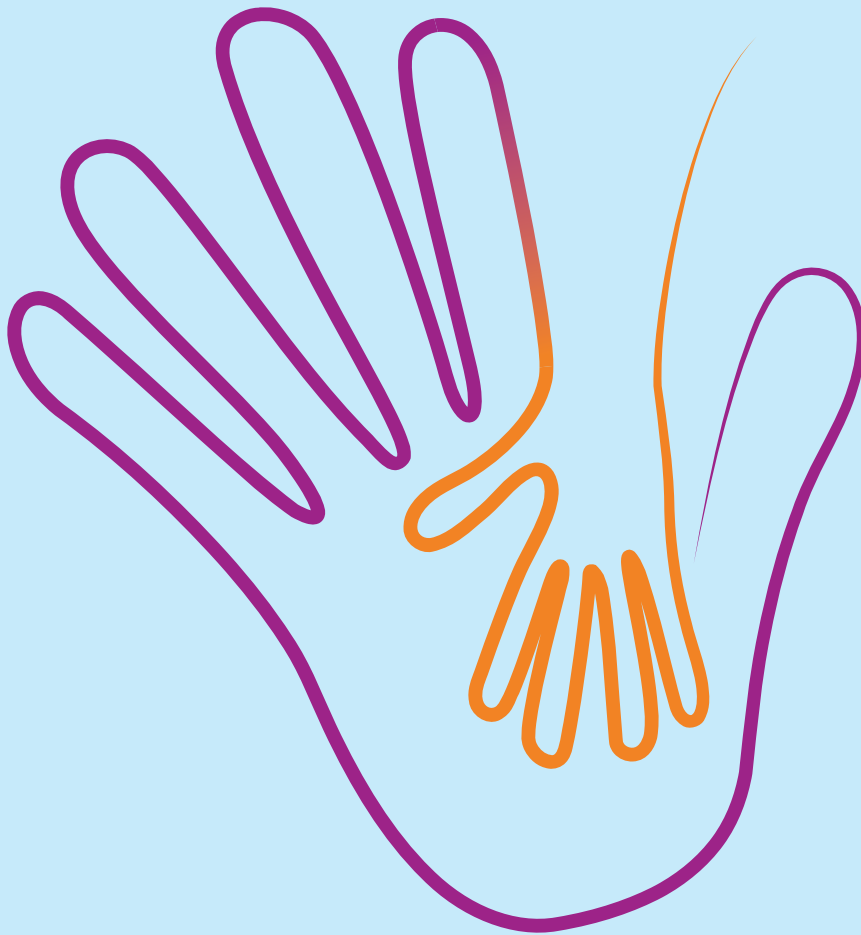


Making a difference

A guide for the designated person for looked after children in schools



Guidance

Guidance document no: 255/2017

Date of issue: November 2017

Making a difference

Audience

Local authorities; headteachers and governing bodies of maintained schools; headteachers and governing bodies of voluntary aided and foundation schools; teachers in charge of pupil referral units; church diocesan authorities; proprietors of independent schools; further education institutions; school staff unions; Governors Wales; Careers Wales; higher education authorities; directors of social services; heads of children's services and social workers. This guidance should also be read by staff within those organisations with responsibility for looked after children, care leavers, fostering and adoption and third sector organisations whose work helps support children.

Overview

This document sets out the roles and responsibilities of the designated person for looked after children in schools and the key personnel in place to support that function. It has been produced by the Welsh Government in partnership with the looked after children in education National Strategic Group. The group comprises of external stakeholders who have been instrumental in helping to drive forward our collective work programme.

Action required

This guide is a practical resource designed to assist the designated person for looked after children in schools to undertake that function.

Further information

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Additional copies

This document can be accessed from the Welsh Government's website at gov.wales/educationandskills

Related documents

See Annex.

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Introduction

The Welsh Government has a national mission to ensure that all our children and young people have an equal opportunity to reach the highest standards. Underpinning this is a belief that someone's ability to benefit from education should not be determined by their personal circumstances and a drive to reduce inequalities and remove barriers to education. Inclusivity is at the heart of our agenda and funding to schools is in place to support all learners to ensure they are not disadvantaged.

We recognise that [educational outcomes](#)¹ for looked after children² rarely compare favourably with other children and young people. We know that many of these learners will have suffered disrupted learning and may have missed extended periods of school. The gaps in their learning – and in many cases the emotional impact of their experiences – are likely to have become significant barriers to their progress. The complexity of this fragmented experience needs careful assessment and planning.

To help address this, we published our looked after children in education plan – [Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales](#)³ – in January 2016.

This plan included an action (no.3) for the Welsh Government to:

Develop and publish guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the designated lead member of staff in schools, and on governing bodies in supporting that function.

In work undertaken with children and young people in the development of the plan through Voices From Care and CASCADE: Children's Social Care Research and Development Centre in particular, looked after and former looked after children have given us a clear message that more work needs to be done to help schools understand the barriers which impact on care experienced children and support them in delivering their responsibilities to looked after children.

Section 20 of the [Children and Young Persons Act 2008](#)⁴ states that the governing body of a maintained school must designate a member of staff (“the designated person”) as having responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of children who are looked after in the school. This duty applies regardless of whether or not there are looked after children on the school roll, as schools need to be sufficiently prepared to respond quickly to the needs of looked after children who they may receive at very short notice.

Essentially, the designated person is responsible for ensuring the needs of looked after children are met within the school.

¹ <http://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2017/170308-wales-children-need-census-2016-en.pdf>

² The definition of looked-after children (children in care) is found in the Children Act 1989. A child is looked after by a local authority if a court has granted a care order to place a child in care, or a council's children's services department has cared for the child for more than 24 hours. In the context of this guide the term 'Looked after children' refers to both children and young people in care.

³ <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/deprivation/educational-attainment-of-looked-after-children/?lang=en>

⁴ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/23/section/20>

This is statutory guidance issued by Welsh Ministers under subsection (4) of section 20. Governing bodies must have regard to this guidance when exercising their functions under section 20.

This guide focuses primarily on the designated person role in primary, secondary and special schools, but also covers the transition of looked after children and young people from pre-school to compulsory education and to further and higher education. The good practice contained in this guide also has relevance for post-16 education settings where there is a designated person for looked after children, young people and/or care leavers.

