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**LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN IN EDUCATION - ANNUAL REVIEW BRIEFING**

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**Background**

In October 2019, the council launched ‘Cardiff 2030: a ten-year vision for a capital city of learning and opportunity’, building on progress made since the launch of ‘Cardiff 2020’ in 2016. Against this overall improving picture, ‘Cardiff 2030’ highlights the continuing importance of focused action in several areas, including the continuing need to improve educational outcomes for Looked After Children.

Reporting as we were doing up until 2019 is still not possible and comparison data is not available or reportable. The GCSE results for Looked After Children will not be published in line with the guidance for all children. However, we have continued to track and monitor individual performance of looked after children and direct support for achievement and well-being as required, in collaboration with key partners. In this report we will focus on sharing the strengths of current practice in terms of supporting our Looked After Children and the areas that we need to develop further.

Pending any guidance from Welsh Government on what the accountability framework will look like, the focus of Education support continues to be on learner well-being, individual learner progress and successful transition at all stages. The transition from statutory education into further education, employment or training remains a priority focus for the Looked After in Education team. ALN reform is also of the highest priority and ensuring that our children with Additional Learning Needs are identified and have Individual Development Plans with the Additional Learning provision that they require in place.

Cardiff received acknowledgement from Estyn in February 2021 of its positive work with Looked After Children during the pandemic:

*‘The ‘children who are looked after’ team has engaged with the 252 providers outside of Cardiff local authority to monitor the support and review processes for these vulnerable learners. Officers view the stronger relationships that it has built with these providers as a positive outcome of the pandemic. Learners indicated they preferred the virtual review meetings that took place during the lockdown period, as these were less daunting than physical meetings. As a result of this feedback, the local authority has continued with this approach. Officers review the quality of personal education plans (PEPs) that schools submit electronically, providing feedback and support, where necessary. They work closely with schools and the ALN team to improve consistency between individual education or behaviour plans for learners with special educational needs, and their PEPs.’*

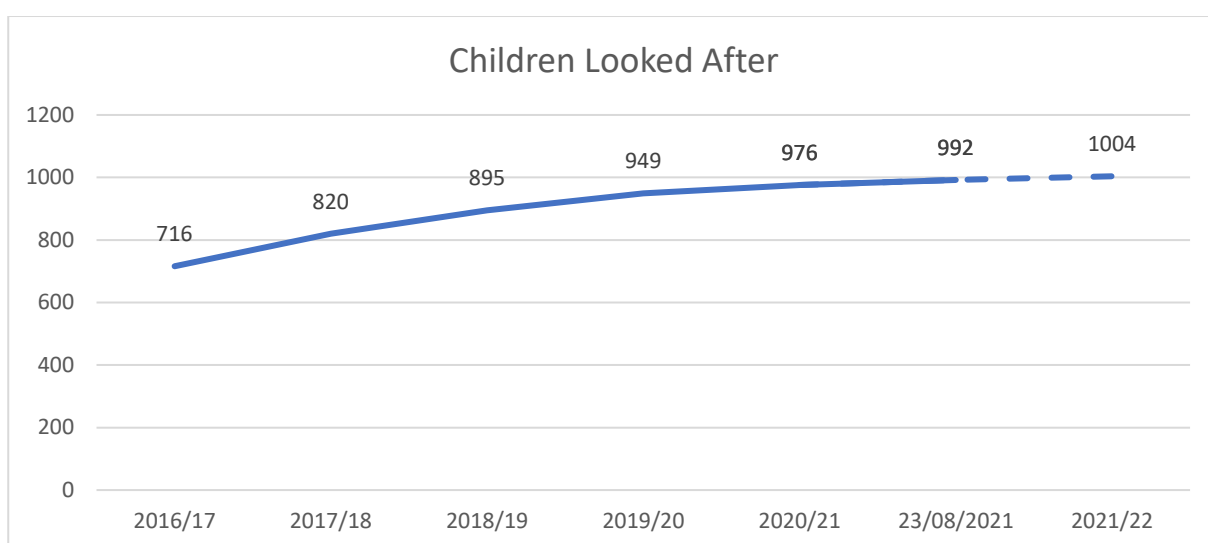
In the November 2021 Education Inspection, support for Looked After Children was one of six Local Inspection Questions:

**How well do education services work with other directorate services and partners to provide support to improve the education outcomes and wellbeing of children who are looked after?**

Outcomes of the inspection will be published in February 2022.

