



Safeguarding children

1.3 Looked after children (Children in Care)

Policy statement

At Willows Educare we believe that all Children in Care should have equitable access to excellent pre-school provision and achieve at a similar level to all Cornwall children. We as a community aim to be champions for Children in Care and take a proactive approach to support their success, recognising that we as a pre-school setting have a vital role to play in promoting children and young people's social and emotional development.

'Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child's experiences between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important. Good parenting and high-quality early learning together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.' Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage DFE 3 March 2017

EYFS Key themes and commitments

A Unique Child	Positive Relationships	Enabling Environments	Learning and Development
1.1 Child development 1.2 Inclusive practice 1.3 Keeping safe	2.1 Respecting each other 2.2 Parents as partners 2.4 Key person	3.2 Supporting every child 3.4 The wider context	4.4 Personal, social and emotional development

As we receive funding for children attending Willows from Cornwall Council as 'Corporate parents' we are required to 'improve the experience of children in care and their life chances' Cornwall Children and young person's plan

Our aims to support pre-school Children in Care

- Provide a safe and secure environment, which values education and believes in the abilities and potential of all children.
- Narrowing the gap - Bring the educational attainments of our children in care in line to those of their peers.
- Making sure that they have access to education appropriate to their age and ability. This includes full access to the Early Years Foundation Stage
- Identifying our settings' role to promote and support the learning and development of our Children in Care.
- Asking the question, 'Would this be good enough for my child?'
- All settings are required to have a designated person for Children in Care who will act as their advocate and coordinate support for them, liaising with carers and or parents (as appropriate) and social workers on a wide variety of educational and care issues. **At Willows Educare this person is likely to be the Setting Manager**

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) sets the standards that all early year's providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. It promotes teaching and learning to ensure children's 'school readiness' and gives children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life. 'Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage DFE March 2017

All staff, leaders and management are committed to ensuring improved educational life chances for Children in Care by ensuring that the relevant personnel have reasonable support and time to complete tasks and responsibilities. Also, to establish and maintain appropriate reporting and monitoring procedures both within the setting and with other agencies.

Sara Mitchell is the Designated Person / SETTING MANAGER FOR CHILDREN IN CARE

- Maintain a register of all Children in Care (this would include children from both in and out of Cornwall)

The register will include a record of:

- The contact person in the relevant Children in Care Education Support Service (CiCESS).
- Status i.e. types of care. See sheet at end of policy for definitions of care orders
- Type of Placement e.g. foster, respite, residential, adoptive.
- Name of Social Worker, area office, telephone number
- Ensure statutory documentation is kept up to date and is relevant to the child's needs and ability i.e. Personal Education Plan

“The Personal Education Plan is a record of what needs to happen for looked after children to enable them to fulfil their potential.” (*Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children DCSF March 2010*)

- Daily contact and telephone numbers of those who need to be contacted in an emergency or for any other concerns. E.g. name of young person, name of parent or carer or key worker in children’s home.
- Share Child Protection / disability information if appropriate (if not appropriate to share, indicate the confidential nature of the information)
- Relevant health information
- Baseline information and any other relevant assessments or information.
- The child (where appropriate) is entitled to decide who attends their Children in Care Statutory Reviews (6 monthly); if the setting does not attend, they need to submit a written report that promotes the continuity and stability of their personal education plan.

“The PEP should reflect the importance of a personalised approach to learning which secures good basic skills, stretches aspirations and builds life chances.” (*Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children DCSF March 2010*)

- Participate in appropriate Children in care training and joint agency training.
- If there are safeguarding concerns for a Child in Care or any other child, contact and advice should be sought from the Multi agency referral unit (MARU) 0300 1231 116

GOVERNORS / Management – what every designated person for CIC should know

Number of CIC on setting roll

Number of CIC with up to date PEPs

Overall attainment of CIC in the setting / performance compared to peers

Number of CIC with SEN and statements

Authorised and unauthorised absence levels of CIC

Number of CIC who have been excluded in previous 12 months

Whole setting approach:

Four guiding principles should shape practice in early years settings. These are:

- ***every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured;***
- ***children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships;***
- ***children learn and develop well in enabling environments, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers; and***
- ***children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates. The framework covers the education and care of all children in early years provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities.*** 'Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage DFE March 2017