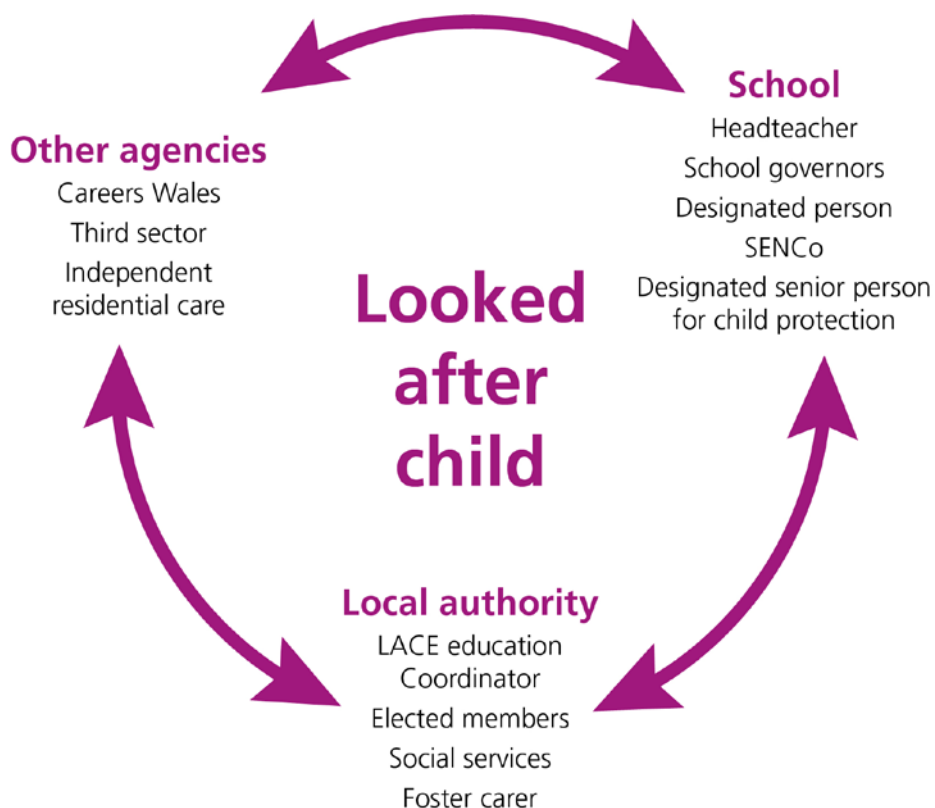
Section 20 of Children and Young Persons Act 2008 does not apply to pupil referral units (PRUs). There is no duty for the Management Committee in PRUs to designate a member of staff for looked after children however, we would encourage PRUs to follow the good practice contained in this guide.

This guide sets out the minimum standards the Welsh Government expects for the role of the designated person to ensure consistency of practice in maintained schools throughout Wales. It clarifies the responsibilities of the designated person, schools, local authorities and the governing body and aims to help strengthen the operational and reporting arrangements between these key roles. It highlights good practice throughout Wales, and provides examples of useful resources and key guidance documents.

We have also incorporated some of the good practice recommendations from the Children's Social Care Research and Development Centre – [CASCADE – Cardiff University research](#)⁵ in this guide.

⁵ <http://sites.cardiff.ac.uk/cascade/research/research-projects/looked-after-children-and-education/>

Responsibilities of key professionals



This section outlines the key roles of professionals who work with looked after children and how they interrelate. We need to ensure these arrangements build on examples of good partnership working and the desire of all those involved in the lives of looked after children to improve the educational performance of these learners. It is essential that adequate support is in place to create an environment which supports effective collaboration and which impacts on improved outcomes.

Children and young people entering care become part of a series of complex systems and relationships. Given the complexity of agencies and professionals that support the lives of these children and young people, effective multi-agency working is crucial.

Governing bodies

Governing bodies must designate a member of staff in schools as having lead responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of children who are looked after. "Schools" include all maintained primary, secondary and special schools. For consistency, a designated person for looked after children in school should undertake the role for at least a full academic year before changes in personnel are considered.

Where looked after children are to be educated in an independent school or a non-maintained special school, the placing authority should satisfy itself that the school has made appropriate arrangements supporting the needs of looked after children. Where children are to be educated in a children's home that is not eligible for registration as a school, there is no requirement for a designated person.

Some schools will not have any looked after children on roll. Given the particular needs of such children, all governing bodies should in any case designate a member of staff. The governing body must ensure that the designated person undertakes appropriate training,

which is generally provided by the local authority Looked After Children Education (LACE) Coordinator. Governing bodies should arrange training for a newly appointed designated person as soon as is reasonably practicable. This will enable the necessary support to be put in place immediately should a looked after child join the school.

Where a looked after child is on a school roll but receives education other than at school (EOTAS), it is the school's responsibility to ensure the safety of that child. Where a looked after child is not on roll and is accessing EOTAS provision, the onus lies with the local authority (as the corporate parent) to ensure the safety of that child.

School policy for looked after children – Governing bodies should, with the headteacher, establish the policy for looked after children for the school and regularly monitor the policy and its implementation in the school. The policy must comply with the requirement:

- to designate a member of staff with responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of children who are looked after in the school
- to ensure that the designated person undertakes appropriate training.

The policy should include as a minimum:

- arrangements which the school has in place for the admission of looked after children
- monitor attendance, assessment and achievement data of looked after children in the school on an individual or collective basis
- catch up arrangements when the gaps in the child's knowledge and education are identified
- encouragement with the child's engagement with after school clubs, the school council or additional revision sessions
- arrangements to access a safe haven or school based counselling if required
- arrangements to ensure Personal Education Plans (PEPs) are completed and the multi-agency review meetings can be attended
- application of exclusion as a sanction and the use of alternatives to fixed term exclusions (such as community service) or to a permanent exclusion (such as a managed move)
- arrangements for when a child leaves the school as a result of a placement move or at a natural leaving point
- reference to the policy and named designated person for looked after children in the school prospectus.