**Introduction**

The children identified as Looked After for the purposes of this report are those identified by Children’s Services on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021. The cohort is constantly changing due to adoption and children moving in and out of care.



Over the last 5 years the number of Cardiff Looked after Children has increased significantly. The needs of the children in the system are also becoming more complex. The pace of increase in numbers, and complexity of needs, is not matched by the number of foster carers and homes in Cardiff, resulting in circa third of those at statutory school age to be placed out of county to live. This has increased the challenge to find suitable and appropriate education for our children within suitable distance. Plans to address these challenges by Children’s Services (CS) over the next three years are developed.

The improvement of systems, processes, and capacity within the Looked After team in Education over the last few years and has impacted positively on the effectiveness and amount of support that can be given.

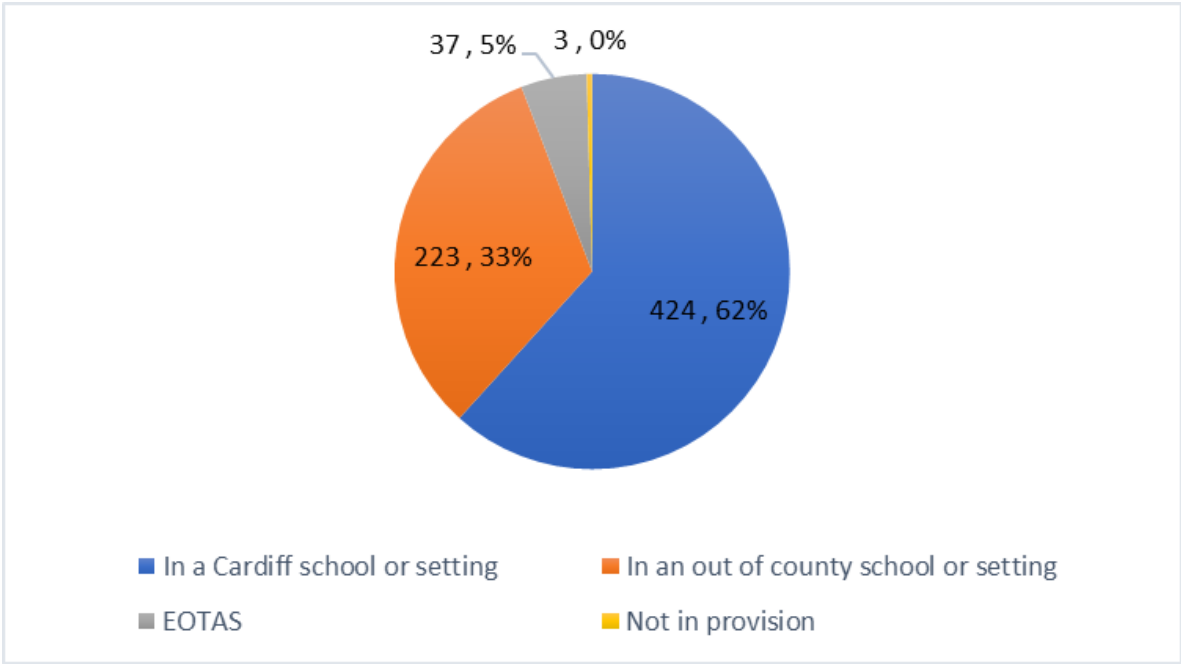
Nearly all schools in Cardiff understand fully their role as corporate parents and are inclusive and meet the Looked After Child’s holistic needs. Many of our children achieve individual success and progress well in education, training, and employment.

The CPAC Education report before the pandemic hit, set out identified areas for development and despite completely having to change our ways of working and the need to set up different panels and procedures, we have kept on that improvement journey. The two most significant are the new Corporate Parenting Strategy involving

