concerns passed to the DT for LAC. In addition to the early opportunities to discuss any known or suspected health issues at the initial admissions meeting and PEP meeting, there should ongoing close liaison between those who form the 'team around the child'. Ensuring that a child feels included in school i.e. is valued, can access the curriculum and mixes socially with other children, will promote good emotional health & wellbeing.

## **Section 9: Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers as a group with particular needs**

'At first it was very difficult for me living alone in a foreign country and not knowing where my family is. But day by day life has got easier. When I started school and learnt English I started to make new friends.'

### **Who are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children?**

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children are those who enter the UK and apply for asylum on arrival. These children are usually known to social care. Since 1997 the main groups of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children have been from Kosovo, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Somalia, Iraq, Eritrea, Zimbabwe and Turkey. It is helpful if staff have some good quality and factual basic information about the child's background. This should be discussed very early on to ascertain who can best provide such information (e.g. Social worker, ELSS, Advisory Teacher for LAC, the child) and how best to sensitively build up a picture. It is important that assumptions are not made about prior experience – every child is an individual.

## **Section 10: Service user's comments**

"When I first came to England I didn't understand anything but my foster family took me to the library in Norwich and I went to the learning English section and I found some grammar books which helped me learn English. Also the ELSS teacher gave me suggestions for books and websites which were really relevant to my level at that time. Without this advice I don't know how I would have learnt English. Getting to know English students as friends helped me as well because we revised together so I learned what revising meant and they came to my house and helped me learn and study.

Teachers in the school were very helpful – they always checked at the end of the lesson that I had understood. It really helps if the teachers themselves come from other countries – they understand exactly your situation. At the beginning I felt bad because I was getting bad grades – I felt like giving up but I forced myself to go on

working every day and now I'm getting good grades. It was difficult but there was no other way of doing it.

My foster family helped a lot– they are used to looking after young people who don't speak English - we did a lot of things together and they explained things to me about language and culture and they corrected my English.”

### **Section 11: Private fostering arrangements**

This is where a child (under 16) is living with someone who is not a close relative i.e. aunt, uncle, grandparents, older sibling. Where this occurs, there is a duty on the adult who is providing care to inform Children's Services. Where such an arrangement comes to light in school, this information should be passed to the DT for Safeguarding, to make a referral to the Assessment Team for investigation. Private fostering is not the same as legally defined LAC status.

### **Section 12: Resources that schools, social workers and carers should consider obtaining for Looked After Children with EAL**

- A good bi-lingual dictionary (if the pupil is literate in their home language)
- For secondary beginners - a copy of 'Longman Photo Dictionary - British English with audio CDs' published by Longman, ISBN 9781408261958
- For younger children – a copy of Longman Picture Dictionary English  
Author: Ashworth, J. & Clarke, J. Published by Longman, ISBN 9780175564545
- For secondary pupils - A copy of 'Essential Grammar in Use' by Raymond Murphy, published by Cambridge University Press, ISBN 9780521675802 (copy with CD Rom ISBN 9780521675437)
- Key Stage 1, 2, 3 and GCSE revision guides – sometimes adolescent pupils benefit from material provided in more simplified language and formats

## **Section 13: Contacts**

### **Virtual School**

Jane Sarmezey, Senior Educational Psychologist for LAC  
01603 307770 [jane.sarmezey@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:jane.sarmezey@norfolk.gov.uk)

Tricia Ciappara, Senior Specialist Advisory Teacher for LAC  
01603 307771 [tricia.ciappara@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:tricia.ciappara@norfolk.gov.uk)

### **Advisory Learning Support Teachers for LAC**

Pip Wells (City & South)  
01603 307552 [pip.wells2@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:pip.wells2@norfolk.gov.uk)

Sheila Garvie-Adams (City & South)  
01953 450512 [sheila.garvie-adams@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:sheila.garvie-adams@norfolk.gov.uk)

Bronwen Richmond (North, East & Broadland)  
01692 409540 [bronwen.richmond@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:bronwen.richmond@norfolk.gov.uk)

Victoria Scott (North, East & Broadland and City & South)  
01493 414546 [victoria.scott@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:victoria.scott@norfolk.gov.uk)

Judith Smith (West & Breckland)  
01553 669209 [judith.smith@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:judith.smith@norfolk.gov.uk)

### **Norfolk English Language Support Service**

Jenny Mann Service Co-ordinator  
01603307708 [jenny.mann@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:jenny.mann@norfolk.gov.uk)

Alison Neale Business Support Team Leader  
01603307791 [alison.neale@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:alison.neale@norfolk.gov.uk)

Nicola Clark  
01603 307766 [nicola.clarke@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:nicola.clarke@norfolk.gov.uk)

## **Section 14: Document contributors:**

Jane Sarmezey (Senior Educational Psychologist for Looked After Children – Virtual School for LAC)

Jill Gambier (Secondary Lead Advisory Teacher ELSS)

Sue Raywood (Associate Headteacher, The Hewett School Norwich)

Sue Finch (Social Worker – Specialist Social Work Services and Diverse Communities)

Pip Wells (Advisory Support Teacher for LAC)