Headteachers

Although the governing body must appoint the designated person and notify their local authority LACE Coordinator, the headteacher needs to be instrumental in this process. The headteacher should work with the local authority to ensure that necessary training is provided to the named designated person and allow sufficient time for them to attend training - (as part of their continuing professional development (CPD)) - and statutory looked

after children review meetings. Headteachers are responsible for ensuring this is reflected in their school policy for looked after children.

Important!

The role of the designated person for looked after children should be afforded the same prominence in school as other key roles such as the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) (also known as the Additional Learning Needs Coordinator (ALNCo)) and the designated senior person (DSP) for child protection.

Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo)⁶

In maintained schools, SENCos play a key role in determining the school's SEN policy and provision, and have day to day responsibility for the operation of the policy and the co-ordination of provision made for individual children with SEN. They also provide related professional guidance to colleagues with the aim of securing high quality teaching for children with SEN. Given that a high proportion of looked after children have some sort of [SEN](#)⁷, SENCos will have a key role to play in their education.

Designated senior person (DSP) for child protection – each maintained school must identify a DSP who has lead responsibility for managing child protection issues and cases within the school. The DSP should know how to recognise and identify signs of abuse and neglect and know when it is appropriate to make a referral to relevant investigating agencies. Most children and young people enter care because they have been abused or neglected. These experiences can leave children and young people with complex emotional and mental health needs, which can increase their vulnerability to abuse and can sometimes result in risky behaviours. Close liaison with the DSP is essential to ensure that any safeguarding risks are clearly understood, recognised and acted on.

The role of the designated person

The designated person needs to have an understanding of the care system and the impact that being in care can have on a child's educational outcomes. Having undertaken appropriate training, the member of staff is expected to be able to effect change and be effective in problem solving exhibiting a genuine commitment to strive for improved outcomes of looked after children. A background in pastoral care is often a key requirement.

The role requires someone who is able to ensure that the school communicates effectively with other organisations such as the local authority (education and social services departments) as well as with the child/young person and their carers. It is imperative that communication between social services and education providers is timely and comprehensive to avoid delays in providing looked after children with effective support.

Where there is a considerable number of looked after children in a school, a headteacher may nominate a member of the leadership team to be designated by the governing body to undertake the role and coordinate an overview of the looked after children in the school. In

⁶ Under the ALN Bill (currently at stage 3 in the Assembly), SENCos are to be replaced with ALNCos who will carry out equivalent roles.

⁷ <http://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2017/170308-wales-children-need-census-2016-en.pdf>

this case, the role would involve liaising with others who are working on a daily basis with the children, for example with form tutors, heads of year, Education Welfare Officers (EWO), leaders of learning and inclusion officers. In doing so, they would need to ensure that all are aware of their responsibilities towards the children on aspects such as daily monitoring of attendance, progress checks, monitoring emotional well-being and the completion of PEPs.

Depending on the specific individual needs of the child it may be appropriate for the SENCo⁸ or DSP for child protection to perform the function of the designated person for looked after children.

Having a designated person for looked after children does not diminish the responsibility of headteachers. The headteacher is the lead professional and leader of learning in the school, responsible for the quality of learning and teaching and for **all** learner achievement.

Given this broad responsibility, the governing body should consult with the headteacher in making the decision as to who will be the designated person. The governing body should be satisfied that the designated person prioritises education for the looked after child.

The decision on who should fulfil the designated person role should be based on a number of factors such as the existing management structures within the school, the size of the school and the number of looked after children and their specific needs, which may vary markedly. Consideration should be given to extending the duties of a member of staff currently undertaking a strategic, inclusion or pastoral role, as appropriate.

The designated person has a crucial role as a leader and a champion for looked after children. They need to be able to work with the school governing body to establish school policy and oversee its implementation. This means:

- promoting high aspirations for looked after children
- monitoring learning outcomes
- empowering school staff to contribute to the teaching and wider learning experiences of children in care
- undertaking discussions with the looked after child; and
- having empathy with the complexity of the lives of looked after children.

It is expected that the designated person for looked after children will ensure that:

- the school shares and supports high expectations for looked after children. The school should consider implementing projects that work on increasing aspirations and mentoring schemes (possibly by care experienced people) as a form of support for looked after children
- the well-being of looked after children is monitored effectively and their welfare needs addressed

⁸ Under the ALN Bil (currently at stage 3 in the Assembly), SENCos are to be replaced with ALNCoS who will carry out equivalent roles.

- there is access to current and accurate information on the looked after children on roll. This should include social worker and carer details, also, information relating to persons with whom the child should not have contact
- a culture of positive collaboration is fostered and where communication difficulties arise with social workers or carers, contact is made with the LACE Coordinator
- education information is transferred promptly between agencies and individuals
- a looked after child's transition from nursery into school and from school into post-16 education (further/higher education) is coordinated smoothly with all partners concerned
- a home-school agreement is drawn up with the carer
- there is regular dialogue with the child to provide support in the school environment
- the child's educational needs are identified in consultation with his/her teacher(s) to address them by setting realistic challenges and academic targets
- a PEP is drawn up in partnership with the child, parent and/or relevant family member, carer, social worker and any other relevant person. The PEP must be available at the looked after children review meeting although it is considered best practice to conduct the PEP review separately from the overarching looked after children review
- PEPs and guidance are available from the LACE Coordinator
- sufficient time is allocated for the school to be represented at the looked after children review
- all meetings for looked after children (for reasons related to their care circumstances) should be held outside of lesson times. If this is not possible an appropriate room should be provided to ensure privacy for the meeting
- all meetings with looked after children only involve members of school staff who are absolutely critical to that meeting
- looked after children are not exposed to disputes over finances and responsibilities in meetings
- any issues arising that might threaten the school placement are addressed without delay. All steps should be taken to prevent exclusion, including the implementation of pastoral support, referral for behaviour support and involvement of the Education Welfare Service. Please see the [Neath Port Talbot CBC Pastoral Support Programme](http://resources.hwb.wales.gov.uk/VTC/raise/swamwac/7527/7527-Pastoral-Support-Programme.pdf)⁹ as a case study

⁹ <http://resources.hwb.wales.gov.uk/VTC/raise/swamwac/7527/7527-Pastoral-Support-Programme.pdf>

- a looked after child being re-integrated to school receives the necessary support they need to ensure the process is successful
- regular liaison on issues, including poor attendance, takes place with the EWO
- looked after children with learning or behavioural difficulties are assessed to identify and provide for their support needs
- referrals are made to support services e.g. school based counselling service are made as appropriate
- working with the headteacher - the educational progress of looked after children is reported to the governing body on a termly basis
- the register of the looked after children in school is up to date
- training is undertaken to carry out the full duties of the role effectively.

