

# Regional Guidance (NI) for Personal Education Plans for Looked After Children/Young People (PEP)



“Personal Education Plans focus on the `whole child/young person` by ensuring they take advantage of the best learning opportunities within education, while recognizing the relationship between the home environment, school and opportunities available to children and young people within communities to engage in youth work based and/or alternative programmes.” **(Care Matters, 2009)**

## **Regional Guidance (NI) for Personal Education Plans for Looked After Children/Young People (PEP)**

Education is a vital component of all children's and young people's lives and this applies particularly to Looked After Children who have often suffered many disadvantages in their lives. Sadly this has often been reflected in statistics about their educational attainments which can then impact on their future lives and chances for satisfactory employment. In order to assist with the process of maximising the benefit of Education for these children and young people, the introduction of the use of a Personal Education Plan as an integral part of every statutory Review on Looked After Children will help to focus on this. This will involve children, young people, parents, carers, teachers, Education Welfare Service and Social Workers to ensure a comprehensive approach. By doing so, it is hoped that these children and young people will be facilitated to fully develop their individual educational capacity, which will help with their future employability and general well-being.

In Northern Ireland the main statutory agencies charged with the care and education of Looked After children and young people are the local Health and Social Services Care Trusts and Education and Library Boards.

This regional guidance will establish the formal mechanisms for these lead agencies and other agencies, along with parents, carers and Looked After children and young people to share information in order to ensure that these Looked After children/young people are provided with high quality services which meet their assessed needs.

This is a new process which may require review and revision. This will be undertaken within 2 years.

### **Good Practice Principle**

Aristotle said `Teaching is the highest form of understanding`. If we subscribe to the belief that education is a child's passport to the future then the Health & Social Care Trusts and the Education Library Boards should embrace a shared responsibility for assisting Looked After children/young people to enjoy and achieve whilst in education, training and while preparing for employment.

## **What is a Personal Education Plan?**

A Personal Education Plan is a continuous running record of the child/young person's school history and identifies what needs to happen for Looked After children/young people to fulfil their potential by planning and establishing clear targets for the child/young person relating to learning achievements.

**Targets should not be vague aims and our expectations should be high.**

### **A PEP will:**

- consider education in its widest sense
- reflect academic progress and attainment
- look at relationships
- encourage extra-curricular activities
- review support with homework
- explore opportunities to learn and travel
- set goals and plan for the future
- reflect the young person's aspirations, hopes and dreams.

A PEP should reflect any existing education plans such as a Statement of Special Educational Needs (S.E.N) and individual Education Plans (I.E.P). The PEP should inform the UNOCINI and critically influence the Care Plan.

### **Who needs a PEP?**

All Looked After children/young people of statutory school age, including children/young people in secure accommodation and in custody.

### **When is a PEP required?**

A PEP should be completed for all Looked After children/young people admitted to care at the 3 month LAC Review, 6 month LAC Review, and at 6 monthly intervals thereafter to coincide with LAC Reviews.

It is vital that sufficient time is allowed for the completion of the PEP particularly a first review when vital information is being gathered.

A PEP can be regularly discussed at meetings and especially at critical times, for e.g. change of school, care placement, suspensions or exclusion.

## **Who are Looked After Children and Young People?**

The majority of children and young people accommodated by a Health and Social Care Trust are cared for with the full agreement of those who have parental responsibility for them (Voluntarily Accommodated). They are usually accommodated because of difficult or complex family circumstances requiring them to live outside their normal family environment. Health and Social Care Trusts will endeavour to accommodate Looked After children and young people in their own communities either with extended family of origin (kinship carers), with friends or with foster carers. While they are voluntarily accommodated their parents retain full responsibility and may remove them from the accommodated placement.

Other Looked After children and young people are accommodated by a Health and Social Care Trust because they are subject of a Care Order. In these circumstances the Trust has applied to the Court as they believed the child/young person had suffered or was likely to suffer 'significant harm'.

Health and Social Care Trusts often refer to 'Care Leavers'. When young people qualify, 'Trusts' are responsible for them while in education/training until they reach 21 years of age.

