Questions that social workers might ask in PEP meetings to support the progress of children in care

Section 4 of the primary and secondary PEP form refers to a number of areas that social workers might want to seek clarification from the school about before the PEP and the following may be useful starting points.

Academic progress used to be measured in national curriculum levels although this changed for most subjects and most pupils from September 2014 when schools could choose how to record progress.

As some pupils’ PEPs may still show historical progress measured in levels, the following three paragraphs may be helpful to know.

Each level was broken down into ‘fine’ levels.

At primary phase, in order to narrow the gap between children in care and their peers, a target of 8 fine levels of progress per key stage needed to be set to secure good progress. An example of progressing one fine level was from 3c to 3b and an example of progressing a whole level was 3c to 4c.

At secondary phase, in order to close the gap and ensure that the children in care achieve at least in line with age-related expectations, targets should have been set at aiming for the challenge target of “4 levels of progress” (good progress) and a minimum target of 3 levels of progress (satisfactory progress).

If you are not sure if the school’s data are showing sufficient progress, you might ask the following:

• What strategies have the school put in place to accelerate the progress of the student e.g. how is the LAC Pupil Premium* funding being used and is one to one tuition** in place in English and/ or maths? Schools and academies should use LAC Pupil Premium funding to raise attainment and one to one tuition is a good use of spending this grant.

• What communication have the school had with carers regarding the fact that the student is falling behind their expected outcomes?

• What is hindering the progress of the student?

• What can the social worker or carer do to help them in maths and English?

• Can subsequent reports on progress be forwarded to all involved in the PEP in the interim to check that progress is being made between PEPs?

• Has the student got revision materials/books to support their learning in the core subjects?

• Is the student accessing all online resources such as the school website, BBC bite size and are the web addresses recorded somewhere for future use?

• How does the school identify whether or not the student should be part of any Gifted & Talented (G&T)** or Aim Higher**** cohort? If this has already been identified what activities will the student be able to access?

• How does the school reward/ sanction young people? How are achievements celebrated in the school? Is the young person in line for any celebrations? When will this happen?

• What is the structure of the team around the student? Is there a paper copy that is available with details of Learning Support Mentors, the designated teacher etc?

All schools have a range of extra-curricular activities and these are usually published as a programme for carers. Children often need to be reminded about or supported into these programmes so it might be helpful to ensure that this is happening by asking about it in the PEP meeting.
• How has the school encouraged the student to become involved in extra-curricular activities? Have details of the programme been discussed with carers with conversation about transport if required?

* The government believes that the Pupil Premium is the best way to raise educational achievement for children in care and other vulnerable groups. Schools should have Pupil Premium money for any child who has been in care for at least one day and is aged between five and 16 if they meet the criteria set by The HOPE Virtual School for Children in Care. For the financial year 2016 to 2017 and 2017 to 2018, the amount is £1900 per pupil.

The HOPE Virtual School for Children in Care is responsible for distributing the LAC Pupil Premium to mainstream schools, academies or special schools which Bristol looked after children mainly attend, both in Bristol and in other local authorities. We consider that 80% of Pupil Premium funding is spent on one to one English and maths tuition.

** All children in care are eligible for one to one tuition in English and maths. Research has shown that children in care benefit greatly from this tuition and we encourage schools to provide one to one tuition every year for all children in care, not just for pupils who are falling behind. However, schools are free to make their own judgements about how to spend income from the tuition funding stream.

*** Gifted and talented describes children and young people with an ability to develop to a level significantly ahead of their year group (or with the potential to develop those abilities):

- ‘gifted’ learners are those who have abilities in one or more academic subjects, like maths and English
- ‘talented’ learners are those who have practical skills in areas like sport, music, design or creative and performing arts

Skills like leadership, decision-making and organisation are also taken into account when identifying and providing for gifted and talented children.

**** The Aim Higher programme was established to encourage progression to higher education. Working through 42 partnerships across England, the programme encompassed a wide range of activities to engage and motivate school and college learners who had the potential to enter higher education, but who were under-achieving, undecided or lacking in confidence. The coalition government cancelled the programme in 2011 but some opportunities to participate are still available via our local universities.