Other key personnel beyond the school

A range of professionals across a number of disciplines exist to support children who are looked after. These span all sectors, with a leading role for local authority social services and education services. To ensure the right outcomes are delivered, everybody needs to execute their function and responsibility for these children with the child at the centre of activity.

The Looked-After Children in Education (LACE) Coordinator

In discharging their duties under the Children Act 1989 and 2004 responsible authorities are required to designate a specialist practitioner (the LACE Coordinator) to coordinate the child's education plan and address the education needs of looked after children and care leavers in the local authority area. In addition the responsible authority must ensure that every child looked after by them has an effective and high quality PEP.

LACE Coordinators' exact roles are defined by individual local authorities and can vary throughout Wales.

They are there to make sure that looked after children get any additional support they need with education and are based within the social care or education departments of the local authority.

The LACE Coordinator should have the relevant skills and competencies to undertake their role. They should have a clear remit to establish and enforce joint procedures and protocols, provide information as appropriate to all involved in corporate parenting and to act as a champion for young people in public care.

As the designated local authority officer, the LACE Coordinator, as a minimum, is expected to perform the following roles:

- work towards the Welsh Government's objectives on the education of looked after children

- promote the education of **all** looked after children for whom the local authority is the corporate parent, whether placed in or out of the authority
- liaise with their counterparts across counties to effectively meet the needs of the looked after child when placement changes occur across counties
- monitor attendance, exclusion, progress, well-being and achievement data; collate and analyse performance information on an individual and collective basis. Use the calculation of 'value-added' data and 3 year rolling averages
- establish and maintain a list – through the admissions process - of looked after children who are placed in the authority by other local authorities
- liaise with the relevant lead person of the corporate parent local authority i.e. social worker, virtual headteacher (from English local authorities) or LACE Coordinators on educational provision and transitional arrangement as appropriate
- in conjunction with social workers, ensure that schools know which children are in care
- develop and promote a means of engaging looked after children and obtaining their views on educational provision. The individual needs, requirements and opinions of looked after children should be considered when places for them are made available on interventions and programmes
- act as a conduit between social services, schools and other education professionals on Special Educational Needs (SEN), admission arrangements, policy etc.
- liaise with Careers Wales, Youth Services, the Leaving Care Team and other relevant managers to ensure appropriate and timely support and access to universal entitlements
- provide support and challenge to local authorities relating to school admissions and exclusions
- working with schools, help minimise the impact of disruptive home circumstances on the looked after child's learning by arranging 'catch up' sessions, one-to-one support or other targeted support
- disseminate good practice including training for elected members, foster carers, social workers, school governors and the designated person for looked after children in schools
- ensure high quality PEPs/Individual Development Plans (IDPs)¹⁰ are in place for each child and provide guidance on their implementation
- submit robust budget proposals that enable the purchase and allocation of educational resources for looked after children as appropriate – in the case of the

¹⁰ IDPs will replace the existing Statement of Special Educational Needs over a phased period and be used for learners from the age of 0 to 25.

Pupil Development Grant (PDG) for looked after children close working with consortia and individual schools is essential

- establish and maintain a list of designated persons for looked after children in each school in their authority and for schools attended by children placed out-of-authority
- attend looked after children reviews as appropriate
- contribute to strategies and operational plans to promote the engagement, attendance and achievement of looked after children and of vulnerable groups
- help deliver the local authority strategy and policy for looked after children in the consortia region
- report to corporate parenting panel / elected members / senior management team on the educational outcomes of looked after children against the local authority strategy
- work closely with the Engagement and Progression Coordinator (EPC) to ensure that looked after children who are at risk of disengagement are supported and have a planned transition to an appropriate post-16 setting.

Engagement and Progression Coordinator (EPC)

The Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF) has been developed to support those at risk of not making a positive transition when they leave school. The framework brings together key elements of effective practice to help deliver positive outcomes for young people and provides a systematic mechanism for local authorities to identify those in need of support, establish the support available, and to track progress of young people as they make the transition from compulsory education into further education, training or employment.

Each local authority has put in place an EPC, who plays a critical role in implementing the YEPF. They work closely with Careers Wales to provide the operational leadership needed to identify the level of risk of young people and the specific support needed to help them make a positive progression.

A looked after child may well flag up as at risk of disengaging as part of the local authority early identification system and in collaboration with other key partners appropriate support will then need to be put in place.

Foster carers, carers and residential staff

Foster carers, carers and residential staff should encourage and support each looked after child to meet the objectives and targets in their PEP (owned by the child and their carers) which relate to educational aspirations (academic and non-academic) and leisure interests which support the child to enjoy learning and to achieve their learning outcomes. In practical terms, this will include providing a home environment and appropriate equipment¹¹ which enables a child to learn, study and do homework. They should also ensure the child attends school or the equivalent in accordance with the care plan. They should actively contribute to the child's PEP and care plans. The designated person should meet carers to complete a

¹¹ looked after children should have access to computers and to a wide range of reading materials. Foster carers should work with the school to ensure the right equipment is provided

PEP regularly (at least twice a year). If there is any update to the PEP this should be given to the carer.

In addition, they should ensure there is contact and communication with the child's parents and family in accordance with the agreed plans.

We recognise that there needs to be more focus on the importance of foster carers own experience of education with consideration given to providing opportunities for foster carers to gain additional educational qualifications. Training for foster carers should include explicit teaching on how to support children with their homework, providing dedicated time to undertake positive educational activities with children, as well as the importance of attending school meetings.

To help address this, [The Fostering Network](#)¹², in partnership with the Welsh Government, has produced a useful foster carer's guide to education in Wales.

The [Vale of Glamorgan County Council](#)¹³ has also delivered a successful education forum to engage carers with the education of the looked after children in their care.