## **Processes Explained**

The PEP will initiate formal contact regarding School/Education/Training.  
[See App 1 for PEP process flow chart.]

## **Notification of Becoming Looked After and Subsequent Changes in Circumstances**

Health and Social Care Trusts should notify School Principals, Chief Education Officers and other relevant agencies and individuals after a child/young person becomes Looked After by use of form, 'Notification of Becoming Looked After and Subsequent Changes'. This is sent immediately after a child/young person becomes Looked After and **NO** later than 14 days.

## **UNOCINI – Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland: ‘Looked After Child’ Pathway Assessment**

An Inter-agency assessment model has been developed in Northern Ireland to support staff to conduct high quality assessments.

Each of the UNOCINI assessment framework pathways (Family Support, Child Protection, Looked After Children and 16 Plus) is informed by a process of progressive assessment with each one building upon the information gained from the previous assessment. This ensures the continuity of the assessment and prevents children and their families from responding to the same questions as new professionals / educational personnel become involved. The information contained in the PEP should inform the completion of the UNONICI which will be presented to the LAC Review. It is at the LAC Review that the child/young person’s Care Plan is agreed.

### **Care Plans and Looked After Reviews**

All Looked After children/young people **MUST** have a Care Plan which is compiled and reviewed at Looked After Reviews; these are at set times laid down within regulations at 14 days, 3 months and every 6 months following the 3 month review.

#### **Components of the Care Plan Cover;**

- Health
- Education
- Emotional and Behavioural development
- Identity
- Legal status
- Family and Contact
- Relationships
- Self care and independent skills
- Child Protection and safety

**NB.** The Personal Education Plan informs the UNOCINI and therefore the Care Plan.

## Social Worker's Roles and Responsibilities

- Complete Section 1
- Attach cover and page 1 ONLY and forward with each Section, 2-6 of the PEP **simultaneously** to the respective contributors. Insert return date at the beginning of each Section. The return date should pre-date the Meeting and allow for up to 2 weeks for completion by contributors.

Section 2 – School/Education/Training Provider

Section 3 – Child/Young person

Section 4 – Parent (s)

Section 5 – Carer/Residential Social Worker

Section 6 – Education Welfare Officer

- Section 7 - the Targets and Planning must be compiled by collating all contributions contained in the Conclusion and Target pages completed by every Contributor. This information will be used to populate the UNOCINI and prepare for the LAC Review.

### Notes for completion:

- I. **The child/young person's views, and the process of their involvement, will be central to the effectiveness of the PEP;** they should be consulted about the completion of Section 3 (from 4/5 years of age). If support is required the child/young person should be offered a choice from the range of adults involved (e.g., Social Worker, Befriender, Personal Advisor, School Named Contact person, Education Welfare Officer/LAC, Advocate) and the Social Worker should inform that individual of the child/young person's selection.
  - A good practice principle allows for the Meeting prior to the Looked After children Review to be devoted to the PEP, especially the completion of Section 7, in preparation for the Lac Review.
  - The information contained in the PEP contributes to the UNOCINI and therefore the Child/Young Person's Care Plan.

### Supporting Information

- Where there is an `active case status` the Education Welfare Service, LAC Support Teams or ELB staff, on behalf of education personnel and by agreement, will undertake the future progress of the PEP.
- At all times the School Named Contact person should inform the child/young person's Social Worker, as soon as possible, of any obstacles/changes which prevent or delay the progression of the PEP.
- Celebrate the child's/young person's successes and achievements as a good "Corporate" Parent.

### Court Proceedings

Only Sections 1 and 7 will be submitted for Court proceedings on the understanding that a full PEP can be made available on request to the Judiciary.

## **School Principal – Roles and Responsibilities**

On receipt of the PEP (Section 2) the School Principal will:

- Ensure the completion of Section 2 by the Named Contact Person.
- Ensure the return of the completed Section 2 to the Social Worker by the requested date.

