

INTRODUCTION OF PERSONAL EDUCATION PLANS FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

MINISTERS' FOREWORD

Looked After Children have often suffered many disadvantages in their lives and many of them have low educational achievements which are likely to impact on their future lives and chances for employment.

Statistics show that Looked After Children here continue to be significantly outperformed by their peers in the general school population.

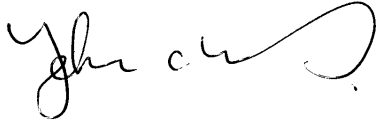
We know that there is already good work going on to help children and young people in care to overcome the challenges that lead to educational underachievement. However it is clear from the evidence that considerably more needs to be done on behalf of these children. Educational attainment is an important predictor of success in later life and one of the key education priorities is closing the gap and increasing access and equity.

The *Care Matters in Northern Ireland* strategy, which aims to improve support for children in care, was endorsed by the Executive in 2009. One of the recommended actions flowing from the strategy is the introduction of a Personal Education Plan for each and every Looked After Child or young person for the expressed purpose of improving educational outcomes.

The Department of Education, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, the Health and Social Care Board, Health and Social Care Trusts and the Education and Library Boards, with the support of a number of voluntary sector organisations, have been working together to develop a standardised regional Personal Education Plan for all Looked After Children of statutory school age. This Plan will establish clear targets and actions to respond effectively to each child's needs and provide a continuous record of their achievements. In addition, a Personal Education Plan is an opportunity to listen to children, record their hopes and worries and clearly show their stated aspirations.

The roll out of Personal Education Plans will commence on 1 December 2011. We are both personally committed to these Plans which are vital in providing a 'collective memory' of each child's education. We ask for your support in making the process a success.

We all have a shared responsibility towards Looked After Children. Educational achievement is fundamental to their future success and life chances, particularly in adult life. It is absolutely essential that everyone involved in these children's lives works together to increase their chances of better lives and greater opportunities. Our expectations for children and young people in care should be exactly the same as those for any child. Let us make that a reality.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John O'Dowd', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

John O'Dowd MLA
Minister for Education

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Edwin Poots', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Edwin Poots MLA
**Minister for Health, Social
Services and Public Safety**