Fostering/family placement and residential service managers

Fostering/family placement and residential service managers should ensure that their services support carers and staff in looking after children and in promoting their educational achievement. They should arrange for regular supervision of staff and compliance with legislation, procedures and guidance, including national foster care standards and codes of practice. They should contribute to developing and managing services to provide adequate choice of placement to meet the needs of looked after children within their authority.

Social workers

The social worker should take account of the child's educational needs¹⁴ and the availability of appropriate schools and services when making placement arrangements. Best practice is to initiate a PEP meeting with the school, looked after child, and LACE Co-ordinator. If possible, invite the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). This will precede the looked after children review, though this may not always be possible, it should be adopted as best practice.

The social worker should ensure that care plans and PEPs are made and reviewed in accordance with statutory timescales. Where this does not happen, the social worker should report this to the designated manager within the department.

When a looked after child is placed outside their home authority, the responsibility for the child still rests with the social worker from the home authority under the corporate parenting obligations. Decisions around remaining in the same school and commuting or moving to a new school as a result of placement moves should be discussed with the looked after child, their views taken into account, and decisions made on an individual case-by-case basis.

¹² <https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/advice-information/looking-after-fostered-child/education>

¹³ <http://www.exchangewales.org/careandeducationcasestudies>

¹⁴ Training for educators, careers services **and** social workers should be considered in relation to countering the propensity for low attainment and career expectations for looked after children

Education for looked after children should always be prioritised and the arrangements for moving schools should be expedited.

Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)

If a local authority is looking after a child, it must appoint an IRO to oversee that child's case. IROs should chair the review meetings of all children who are looked after - except in cases where it has been agreed that the child or young person can chair the proceedings. The IRO's job is to listen to the child and to check the local authority is looking after the child well.

IROs should bring a degree of objectivity and oversight to the care and support planning process and ensure that the local authority has a consistent approach towards the care of children for whom it is corporately responsible.

The IRO should seek to prevent any 'drift' in the planning of the care for looked after children and ensure that the local authority's efforts in reviewing children's cases are focussed on meeting the needs of each child. The IRO should ensure that care and support plans are timely, effective and sensitive to the individual needs of the children who are looked after.

The IRO along with social workers, the designated person and others should take every possible step to minimise disruption to an education placement as a result of entry into or exit from care or a change in care placement.

The independent nature of the IRO should facilitate the opportunity for monitoring the activities of the local authority as a corporate parent, assess the quality of services and challenge activities where necessary. The IRO should therefore be sent a copy of the PEP and any amended versions of it so they can fulfil this role.

Independent visitor

Independent visitors are appointed by a local authority for a looked after child where it appears to them to be in the child's best interests. The role of the independent visitor is to visit, befriend and advise a child on any issues of concern.

Personal advisers

A young person may cease to be looked after and become a care leaver before they reach the age of 18. Upon achieving care leaver status, the local authority is no longer required to provide them with a social worker but instead must appoint a personal adviser to support them. The personal adviser will act as the focal point to ensure the care leaver is provided with the right kind of personal support.

The personal adviser will be the key professional responsible for co-ordinating the care leaver's support and is a key participant in preparing the young person's pathway plan. The plan will set out the actions necessary to support the young person making a successful transition to adulthood and greater independence and will be based on their existing care and support plan. It must address education, training and employment and the PEP should continue to be maintained while the young person continues to receive full or part-time education.

The personal adviser will ensure that the pathway plan is reviewed at the correct intervals, ensure the plan is implemented and keep themselves informed about care leavers' progress and wellbeing.

Advocate

All looked after children have a statutory entitlement to an advocate who will help support them in participating in the care and support plan, including the PEP. The advocate may be an independent professional advocate or may be a lay advocate chosen by the child. A lay advocate may be for example a relative, teacher or carer. Irrespective of whether the advocate is an independent professional or a lay advocate they will seek to ensure the views and wishes of the child are fully reflected in the decision making process around their plan and the advocate should be actively involved in the development and reviews of the PEP. It would be good practice to invite the advocate to any PEP meetings

Elected members

Elected members have an important role to play in overseeing the services provided for looked after children and young people to make sure that the services are improving their outcomes. Corporate parenting places a collective responsibility on local authorities to achieve good parenting for all children in their care by:

- making sure all councillors within every local authority understand their corporate parenting responsibilities and are committed to fulfilling them
- ensuring the corporate strategy gives a high priority to the local authority's role as corporate parent
- ensuring that the local authority works closely with key partners. The children and young person's plan should set out how agencies will work together to support looked-after children
- making sure looked after children and young people have the opportunity to discuss and give feedback on the quality services they receive
- providing the support a good parent would give on housing, education, training and employment
- receiving regular management information reports on looked-after children.
- fulfilling the role summarised in '[If this were my child A councillor's guide to being a good corporate parent to children in care and care leavers](#)',¹⁵

Post-16 education providers; supporting an effective transition to post-16 education or training

Successful transition to post-16 education and training takes careful planning and involves a number of partners, especially for looked after children. They may not have access to the same social capital as their peers and may therefore need extra support and encouragement.

To help looked after children make a successful transition schools, colleges, local authorities, other post-16 providers and interested parties should create gateways to learning beyond 16.

¹⁵ <http://gov.wales/docs/caecd/publications/090804ifthisweremychilden.pdf>

Pupil Development Grant (PDG): looked-after children

The PDG is made available by the Welsh Government to overcome the additional barriers that prevent children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds achieving their full potential. The PDG is provided to support:

- learners who are eligible for free school meals and who are educated in maintained schools
- eligible learners who are singly-registered in PRUs and EOTAS
- eligible learners in early settings where the Foundation Phase is delivered
- looked after children, and former looked after children who have been adopted from care or who are subject to a special guardian or residence orders aged 3-15.

The funding relating to the e-FSM (eligible-free school meals) and the Early Years part of the grant is given directly to schools. Funding to support looked after children and learners in PRUs is managed by the regional education consortia, working closely with local authorities – and the LACE Coordinator in particular – and schools to ensure effective use of the grant.