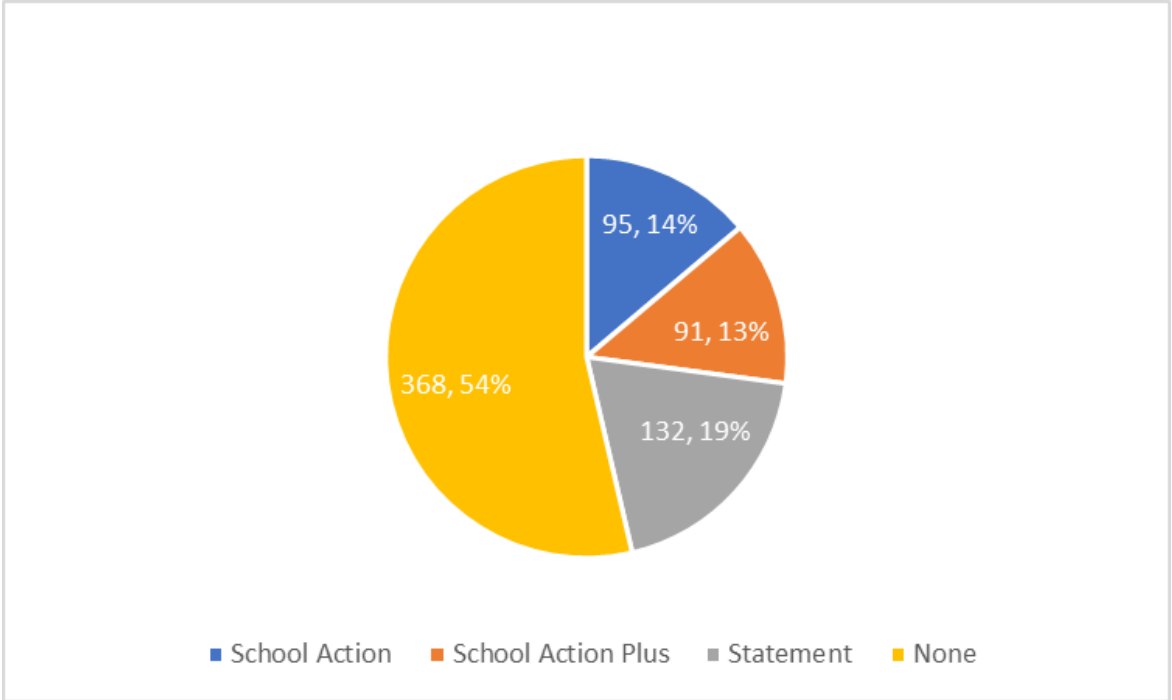
all partners launched in May 2021 and the recruitment of 4 learning mentors to provide additional support for our KS4 pupils. The LACE mentors will complement the mentors already supporting KS4 pupils in schools and focus on ensuring transition to EET post-16. They will also be able help us analyse at the individual level barriers to learning in a timely manner so we can improve our intervention and support at KS4. In preparation for ALN reform we have also recruited an inclusion teacher who will focus on the completion of Individual Development plans (IDPs) for Looked After Children identified with ALN educated in Cardiff or in other LAs.