**NB: Principals are also advised to update their LAC data on at least a yearly basis.**

## **Child/Young Persons involvement**

It is essential to ensure that the young person is able to participate in every aspect of the preparation and completion of the PEP. They must be given appropriate support to be fully involved regardless of time, their age or ability. If support is required the child/young person should be offered a choice from the range of adults involved (e.g., Social Worker, Befriender, Personal Advisor, School Named Contact person, Education Welfare Officer/LAC, Advocate) and the Social Worker should inform that individual of the child/young person's selection.

## **Parents/Carers**

It is important that parents and carers are involved in this process. They must be given sufficient information and support to be able to participate.

## **School Named Contact Person's Roles and Responsibilities**

- School Named Contact Person will receive Section 2 from the Social Worker and should complete and return by the requested date. Section 2 is accompanied by page 1 which has been completed by Social Worker
- For the first PEP document the School Named Contact Person must complete all key stage attainments achieved. For subsequent PEPs complete ONLY relevant key stage section.

**NB: Department of Education is working to facilitate information gathering for PEP Document through C2K.**

### Notes for completion:

- Maintain regular contact with the Looked After Child's/Young Persons' Social Worker.
- Co-ordinate the completion of Section 2 by consulting relevant teaching and education personnel.
- Discuss their school's contribution to the PEP with the Child/Young Person.
- Facilitate the Child/Young Person's completion of Section 3 if selected to do so. This will be agreed by the Social Worker in consultation with Child/Young Person.
- Ensure that Conclusions and Targets contained in the PEP are challenging and commensurate with the Child/Young Person's capabilities and potential.

### Supporting information

- On receipt of the fully completed PEP ensure awareness of Goals and Targets (Section 7) and offer comments to Social Worker as appropriate.
- Ensure the PEP is operational within their school between Looked After Reviews.
- At all times the School Named Contact Person should inform the Social Worker and/or EWO (If active to EWS) about any changes, which obstruct or prevent the progression of the PEP.
- If the child/young person moves schools the PEP should be forwarded, along with other school records, to his/her new school. A receiving school should always ask for the most recent PEP.
- May attend/contribute to the Case Planning meeting prior to the Looked After Review of Arrangements which can be devoted to the PEP and especially to the completion of Section 7.

### Education Welfare Service/LAC Support Teams or ELB Staff – Roles and Responsibilities

- Complete Section 6 of the PEP and return to the Social Worker by the requested date. This is accompanied by page 1 which has been completed by Social Worker.
- On receipt of the fully completed PEP ensure awareness of Goals and Targets (Section 7) and offer comments to Social Worker as appropriate.
- Where there is **`ACTIVE CASE STATUS`** the Education Welfare Service, on behalf of education personnel and **by agreement**, will undertake the future progression of the PEP.

- Should attend/contribute to the meeting prior to the Looked After Review of Arrangements which can be devoted to the PEP.