- The setting celebrates the achievements of Children in Care.
- Staff should have high expectations of the child, encouraging achievement and ambition
- The child will need to have a special, trusted key person in the setting who is able to take time to listen to them and have access to support and counselling if required.
- For young Children in Care, there should be clarity in relation to who is and is not allowed to collect the child from the setting
- All staff within the setting are made aware of the needs of Children in Care and actively promote their best interests
- Adults in the setting will need to be sensitive to the young person's wishes over what is known and by whom regarding their care status
- Effective assessment, recording and reporting practices are established
- Ensure that systems are in place to keep staff up to date and informed about Children in Care
- The designated person / Centre Manager ensures that positive messages about behaviour and achievement are shared within the setting and between setting, carers and outside agencies and that high educational expectations are maintained
- Staff work in partnership with carers and agencies and parents (where appropriate).
- Support carers to value educational achievement and improve attendance
- Staff can help the individual begin to feel that they are fitting in and offer them a safe haven and a sympathetic ear in a crisis
- Staff are aware that being or becoming 'in Care' has a major impact on children's lives and that when considering children's learning and or behaviour, due consideration will be given
- Staff are aware of a variety of issues that may undermine the young person's ability to engage in the learning process including feelings of loss, rejection, isolation, confusion and low self-esteem
- Staff need to be aware of possible unresolved feelings the young person may have about their own families and siblings, in addition to insecurity over their current homes and carers

Special Educational Needs / Gifted and Talented:

- Any special educational needs / Gifted and talented abilities are quickly identified, and appropriate provision is made
- Ensure that systems are in place to identify and prioritise when Children in Care are underachieving and have early interventions to improve this
- Contact needs to be made with the Children in Care Education Support Service (CiCESS) as soon as concerns are raised
- If the child or young person has a statement of special educational need, then ensure the six monthly review coincides with one of the six monthly care planning reviews; dates can be obtained from the social worker and should include the Senior locality SENCo from the Early years Inclusion team.

Admissions and transitions:

- Ensure that on admission or transfer all relevant information is obtained at the outset
- Make every effort to provide continuity of pre-school educational experience
- Prioritise Children in Care within settings own admissions procedures and admit children as quickly as possible recognising the importance of re-establishing educational stability for Children in Care.

Exclusion:

- Identify any Child in Care who is at risk of exclusion and contact the EY School improvement team, the Inclusion team, Children in Care Education Support Service (CiCESS), Social Worker and or relevant professionals to put proactive strategies in place to avoid the Child in Care missing days from school

Multi-agency liaison: Links with Early years services

- Designated person / Centre Manager - Sara Mitchell will need to liaise closely with carers and or parents and the child's social worker on a variety of issues. It is important that positive messages about behaviour and achievement are shared
- There should be a well planned and co-ordinated approach to meeting the child's educational and social needs, for example, whether potentially disruptive changes in the setting can be prevented
- There needs to be clear understanding about the role and responsibility of setting staff in relation to the young person and the roles and responsibilities of the other professionals involved
- staff will need to share positive perceptions and high expectations of the child with other professionals but especially with the child themselves
- The setting should be aware of and sensitive to the appropriate role of the carers and or parents
- Designated person /Managers should ensure that requests from the LA for statistical information held by the setting are completed and returned on time to comply with statutory obligations
- Support the child to have the opportunity to participate fully in planning and decision making
- Involve external agencies as below to support the quality of provision for children including Children in Care

Early years Improvement team:**Early years Inclusion team:****Childcare and play development team:****Personal education plans (PEPs):**

"The PEP is the joint responsibility of the local authority and the school."(*Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children DCSF March 2010*)

- Ensure that there is a quality Early years Personal Education Plan in place for each child to include appropriate targets. This must be compatible with the child's Care Plan held by the Social Worker, and form part of any other setting plan. E.g. Statement, Transition Plan, Pastoral Support Programme, adoption plan
- Contribute to the process whereby all Children in Care have a high quality EY Personal Educational Plan (PEP) in place within 10 days of starting the setting. This will include SMART educational targets and will be linked to the child's Care Plan and any other plan resulting from the assessment of the child (IEP, PSP, Statement of Educational Need)
- Following the writing of an EY PEP, any educational recommendations in that PEP will be adhered to by staff in order that any Child in Care has the opportunity to fulfil and achieve the targets set

- Hold an EY PEP meeting for every statutory care review, involving the Social worker, foster carers, young person and parent if appropriate (See *brief PEP Guidance on website*)
- PEP 'Responsibility sheet' will record who holds PR / signing of consent forms / emergency contacts

Assessment:

In the final term of the year in which the child reaches age five, and no later than 30 June in that term, the EYFS Profile must be completed for each child. The Profile provides parents and carers, practitioners and teachers with a well-rounded picture of a child's knowledge, understanding and abilities, their progress against expected levels, and their readiness for Year 1. The Profile must reflect ongoing observation; all relevant records held by the setting; discussions with parents and carers, and any other adults whom the teacher, parent or carer judges can offer a useful contribution.