**Information that can be shared**

**Where Cardiff Looked After Children are being educated:**

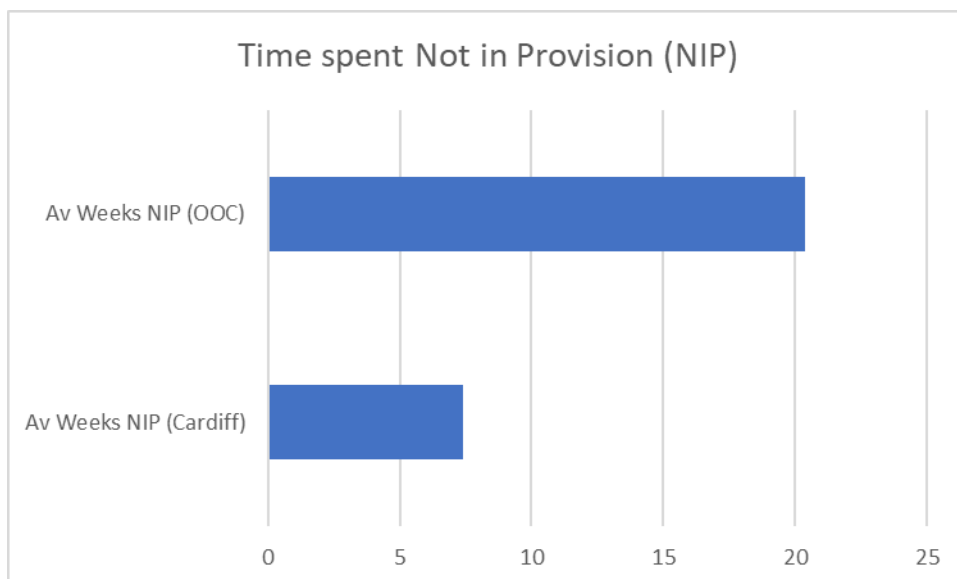


**Cardiff Looked After Children identified as having Special Educational Needs (SEN) / Additional Learning Needs (ALN)**



## Cardiff Looked After Children that have been 'Not in provision'

Time spent Not in Provision (NIP) academic year to date:	
Number of LACE from March 31 <sup>st</sup> cohort NIP this academic year living in Cardiff	2
Av Weeks NIP (Cardiff)	7.4
Number of LACE from March 31 <sup>st</sup> cohort NIP this academic year living in OOC	7
Av Weeks NIP (OOO)	20.39



## Exclusion data

<b>Incidents of FTE</b>	<b>58</b>
Days lost	77.5
LAC with 1 or more FTE	27
Average exclusion length	2.9
No with 5 or more days FTE	4
<b>Categories FTE</b>	
Assault/Violence (Pupil)	8
Assault/Violence (Staff)	8
Damage to Property	1
Disruptive Behaviour	20
Other	6
Substance Misuse	2
Verb Abuse/TB Against a Pupil	1
Verbal Abuse	12

## Progression of our Looked After children into education employment and training

Successful Transition to Employment Education or Training:	# Y11	Y11s in a confirmed destination on 31 <sup>st</sup> October 2021
Total number of LACE in EET on October 31st	81	67
%		83%
Total number of LACE in EET on October 31st (Cardiff)	51	44
%		86%
Total number of LACE in EET on October 31st (OOC)	19	17
%		89%
Total number of LACE in EET on October 31st (EOTAS)	11	6
%		55%

## Personal education plans

Personal Education Plans:	
Total number of LACE with a PEP this academic year	667
%	97%
Total number of LACE with a PEP this academic year (Cardiff Schools)	416
%	98%
Total number of LACE with a PEP this academic year (OOC Schools)	217
%	98%
Total number of LACE with a PEP this academic year (EOTAS / No School)	34
%	85%

**Success stories**

<p><b>Pupil J</b> <b>Destination:</b> A levels At Sixth Form</p> <p>A* Maths A* Numeracy A* English Lit A* Biology A* Chemistry A* Physics A PE A Welsh A English Lang B Art &amp; Design D2 Engineering Pass Extended Cert in Work skills</p>	<p><b>Pupil D</b> <b>Destination:</b> A levels At Sixth Form</p> <p>A* English Lang A* English Lit A* Maths A*A* Science B Business B Drama B PE C Welsh</p>	<p><b>Pupil M</b> <b>Destination:</b> A levels At Sixth Form</p> <p>A* Chemistry A* Physics A* Welsh A* Computer Science A* Maths A* Biology A Business Studies A RE B English Lang D Additional Maths</p>	<p><b>Pupil L</b> <b>Destination:</b> A levels At Sixth Form</p> <p>A*English Lang A* RE A Biology, A Chemistry A Maths A Textiles A Welsh Bacc B Welsh Sec Lang B Physics C Spanish</p>	<p><b>Pupil G</b> <b>Destination:</b> A levels At College</p> <p>A* RE A English Lit A Food &amp; Nutrition B English Lang B Geography B Welsh Bacc C Welsh Sec lang D Maths DD Science double award D Spanish F Numeracy</p>
<p><b>Pupil T</b> <b>Destination:</b> A levels At Sixth Form</p> <p>A* Chemistry A*Physics A* Computer Science A* Maths A* Biology A* Welsh A RE A Business Studies B English Lang D Additional Maths</p>	<p><b>Pupil N</b> <b>Destination:</b> A levels At College</p> <p>A* Biology A English Language A Maths B RE B Welsh Sec Lang B Welsh Bacc B Business Studies C Chemistry C Physics F Computer Science</p>	<p><b>Pupil R</b> <b>Destination:</b> A levels At College</p> <p>A* RE B English Lang B Maths B Numeracy B ICT BB Applied double Science C Welsh C Skills Challenge Cert D Business D Music</p>	<p><b>Pupil C</b> <b>Destination:</b> A levels At Sixth Form</p> <p>A* Computer Science A Welsh Bacc A Maths A Numeracy B Business Studies BC Double Science C English Lang E Welsh</p>	<p><b>Pupil S</b> <b>Destination:</b> A levels At College</p> <p>A* R.E A Numeracy AB Double Science B Maths B English Lang C D.T BTEC qualifications TBC</p>