Foster carers and adoptive parents will often make inquiries with their child's school about the grant. In these cases, the designated person should refer the inquiry to the lead coordinator in the regional education consortia who will provide advice and guidance about the grant.

The PEP and the care and support plan

The [Code of Practice for Part 6 of the Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014](#)¹⁶ sets out local authority responsibilities under the Act for looked after and accommodated children. The Code makes clear that local authorities are required to promote educational achievement as an integral part of their duty to safeguard and promote the well-being of the children they look after.

The Code also explains that regulations set out the arrangements which the local authority **must** make for looking after a child. The making of a Part 6 care and support plan is central to these requirements and is the overarching plan for the looked after child. It brings together in one place all the key information about the child from the assessment of the child's developmental needs and from any other assessments of the child and his family. The preparation of a PEP, health plan and a placement plan should all be incorporated into and form an integral part of the overall Part 6 care and support plan for the child.

The PEP is a record of the child's education and training. It should document the agreed action to help them to fulfil their full potential, and reflect (though it does not need to duplicate) any existing education plans such as a statement of special educational needs¹⁷. The local authority should work in partnership with the child, the school (especially the

¹⁶ <http://gov.wales/docs/phhs/publications/160106pt6en.pdf>

¹⁷ These are to be replaced under the ALN Bill by individual development plans when the ALN Bill comes into force.

designated person), carers and other professionals to develop and review the PEP, so that it reflects fully the needs of the child, remains up to date and is implemented.

Except where a child enters care in an emergency, the PEP **must** be initiated as part of the Part 6 care and support plan before the young person becomes looked after. In an emergency placement, the PEP should be initiated within ten working days. The PEP should contribute to an assessment of the child's educational needs, and a version of it **must** have been developed and be available for the first statutory review meeting of the Part 6 care and support plan (28 days after entry to care or accommodation).

The PEP should not be seen in isolation from other parts of the Part 6 care and support plan but should interrelate with other parts of the plan, particularly those relating to health, emotional and behavioural development, identity and family and social relationships.

Following feedback from young people, Cardiff Council recognised that the format of PEPs was not particularly accessible or child-friendly. The local authority refreshed their documents and produced separate PEPs, [one for primary-aged pupils](#)¹⁸ and [one for secondary-aged pupils](#)¹⁹.

The PEP and the Pathway Plan

When a looked after child is about to turn 16, the local authority **must** prepare a Pathway Plan to assist that young person with the transition to adulthood and leaving care. The Pathway Plan will build upon the child's existing Part 6 care and support plan, which will be subsumed within the Pathway Plan.

The Pathway Plan will capture the actions which will be necessary from the local authority, the young person's carer, young person, parent and other identified parties to assist the young person to make a successful transition from care. The Pathway Plan will continue once the young person turns 18. The pathway assessment and planning process should also determine and record what information, advice and assistance should be provided for the young person as they prepare for, and once they have left, care.

One aspect the Pathway Plan must address is education, training and employment. The PEP should be maintained while the young person continues to receive full or part-time education. Information within the PEP will feed directly into the pathway plan and it should be developed further as part of the pathway planning process when the young person turns 16. Pathways Plans must also have an explicit focus on career planning, taking into account the young person's aspirations, skills, and educational potential.

The young person **must** also be provided with access to high quality information, advice and assistance, to help them plan any move to continuing education, training or employment. How this will be met should be included in the Pathway Plan. This career planning support should help young people recognise the relevance of their studies to their future career and life chances, and should encourage them to reflect regularly on their skills, strengths and aspirations.

¹⁸ http://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/7516f3_1125dd60fb894eab974a65040b83be39.pdf

¹⁹ http://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/7516f3_670ab8c20de84d78a174b214f50ff255.pdf

The PEP should continue to be reviewed and updated as part of the pathway process for which regulations specify minimum review periods.

Transition for pre-school looked-after children into compulsory education

All children entering school face a setting that is vastly different from their previous experiences in terms of the curriculum, the setting and the people. In the case of looked after children this change in their lives can often create challenges for practitioners who are responsible for settling a child into a school. Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council has developed a [case study](#)²⁰ which explains how the authority manages transitions in the early years.

Designated person's role in preparing transition primary – secondary education

As we know from research undertaken in [Scotland](#)²¹, any transition and indeed any significant change can be difficult for children especially those with unmet attachment needs. The transition may trigger feelings of high anxiety and fear. When managed well a positive experience of change provides a valuable opportunity for learning.

Neath Port Talbot Looked-After Children Education Service (LACES) transition intervention

The [Neath Port Talbot LACES Transition pack](#)²² was put together to help support year 6 pupils and their move-on to secondary school. The pack is adaptable and can be used when children begin school, move year group or change school. Schools are able to identify 'care experienced' pupils who they believe would benefit from this more sensitive form of transition support.

The [LACES 'transition intervention'](#)²³ is normally delivered during weekly sessions over a six week period. The aim is to prepare all pupils to make the transition as confidently and smoothly as possible. The LACES member of staff maintains contact with each pupil throughout years 6 and 7 to ensure they know and feel that they are 'held in mind'.

Post-16 education

Joint Post-16 Progression Policy or Service Level Agreement (SLA)

The designated person should take responsibility for ensuring all members of staff in the school are aware of the policy and understand the role they have to play in supporting the progress of looked after children, and that it is regularly reviewed and updated.

The Policy should include:

²⁰ <http://www.exchangewales.org/careandeducationcasestudies>

²¹ https://www.celcis.org/files/7314/6367/6206/Imp_transitions_to_secondary_school_FINAL.pdf

²² http://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/7516f3_43dd824019384d7689ba7c0ff6e788ec.pdf

²³ <http://www.exchangewales.org/careandeducationcasestudies>

- the process for collecting and sharing pupil information. Information should include:
 - the PEP
 - strategies for dealing with young person's social, emotional and behavioural development.
 - strengths and weaknesses
 - support needs
- expectations for actively working with post-16 providers
- the role of staff, parents/carers and children in the progression process
- a commitment to developing an understanding of teaching and learning approaches in post-16 settings and facilitate joint CPD opportunities for teachers, lecturers and tutors in both settings
- details on how learners will be prepared for new ways of learning in post-16 settings e.g. development of independent learning and time management skills
- a comprehensive programme of outreach activities that are offered by post-16 providers; and
- an outline of the information and support that will be available to pupils e.g. information on the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and application process.