Each child's level of development must be assessed against the early learning goals (see Section 1). Practitioners must indicate whether children are meeting expected levels of development, or if they are exceeding expected levels, or not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging'). This is the EYFS Profile. 'Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage DFE March 2017

Related documentation:

See CiCESS website on Cornwall www.cornwall.gov.uk/cicess for related documentation and information

Further Guidance:

'Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage
DFE March 2017

Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities
DCSF March 2010

Improving the Educational Attainment of Children in Care (Looked After Children)
DCSF 2009

Improving the Attainment of Looked After Children in primary schools
DCSF 2009

Special Educational Needs
SEN Code of Practice and SEN toolkit

'Conducting Early years Inspections'
Ofsted July 2012

Being 'in care'

Section 20 – when a child is accommodated under a Section 20 voluntary arrangement. Cornwall, in this instance does not have parental responsibility, this remains with the parents but the child is 'accommodated' by Cornwall.

Interim care order -This is an Order that is made at the first hearing after Care Proceedings have been issued. This Order can last for up to 8 weeks and can be renewed every 4 weeks after that. The Order can only be granted if the Court feels there is good reason to believe that a child may be at serious risk of harm.

When Social Services apply for an Interim Care Order, they have to have prepared an Interim Care Plan which sets out where the child should live until the final hearing. This will include contact arrangements between the parent and the child. The Interim Care Order, like a Care Order grants Cornwall Parental Responsibility which means they are able to make decisions about the child's living arrangements and do not need the parents permission to do so.

There are several final orders the court can make:

Care order

this is an order that places the child in the care of Cornwall and gives it parental responsibility. This does not mean the parents lose parental responsibility, but it does mean Cornwall can override their wishes if it believes this would be best for your child. However, it must have consulted parents first.

For this order to be made, the child must be under 17 years old.

A care order means that Cornwall must provide a place for the child to live (for example with relatives or foster carers) and is responsible for the child's 'maintenance' (making sure they have money to live on). Occasionally the child remains at home with parents under a care order, but Cornwall still makes all decisions and can remove the child at any time if they are concerned about the care the child is receiving.

If Cornwall is granted a care order, its plans for the child will be set out in the care plan filed at court. This plan must be reviewed regularly, and parents should be consulted about this

A full care order remains in force until the child is 18 years old, unless the court:

- makes a residence or special guardianship order;
- decides that the order should end (known as 'discharging' the order);
- makes a supervision order instead; or
- makes an adoption order.

Supervision order

this means parents have parental responsibility and remain responsible for their child's care, but Cornwall has the power to 'supervise' how they care for your child. A supervision order lasts up to one year, but the council can ask the court for an extension for up to two more years.

Residence order

this order would mean that the child would live with someone else, such as a

member of the family, without Cornwall being involved. It would give that person parental responsibility for the period of the order.

Special guardianship orders

this court order places a child with someone who is not their parent in a longer-term arrangement. It is more permanent than a residence order because a parent cannot apply to 'revoke' (end) the order without the court's permission. The court can give this permission only where the circumstances have changed significantly since the order was made. However, a special guardianship order (SGO) does not break the legal relationship between a parent and child.

If an SGO is made for the child, the special guardian will gain parental responsibility for him or her. Parents will still have parental responsibility as well, but the special guardian has the right to override their wishes if they cannot agree.

Placement order

in rare cases Cornwall may consider that the child should be placed for adoption. Where adoption is planned, Cornwall will probably apply for a 'placement order' at the final hearing. This order allows Cornwall to place the child with prospective adopters even if parents don't consent to this.

There are further legal proceedings before the court can make an 'adoption order'. If the child is adopted, he or she will stop being a member of the birth family and will become legally related to the adoptive parents. Once a placement order has been made, there are only very limited circumstances in which parents can later apply to end it or to oppose adoption.

This policy was adopted by

Willows Educare

Held on

August 2025

Date to be reviewed

August 2026

Signed on behalf of the provider

Name of signatory

Susan Oliver

Role of signatory (e.g. chair, director or owner)

Chairperson