



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

cc: Directors of Education

Dear Betsan

Pupil Development Grant (PDG) 2017-2018: Support for looked after children

I am writing to you to ensure that there is clarity in the way the Welsh Government expects the regional arrangements for the looked after children portion of the Pupil Development Grant (PDG) to be managed by Consortia.

The revised regional approach to funding additional educational support for looked after children through the PDG was introduced in April 2015 to ensure a more coherent approach underpinned by clear evidence of what works. It was clear that the previous arrangement where funding was given directly to schools resulted in poor targeting of resources, did not support effective practice and was having little discernible impact on the outcomes experienced by learners.

Despite a clear intention from the Welsh Government at the outset of the new arrangements, implementation has not developed in a consistent fashion and the pace of change varies across Consortia area. I do recognise that new structural changes can often be difficult to implement, but in what will now be the third year of the revised grant arrangements we need to be assured that genuine regional arrangements are in place.

As a first principle, the PDG that supports looked after children in education should be retained and used by Consortia to deliver strategically targeted interventions and support on a regional basis. In accordance with the Welsh Government's looked after children in education plan, the PDG funding should be used by Consortia to employ a lead coordinator who is responsible for the delivery of a strategic programme of work to support looked after children, agreed by local authorities, and to ensure financial accountability. Like the Virtual Head approach in England this level of expertise and focus in supporting looked after children is essential. A summary of the roles and responsibilities which we expect the lead coordinator to undertake is in Annex A.

The letter sent to you by Ruth Conway on 4 April is clear that funding should **not** be delegated to local authorities and schools *unless robust business plans are agreed that are consistent with the regional approach*. I expect any delegation to be on an exception basis only supported by clear financial planning, with the Consortia retaining responsibility for the majority of the budget and delivery of support across the region. Notwithstanding any delegations, the Consortia will remain financially accountable for all expenditure under the grant.

In instances where funding has been awarded to local authorities or schools, Consortia will still need to ensure that the allocation is used in accordance with the terms and conditions of the grant and that money is not top sliced to sustain permanent and/or statutory roles in respect of a local authority's core activity. Creating unnecessary bureaucracy and administration should be avoided and one of the key messages in the use of the grant should be in ensuring that any support provided through the grant should be self-sustaining after the lifetime of the grant.

You will also wish to be aware that the National Assembly's Public Accounts Committee has announced that it will be holding an inquiry into looked after children and will specifically consider *the arrangements for and value for money of the PDG for looked after children, paid to consortia at a rate of £1,150 per looked after child calculated to live in their area*. The terms of reference are at Annex B.

The PAC proposes that the inquiry is undertaken over the next two years and this will clearly be a substantial inquiry. It is entirely likely that Consortia will be invited to give evidence to the PAC and it is imperative that we have a consistent national approach in supporting children who are looked after in education.

I know that Welsh Government officials have worked closely with the Consortia over the last two years and we are very grateful for the work that has been undertaken in this time. It is clear that the regional approach has helped develop our understanding of the needs of children who have suffered trauma, loss, abuse and neglect and experienced attachment issues and that some excellent work is happening all around Wales. We need to ensure that we maintain this momentum, and by keeping a dedicated focus on the needs of looked after children continue to offer them the very best and most effective support possible.

On 10 May we published a review of progress in implementing the looked after children in education plan, a copy of which can be found [here](#)¹ along with a Written Statement from the Cabinet Secretary outlining her commitment to this work.

¹ gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/deprivation/educational-attainment-of-looked-after-children/?lang=en

I would ask you to take personal responsibility in making sure that the grant funded support is delivered as intended. We will be scrutinising Consortia plans closely when they are submitted and will need to be satisfied that these are consistent with the regional approach advocated by the Welsh Government. We had asked you to submit your completed support plans by 12 May. To allow you some additional time to consider the regional strategic approach as set out in this letter, we have extended the deadline for the looked after children element of the support plan to 9 June (we will expect the remainder of the support plan to be submitted by 12 May).

I recognise that that success of these arrangements is dependent upon the cooperation of local authorities and I am copying this letter to Directors of Education and to ADEW.