Designated persons role in preparing looked-after children for transition to post-16 education, training or employment

Planning for transitions should begin early, ideally at the end of year 9 when learners are making their GCSE choices.

The designated person should ensure that all pupils receive independent impartial advice about the full range of post-16 options available to them, including vocational and work-based learning. They should make sure pupils understand what progressions routes are open to them and the qualifications they will need.

Further education and work-based learning providers

Should be invited to the school at appropriate times during the pupil's education to speak about the courses and training they deliver, and what it is like to study in a college or undertake an apprenticeship.

Learners' career aspirations and progression routes should then be captured in their PEP and be regularly reviewed to ensure it continues to reflect the young person's aims and ambitions.

Key Stages 3 and 4

The designated person, carer(s) and social workers should help the young person identify realistic and appropriate post-16 provision.

PEP meeting/post-transition meeting

The designated person will arrange a PEP meeting/post transition meeting and invite all interested parties i.e. the young person and their carer(s), social worker, representation from the post-16 provider and personal adviser if appropriate.

This meeting gives the young person and their carer the chance to meet their key point of contact at the post-16 provider and discuss any support the learner may need to make a successful transition.

It also enables the post-16 representative to meet the young person's personal adviser and social worker, who will play a crucial role in supporting them to participate and remain in post-16 education or training.

Provider visits

The post-16 provider should invite the young person to visit them, get a feel for its geography, and meet key members of staff. The designated person should support the young person to attend open and taster days, for example, by arranging transport or attending with the young person.

Offer of learning

The designated person should make every effort to ensure that all pupils have an offer of learning before they go on exam or study leave, and track those without an offer. The offer letter from the post-16 provider should be copied to the designated person and set out what the pupil should do if they do not attain the necessary grades. If not, the designated person should make every effort to find out from the post-16 provider.

Local authority leaving care team

Around this time the young person may move out of care and into the remit of the local authority's leaving care team.

Personal adviser/Pathways Plan

Every looked after child should be assigned a personal adviser who will act as a mentor during their transition to adulthood. The personal adviser and social worker will use the PEP as a basis for drawing up a Pathways Plan that builds on the Care Plan.

The personal adviser will ensure that the plan is realistic and deliverable and arrange review meetings, taking responsibility for communicating the outcomes to other agencies and individuals as necessary, including schools and post-16 providers. It is essential that the plan captures the young person's intentions to go on to post-16 learning, to ensure they get the support and funding required.

Post-16 Individual Learning Plan

The designated person should facilitate the prompt transfer of information outlined previously to the post-16 provider, who will use the PEP and Pathways Plan as a basis for drawing up a Post-16 Individual Learning Plan (ILP) in collaboration with the learner and social services.

Once successfully transferred to post-16 education and training, the designated person should expect to receive updates on the young person's progress, and the post-16 provider should inform the designated person of their destination upon finishing the course or training. This will help inform the designated person about the progression process, whether it is working and what improvements need to be made. They should also seek feedback from looked after children and care leavers about the process.

Links to existing guidance

PDG to support the educational attainment of looked-after children²⁴

This 'frequently asked questions' guide explains how the PDG is administered and how the eligibility criteria must operate.

School admissions²⁵

This section summarises the code of practice for the admission of children, including those who are looked after, to schools. In addition, children who are looked after and previously looked after should be ranked first in the oversubscription criteria for schools where applications for admission exceed the admission number for the school.

Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 – Part 6 Code of Practice (Looked after and Accommodated Children)²⁶

Requires local authorities to have special regard to the education and training needs of a looked after child when making a placement and to ensure that the placement does not disrupt a child's education or training. In addition, regulations made under the Act impose particular requirements on local authorities when making placements for looked after children in Key Stage 4, recognising that moving children in the middle of a GCSE course may seriously damage their opportunity to gain the qualifications they need to enter further or higher education, or to gain employment.

Transfer of the child's educational records²⁷

This circular provides advice and guidance on the keeping, disposal, disclosure and transfer of a pupil's educational record.

Education Psychology Service (EPS) referral

Every local authority has an EPS, although there are variations in service delivery to meet local needs. Educational Psychologists (EPs) within this service will work with children and young people (CYP) to support their development, well-being, resilience, learning and achievement.

EPS guidance²⁸ - aimed at education professionals and parents/carers, has been published and provides an overview of the responsibilities of EPs and the services they can provide.

Behaviour issues²⁹

This is a resource to enhance the practice of newly qualified primary teachers. It focuses on general behaviour management methods but does not specifically cover issues relating to special educational needs.

²⁴ <http://learning.gov.wales/docs/learningwales/publications/160524-lac-en.pdf>

²⁵ <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/admissions-and-appeals-code/?lang=en>

²⁶ <http://gov.wales/docs/phhs/publications/160106pt6en.pdf>

²⁷ <http://gov.wales/about/foi/publications-catalogue/circular/circulars2006/1552927/?lang=en>

²⁸ <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/additional-learning-special-educational-needs/transformation-programme/supporting-policy/educational-psychologists-in-wales/?lang=en>

²⁹ <http://learning.gov.wales/docs/learningwales/publications/140822-behaviour-management-handbook-for-primary-schools-en.pdf>

Exclusion³⁰

This guidance provides advice on:

- excluding learners from schools and PRUs
- the procedures for appealing against exclusion
- how to maintain the education of excluded learners.

Further education³¹

This guidance provides examples of good practice to help further education institutions (FEIs) meet the needs of looked after children and care leavers effectively.

FEIs have worked to build on the good practice gained from Buttle UK. Good practice materials, based on the Buttle Quality Mark principles were published in November 2015. The Learning and Work Institute has worked to embed the principles, including converting the existing materials into an interactive '[toolkit](#)'³² for FEIs and capturing the views of stakeholders around understanding of post-16 learning.

Estyn best practice report³³

This report focuses on the good practice that exists in schools, local authorities and the regional consortia. The report includes case studies of best practice. It is intended for the Welsh Government, governors, headteachers, senior leaders and staff in schools, local authorities and the regional consortia.