## What are we doing well to support our children in Education?

- A new Corporate Parenting Strategy is in place driven by CS but written with all relevant partners and putting the Looked after Child at the centre. The strategy makes it clear that corporate parenting is not just a function for children's services and elected members, but a responsibility spanning the functions of the whole authority and partners. Half termly operational meetings are set up to monitor progress on actions by all partners. This strategy has helped to strengthen corporate parenting in Cardiff and enabled better partnership working.
- Capacity within the Looked After in Education (LACE) team has been strengthened over the last three years so capacity is now at a good level. New roles with clear responsibilities have been put in place. The role of a project manager is having an impact. With four new mentors and an inclusion teacher focusing on Individual Development Plans (IDPs) for the Looked after Children with identified Additional Learning Needs (ALN) the ability to connect with more partners will be further strengthened.
- Practice systems and processes within the team are now highly effective.
  - ✓ Virtual School – partnership working with CS and the data team has ensured that flags are in place e.g., when a child comes into care, and information is shared in a timelier manner.
  - ✓ Process maps are in place (e.g., for admissions of Looked after Children, so all partners are clear about their roles and responsibilities).
  - ✓ Termly designated teacher (DT) forums are well attended and are a vehicle for information sharing, sharing good practice and for hearing the voice of care experienced young people.
  - ✓ Team meetings have set agendas that ensure individual young people are at the centre.
  - ✓ Risk panel for Looked After Children discusses the education of Looked after Children who are out of county so that costs can be agreed or challenged and delays in receiving education are minimised.
  - ✓ Weekly LACE meetings with the Achievement Leader ensures escalation of issues.
  - ✓ MS Teams channels and SharePoint sites for social workers and designated teachers ensure that all have access to relevant documentation etc.
  - ✓ All information individual pupil information is held in the pupil files so that all education professionals involved can access relevant information.
  - ✓ Responsibility of completion of Personal Education Plans has transferred to the Education LACE team and the completion and quality are much improved.
  - ✓ EOTAS meetings and regular challenge of Looked after Children not in provision (NIP) ensure our most vulnerable Looked After Children are not lost, and discussions are solution focussed.
  - ✓ Establishing the Joint Vulnerable Learner Panel (JVLP) during lockdown ensured that looked after children accessed provision if they were vulnerable to placement breakdown etc.
  - ✓ A direct inbox address for Carers ensures they can discuss any education concerns with an education professional rather than a social worker.

- ✓ Preparation for ALN reform is good with close working with our ALN colleagues and appointment of a member of staff to oversee the IDP process specifically for Looked After Children is positive.
  - ✓ Training about Looked after children is good (e.g., Directorate staff, governors, school staff).
- The LACE Team have a good partnership with Enfys, promoting their training and services, introducing them to relevant colleagues in schools. Enfys attended the Designated Teacher Forum so that all schools are fully informed about the service they provide. Their presentation was very well received and gave some valuable training about developmental trauma and the impact of trauma on looked after children. Enfys have also provided twilight training sessions and free training videos for school. This is promoted and shared on the LACE Team's DT Channel.
  - The Education Directorate all take their responsibility as Corporate Parents seriously and actively pledge their specific support for Looked After Children within their service areas. Pledges from 2019 are being re-visited in light of the new Corporate Parenting Strategy. Partnership working with Admissions, EOTAS team and inclusion teams in particular are very good.
  - The Emotional Health and Wellbeing (EHWB) team within the Education Inclusion service have been providing support to the Fostering Network by sharing approaches to Nurture and supporting foster carers training through the Masterclasses. They also shared this practice at the WG network meeting for LACEs across Wales.
  - Cardiff Commitment's plan is another example of where partnership within the directorate and beyond is working to provide positive outcomes and progression for our Looked After school leavers.
  - Cardiff Schools understand and fulfil their role for Looked After Children with most schools going over and above to meet the holistic needs of their children who are in care. The Designated Teacher meetings are well established and have continued virtually since lockdown. CS operational managers attend which enables three-way partnership understanding of issues and potential solutions.
  - PDG LAC cluster plans have been monitored and evaluated by the consortium and show practice and training to support the wellbeing of Looked After Children has improved in our schools.
  - Senior Improvement Partners are regularly updated on issues with Looked After Children in Cardiff Schools and all Improvement Partners (IPs) have a regularly updated list of the Looked after Children in their schools so that they can ask the right questions re progress and their wellbeing.
  - The LACE team ask Cardiff and Out of County schools and settings to complete an online form when a child is placed with them. This form captures key information (e.g., expectations for Personal Education Plans) and gathers key contact information from schools (e.g., who the DT is and who the exams officer