Yours sincerely

Steve Davies
Director, Education Directorate

Annex A

LAC PDG Lead Coordinator – Core Roles and Responsibilities (February 2016)

- Manage the Pupil Deprivation Grant allocated to the education consortia by the Welsh Government to support the education of LAC. Manage and distribute the funding for individual learners in line with the regional plan, and monitor its impact on learners' performance against the main indicators
- Lead, manage and develop a school based and sustainable model for supporting LAC pupils across the region's schools
- Work closely with schools, local authorities and other stakeholders to ensure that reliable data is available to facilitate the tracking of LAC educational progress, and take the lead on analysing said data on a regional level
- Arrange regional training along with guidance for schools and Challenge Advisers on interventions to improve the provision for LAC to improve their performance
- Keep a record of feedback and the impact of this training
- Plan and monitor to ensure a quality service and continuous improvement.
- Provide value for money by prioritising, managing and monitoring effective use of resources
- Responsible for improving LAC performance by means of effective management and development and by measuring, monitoring and evaluating performance. Implement and develop business plans that reflect this
- Facilitate meetings of Local Authorities' LACE Co-ordinators and develop a successful network in the field of LAC. Jointly plan the agenda of meetings and the Group's direction of work and responsibility
- Facilitate and help develop the work of the Authorities' LAC co-ordinators in relation to the LAC regional strategy
- Provide guidance, collaborate and meet regularly with the Local Authorities' LAC co-ordinators to report back on progress against the regional plan. Provide them with direction and feedback by effectively communicating a vision whilst focusing on service provision.
- Responsibility for preparing interim and final progress reports to Welsh Government

- Act as the region's main LAC contact with Welsh Government in terms of managing the LAC PDG
- Attend meetings with the other LAC PDG lead coordinators every two months to ensure consistency of approach and delivery of service across Wales
- Co-ordinate and contribute to strategic planning for looked after children and other vulnerable groups, ensuring that policies and action plans are in place to support individuals in education
- Contribute to strategic developments, leading and taking action when the need arises
- Responsible for ensuring that each authority's plans are in line with the LAC development plan
- Responsible for sharing information with Challenge Advisers so that they are able to challenge schools with regard to appropriate LAC provision
- Co-ordinate the examples of good practice in schools in the context of LAC and vulnerable groups.

Annex B

National Assembly for Wales - Public Accounts Committee Looked After Children – Future Committee Inquiry

The Public Accounts Committee is responsible for carrying out the functions set out in Standing Orders 18.2 and 18.3 and consider any other matter that relates to the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which resources are employed in the discharge of public functions in Wales. Whilst these responsibilities are narrowly defined the Committee is able to consider a wide range of issues within this remit.

The Committee have agreed to undertake an inquiry into Looked After Children as there a number of significant concerns in relation to the value for money and effectiveness of arrangements in this area, and as such we are intending to take a systemic view of this area.

The Committee has initially identified four areas which it will consider over the course of this Assembly, which are outlined below.

1. Value for money of public spending on looked after children

The Committee intends to consider:

- The overall cost to and value for money of the range public services aimed at improving outcomes for Looked After Children;
- Whether the Welsh Government's desired outcomes for Looked After Children are being delivered by the current levels of public expenditure;
- Whether the extent of spending specific to Looked After Children is sufficiently transparent across the range of public services
- Whether public bodies have placed sufficient emphasis on a long term preventative spend approach, in line with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, to maximise the benefits of public expenditure for this group of children.

2. Educational attainment

The Committee intends to consider:

The arrangements for and value for money of the Pupil Deprivation Grant for looked after children, paid to regional consortia at a rate of £1,150 per looked after child calculated to live in their area

3. Foster placements

The Committee intends to consider:

The value for money and effectiveness of current arrangements for foster placements.

4. Local authority corporate parenting arrangements

The Committee intends to consider:

The effectiveness of local authority corporate parenting arrangements.

We would welcome the views of stakeholders on the areas identified are the right areas and whether there are any additional areas which would benefit from the Public Accounts Committee considering over the long term.

Responses to be received by 12 May 2017.

Once the Committee begins to undertake this work, we will issue consultation documents for each phase of the inquiry.