



Supporting Looked after Children and Care Leavers (vulnerable groups)

Definition

For the purpose of this policy a vulnerable learner is defined as a child (under 18) who is under the care of the local authority (LA) or a Care Leaver.

Although some Looked after Children (LAC) and Care Leavers do well, as a group they often have poor education experiences and low educational achievement. This policy sets out how Paragon Skills will work to support LAC and Care Leavers with the aim that their lives are improved through a positive educational experience.

A child in care is defined as:

An eligible child - a young person who is 16 or 17 and who has been looked after by the local authority/health and social care trust for at least a period of 13 weeks since the age of 14, and who is still looked after;

A relevant child - a young person who is 16 or 17 who has left care after their 16th birthday and before leaving care was an eligible child; or

A former relevant child - a young person who is aged between 18 and 21 (up to their 25th birthday if they are in education or training) who, before turning 18, was either an eligible or a relevant child.

Identification of vulnerable learners

Paragon Skills recognises the need to identify, support and track those learners who are LAC/Care Leavers and will ensure that this is identified from the outset through the recruitment and enrolment process. We will do this by directly asking prospective learners to identify themselves as being a LAC. Using this information Paragon Skills will then engage with those LA's who have corporate parenting responsibility to support the statutory duty placed upon the LA to ensure that LAC have their education enhanced, monitored and improved.

We recognise that there are times when young people choose not to disclose their LAC/Care Leaver status. In order to address this we will seek to build relationships with Local Authorities which promote information sharing to ensure that statutory obligations can be met and the life chances of these vulnerable learners promoted.

Responsibility and accountability

When a child becomes looked after it is the responsibility of a social worker to ensure that a care plan is in place – an integral part of this is a Personal Education Plan (PEP). When a young person leaves care a PEP continues to be relevant.





According to the duty there is a joint responsibility between the LA and a school to ensure that a PEP is in place. Paragon Skills will seek to ensure that this model is adopted for relevant learners through discussion with the LA. We will seek to ensure that this is a tool to support personalised learning and that it reflects the learner's views, educational ambitions and identifies achievable goals.

The Safeguarding and Welfare Manager will take the lead within Paragon Skills to work with the LA's to review and develop any PEPs and that these are communicated to the Personal Tutor.

The Operation Managers (OMs) will lead in monitoring the achievement and progression of LAC/Care Leavers, overseen by the Regional Operations Directors (RODs).

The Personal Tutor/Tutor will be responsible for the delivery of the educational targets contained within the PEP and reporting on progress towards these via Paragon Skills' normal systems.

PEPs will be stored on BUD within the contacts section to ensure confidentiality.

Tracking vulnerable learners

Paragon Skills will track the progression and achievement of all learners using MIS reporting tools. Reports will be produced on a monthly basis to enable OM's to track individual learners and ensure their progression and timely achievement is supported.

Quarterly vulnerable learner tracking reports will be provided to the included task group by the Safeguarding and Welfare Manager to ensure visibility of the achievement of these learners. We will use this data to ensure that our provision is meeting the needs of vulnerable groups.

Supporting vulnerable learners

Learners defined as either in care or as care leavers will be visited face to face with remote visits only being considered where absolutely necessary (eg to maintain the health and safety of colleagues/learners during times of a pandemic). This is in recognition that face to face visits are more likely to enable a Personal Tutor to notice indicators that a learner is at risk of harm.

Learner Support Funding (LSF) may be accessed to support educational or support requirements as identified via the educational (PEP) planning process. Any such requirement for additional funding will require sign off from either the Head of Funding or Compliance or, in their absence, the Head of Finance. Normal LSF processes will then be followed, please see LSF guidance.

Care Bursary

Apprentices are eligible to receive a £1,000 bursary payment if they have been in the care of the local authority. To apply for this Personal Tutors will support eligible learners to apply for this bursary using the Care Leaver Declaration form.

A Care bursary is a one off payment which can only be paid once meaning a learner cannot receive this funding again if they progress or start another apprenticeship. If they have already been paid a care bursary, or have already claimed a care bursary through another employer or training provider, they are not entitled to claim this again via Paragon Skills. Our Personal Tutors will verbally explain this to the learner to ensure their understanding.





Bursaries are paid to us within 60 days and we will pass this payment onto the learner within 30 days of receiving this from the ESFA.

Learners wishing to apply for this bursary must provide evidence of their looked after child status which confirms them to be a care leaver. This must be accompanied by the [Care Leaver Declaration form](#).

Payments to an Employer

In addition to the care leaver bursary the employer of the vulnerable learner may be entitled to an additional payment. In order to access this we may need to share details of their care status with their employer. This is entirely optional and we will not share this information without the learners consent. The learners consent to this does not impact their ability to claim the care bursary. The declaration will be used to generate additional payments to both Paragon Skills and the learner's employer to support their transition into work.