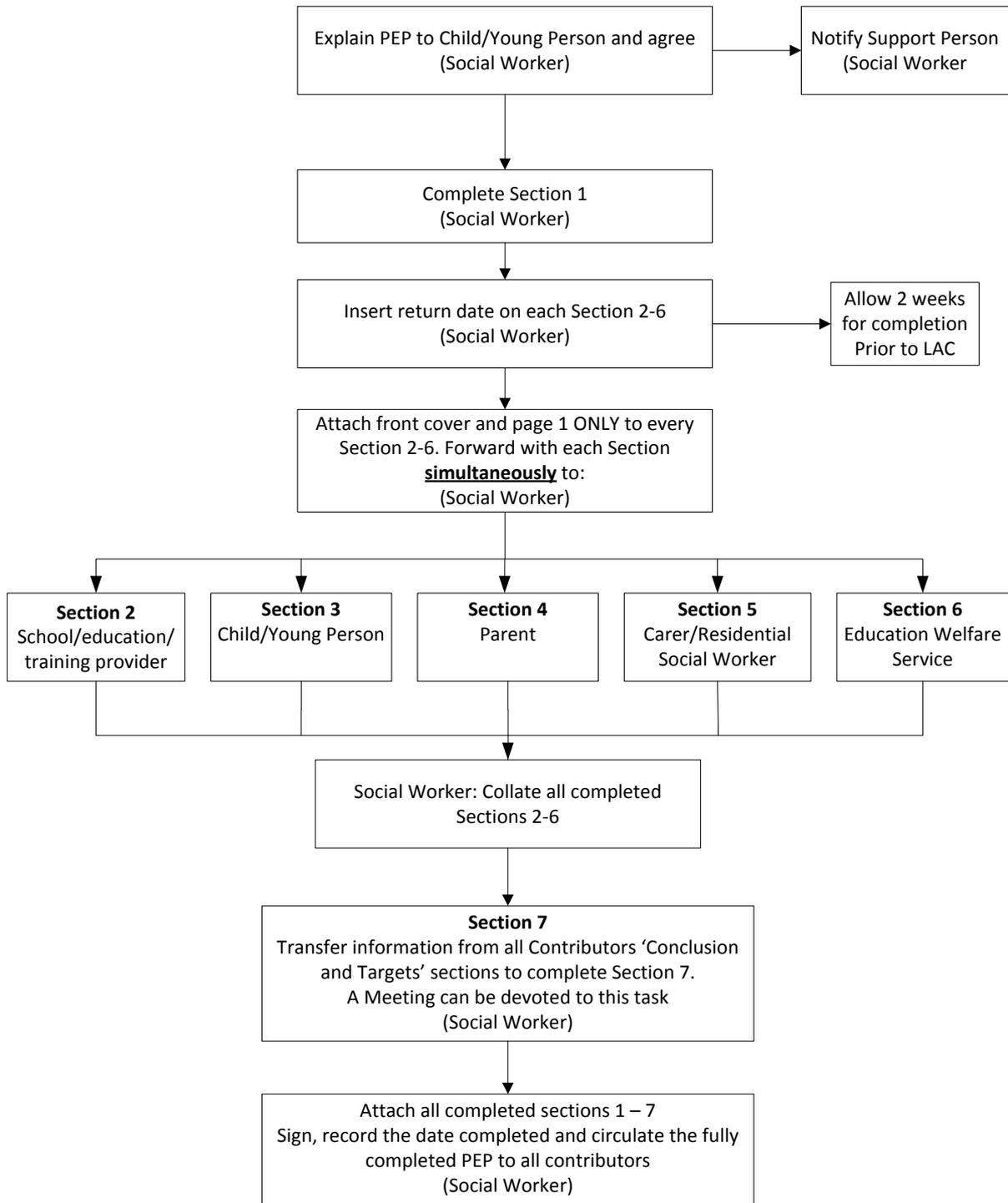
Notes for completion:

- I. Maintain regular contact with the Looked after Child/Young Persons' Social Worker/School/Education Provider/Parent/Carer/Residential Social Worker and Child/Young Person.
- II. EWO/ELB Staff should alert Social Worker to any significant change which impacts the progress of the PEP. For e.g. a change of School Placement; where a Child/Young Person has been placed on a suspension or has been excluded from Education; or where the EWS/ELB Staff has closed a case

**NB: Local Service Level Agreements can be agreed between Education Boards and Health Services where specialists LAC Education Teams are in operation.**

# Appendix 1

## PEP FLOWCHART



A good practice principle allows for a Meeting to be devoted to the completed PEP.

**PEP information should be used to complete the UNOCINI which will be presented to the LAC Review and inform the child/young person’s Care Plan.**

## **Appendix 1**

### **PEP FLOWCHART**

All Looked After Children/Young People of statutory school age require a PEP, including those in secure accommodation and in custody. PEPs can be used for young people in Training/Employment.

A PEP should be completed for all Looked After Children/Young People admitted to care at the 3 month LAC Review, the 6 month LAC Review and at 6 monthly intervals thereafter to coincide with LAC Reviews.

A PEP should be presented at Court proceedings. Only Sections 1 and 7 will be submitted on the understanding that the Judiciary are informed that a full PEP is available, on request.