is). This information is a crucial part of effective partnerships with schools and means that communication between the LACE Team and schools is strong.

- Partnerships with Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) settings are good. This year to strengthen that partnership and improve outcomes for EOTAS, ALN, LACE, colleagues from the Inclusion Service, EOTAS Service and LACE team are working together on a training offer in relation to support ALNET specifically for independent and non-maintained settings.
- Our Looked after in Education Co-ordinator (LACE) works closely with LACEs across the consortium and the consortium lead in a professional learning context. Good practice is shared from PDG LAC plans that have had positive impact on Looked after Children's outcomes and well-being. The cluster approach to planning has been an enabler of good practice sharing and embedded CLA friendly practice across our schools.
- Partnership at all levels between Education and Children's Services is in place, including preventative partnerships to reduce the need for children to come into care. The senior management team in CS and in Education are now meeting monthly to strengthen join up of plans and align work. The meeting enables effective challenge and professional dialogue to take place too. Operational Managers, Project Managers and the LACE team are in daily conversations with Social Workers.
- CS and Education staff who work directly with children have been trained on *Compass for Life* so that they complement the work they do with children on improving aspiration and direction for their lives.
- The newly appointed youth mentors will work directly with young people in schools. Person-centred practice and the voice of the child have been included throughout the mentor programme. From referral stage, the views of the young person are included, at initial engagement meeting the mentor can discuss the program with the young person and find out if/how they would like to work together. All assessments and action plans are led by the young person, and this will continue all the way through to evaluation.
- A similar process has been introduced for capturing the voice of the child when they are accessing additional tutoring via Cardiff and Vale Tutors. There is a pre- engagement and post-engagement questionnaire that will help us evaluate the effectiveness of the provision and monitor progress from the learner's point of view.
- Weekly quality assurance and monitoring of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) gives further insight into the child's view as they include a One Page Profile and details about career aspirations and post-16 destinations.
- We are always seeking to expand partnerships to support our Looked After Children. We are having conversations with the Big Lottery re gaining additional funding for a specific project. The project involves partnership with Elevate Charity, with the Vale of Glamorgan LA and the university, to develop near peer coaches. Care experienced young people would be trained as accredited coaches to support Looked After Children still at school. If successful, an important part of the project is that it will be guided and shaped by young people

themselves. This will help create a really meaningful project. Feedback and learning from this will help us shape and adapt other services.

## **Covid-19**

During the pandemic additional capacity, procedures and processes were put in place to ensure that Looked After Children accessed vulnerable learner provision so that placements remained stable and disruption to their routine and education were minimised as much as possible.

The setting up of the Joint Vulnerable Learner Panel (JVLP) is an example where partners across the council directorates worked hard to provide the best support at this difficult time for our most vulnerable young people. Communication with out of county schools and carers was especially enhanced at this time. A direct e-mail address for carers and weekly calling of out of county education providers established stronger positive relationships.

## **Further actions to improve the outcomes for Looked After Children**

- To continue to track and monitor the progress of our Looked After Children at an individual child level to ensure more children achieve good education outcomes and progress into EET post 16.
- To continue to improve partnership working at an individual child level to ensure the right provision/support is put in place at the right time to ensure that the child achieves and progresses successfully into Education/Employment or training post-16.
- To review joint systems and processes around the Brighter Futures panel and the discussion about education at the earliest opportunity when a child is moving out of county.
- From January 2022 have a clear systematic approach to ensuring Looked after Children (linked to year group roll out) have a good IDP with clear Additional Learning Provision (ALP) agreed by all relevant professionals.
- To work with the Consortium to ensure that the monitoring of the PDG LAC is robust and the impact is clearly reported

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**11 January 2022**