CASCADE research³⁴

In January 2015, the Welsh Government commissioned a study on looked after children and young people and education. CASCADE completed the research: *Understanding the educational experiences and opinions, attainment, achievement and aspirations of looked after children in Wales over a six-month period.*

Listening to the views of care experienced by young people

Positive engagement is key. Looked after children are telling us clearly they do not want to be labelled; they do not want to be treated differently, they want to be part of the decision making that affects the rest of our lives. This [video](#)³⁵ for schools by CASCADE provides a very clear insight into the views and opinions of some looked after children. The message is loud and clear. As adults we need to start hearing and acting on those messages.

Looked after children and young people have high ambitions and aspirations and we fail them by expecting them to achieve anything less than their full potential. The aspirations and ambitions of significant adults in the lives of children who are looked after should at least mirror those of the child. Strong and appropriate support – aligned with an unswerving sense of belief - is essential if we are to progress.

³⁰ <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/pupilsupport/exclusion/?lang=en>

³¹ <http://learning.gov.wales/resources/browse-all/supporting-care-leavers-in-further-education/?lang=en>

³² <http://www.exchangewales.org/careandeducationpracticematerials>

³³ <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/sites/default/files/documents/LAC%20Remit%20report%20Eng.pdf>

³⁴ <http://sites.cardiff.ac.uk/cascade/looked-after-children-and-education/>

³⁵ <https://vimeo.com/214645169/e69c78e447>

Looked after children need opportunities to meet with others who have experienced time in care and these should be held regularly. Provision in this area is currently available from The Fostering Network and [Voices From Care](#)³⁶ and these should be considered as best practice models to develop further support for looked after children. The designated person for looked after children in school should signpost learners to these providers.

Other tips for the designated person

When introducing intervention programmes for looked after children they should have comprehensive plans for negotiating their end-point to minimise distress.

Universal programmes that are open to all children and young people rather than restricted to looked after children and young people should be considered as they may be less stigmatising and more beneficial for a wider demographic.

Good practice case studies

Local authorities, consortia and schools are encouraged to produce good practice case studies to share with practitioners and carers via the online community of practice: *ExChange – Care & Education*.

The following case studies are available:

Torfaen County Borough Council³⁷

Torfaen County Borough Council has set out its policy whereby each school has a nominated school governor for looked after children who will report to the Governing body. Caveat - there is no statutory requirement for such a specific role as a nominated school governor; however some schools and local authorities may choose to assign one.

Education through Regional Working (ERW)³⁸

Education through Regional Working has produced a guide on the role of LAC Link Governor. Caveat - there is no statutory requirement for Governing Bodies to have a link governor for looked after children, but many local authorities recommend that they do.

ERW has also produced a [template](#)³⁹ for Headteachers to use to provide a termly update for governors.

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council⁴⁰

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council has developed a model school policy for the education of pupils looked after (draft exemplar).

³⁶ <http://www.vfcc.org.uk/>

³⁷ <http://www.exchangewales.org/careandeducationcasestudies>

³⁸ <http://www.exchangewales.org/careandeducationcasestudies>

³⁹ <http://www.exchangewales.org/careandeducationcasestudies>

⁴⁰ <http://www.exchangewales.org/careandeducationcasestudies>

Rumney Primary School, Cardiff⁴¹

Rumney Primary School, Cardiff has produced a case study on the role of the designated person for looked after children. The school has also produced a case study on using therapies to support the social and emotional needs of looked after children.

Coleg Gwent⁴²

Coleg Gwent has developed a strategy for supporting vulnerable learners in further education by the introduction of an information sharing protocol with the leaving care teams in local authorities.

Training available

Training for the designated person must be undertaken and it is generally provided or arranged by the LACE coordinator in each local authority. Refer to the section about the role of the LACE coordinator.

[The Education Achievement Service \(EAS\)](#)⁴³ consortia has delivered training for designated person(s) in the south east region of Wales and a useful selection of training materials have been developed.

Developing good practice: checklist of questions

Estyn produced checklists for completion by [schools](#)⁴⁴ and [local authorities](#)⁴⁵ to inform their publication: *Raising the attainment, achievement and aspiration of children who are looked after – a best practice report*. These useful resources were designed for schools and local authorities to conduct a self-assessment to check how well they are supporting looked after children and to identify any areas for further improvement.

⁴¹ <http://www.exchangewales.org/careandeducationcasestudies>

⁴² <http://www.exchangewales.org/careandeducationcasestudies>

⁴³ <http://www.exchangewales.org/careandeducationcasestudies>

⁴⁴ <http://www.exchangewales.org/careandeducationcasestudies>

⁴⁵ <http://www.exchangewales.org/careandeducationcasestudies>

Useful contacts

We are continuing to work with our key partners to drive up improvements in the educational attainment of children who are looked after. To find out more about the work of our partners please visit the following websites.

Estyn: The office of Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training
www.estyn.gov.wales/language

The Fostering Network
www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk

Voices From Care
<http://voicesfromcarecymru.org.uk/>

CASCADE – Cardiff University
<http://sites.cardiff.ac.uk/cascade/>

Education through Regional Working (ERW)
www.erw.wales

Central South Consortium Joint Education Service (CSCJES)
www.cscjes.org.uk

Education Achievement Service (EAS)
www.sewales.org.uk

GWE – North Wales Consortium
www.gwegogledd.cymru/cy

Contact details for LACE coordinators and LAC PDG lead coordinators
<http://www.exchangewales.org/careandeducationkeycontacts>

Annex: Related documents

Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales – Strategy (Welsh Government, 2016)

<http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/160127-lac-strategy-en.pdf>

Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales – Strategy (easy read version) (Welsh Government, 2016)

<http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/151218-easy-read-lac-strategy-en.pdf>

Raising the attainment, achievement and aspiration of children who are looked after – a best practice report (Estyn, 2016)

www.estyn.gov.wales/thematic-reports/raising-attainment-achievement-and-aspiration-children-who-are-looked-after-best

Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after: one year on (Welsh Government, 2017)

<http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/170509-looked-after-children-en.pdf>

Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after: one year on (easy read version) (Welsh Government, 2017)

<http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/170509-looked-after-children-easy-read-en-v2.pdf>