



**An introduction to the virtual
school for foster carers and
parents**

2018

The session will cover:

1. What is a virtual school and why is one needed?
2. Barriers for Children in Care and often Post Care Children at school
3. The importance of education
4. The Children and Social Care Act 2017
5. The PEP process and Pupil Premium Plus for Children in Care
6. Pupil Premium Plus Post Care
7. Your questions

What is a virtual school?

A virtual school works with the authority's Children in Care as if they were all in a single school but also acting as an advocate to ensure that each member of this vulnerable group receive the highest quality educational experience.

However we now have new responsibilities in terms of Post Care Children including those leaving care to be adopted or part of special guardianship orders.

Prepare 4 Success (P4S) Virtual School:



Victoria Duke : Headteacher



Sarah Gunner: Early Years to Year 8 Lead

Moyra Maxon: Year 9-Post 16 Lead



Trish Rolfe: Admin Lead

What is the need for a virtual school?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOeQUwdAjE0>

READ
ALL
ABOUT
IT

NUMBERS

- 50 per cent of prostitutes on the streets came from the care system
- 80 per cent of Big Issue sellers were in care
- 80 per cent of care-leavers are unemployed after two years
- 13 per cent of children in care leave school with five good GCSEs, against 58 per cent of others
- 9 per cent of care-leavers go on to university, compared with 47 per cent of all youngsters
- 50 per cent of inmates in young offenders' institutions have been in care
- 26 per cent of adults in prison were in care as children
- 25 per cent of girls in care have been pregnant by the time they leave
- 50 per cent of girls in care are single mothers within two years
- 7 per cent of under-18s in care have a criminal conviction, against two per cent of under-18s

Care leavers are over four times more likely to commit suicide in adulthood and four times more likely to have a mental health disorder

School is often a challenge for children in care

- Curriculum content e.g. family trees
- Gaps in learning
- Time without a school place
- Inconsistent pastoral support
- Inflexible behaviour policies
- Moving schools mid year or in test/exam key stages
- Having to make new friends and trust different adults
- SEND needs not being met



So why are exam results so low according to the research?

From Rees Centre Research 2015

There are factors from **early background** such as poverty and home language

There are factors **related to care** such as the time in care, learning with carers and number of placements

There are factors to do with **primary education** such as gaps in learning or changing schools

There are factors to do with **secondary education**

RELATED TO SCHOOLING

School
changes in
Year 10-11

In non-
mainstream
school at KS4

Unauthorised
absences

Fixed &
permanent
exclusions

As well as this, Children in Care cohorts also often have:

- High proportion SEN (4 times as likely to have an SEN and 10 times as likely to have an EHCP/statement)
- More likely to have had low attendance or had this in the past
- High exclusion levels (twice as high than other students)
- Increased risk taking behaviours
- 45% have a mental health disorder

Unfortunately, it is getting harder for this group of children so more support is needed:

- New, more demanding national curriculum with more content so pupils that move schools will find it harder to catch up on missed learning
- GCSEs are being reformed to be more demanding so the current Year 11 will be the first year to sit these
- Every school is different so GCSEs may start in Years 9 or 10 or even 11 so moving schools and delays in getting into a school can mean the difference between a pass or fail.
- Every school can choose which exam board it uses and then which courses it chooses to follow so English Literature in one school could look completely different to English Literature in another school

Expression of Attachment Disorder

Constantly on Edge

Memory difficulties

Unable to describe how they are feeling

Fidgety

Become over-excited easily

Unable to trust and follow an adult

Inappropriate sexualised behaviours

Doesn't seem to have a sense of remorse

Don't respond consistently to behaviour sanctions or rewards

Lack of self-awareness

Difficulties making and keeping friends

Speech and Language difficulties

Unable to cope with sudden changes

Organisational difficulties

Difficulties trusting others

Hoarding

Unable to concentrate

Presenting as younger than peers



Potential Trigger Points



Contact with family

Change of plan in class

Unstructured work/activities

Sense of injustice

School trips and residential

Start/end of school year

Taking risks in class

Free time/unsupervised

Change to the usual school day

Supply teachers

To much praise

Birthdays

Christmas and other holidays

Feeling unsafe



The Children and Social Care Act 2017

School Responsibilities:

Designate a member of staff to have responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of previously looked-after pupils who are no longer looked after in England and Wales because they are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order, or were adopted from 'state care' outside England and Wales

The needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children may have implications for almost every school policy and consideration may want to be given to ensure that policies are effective in reflecting their needs. How schools monitor this is up to them, but some of the issues that may be considered include

- ❑ that there are no unintended barriers to the admission of looked-after and previously looked-after children either at normal transition or any other point of the school year;
- ❑ for looked-after children, whether the school's policies are sensitive to their needs, e.g. in accessing out of school hours learning, respecting the children's wishes and feelings about their care status or generally meeting their needs as identified in their personal education plans (PEPs);
- ❑ whether any looked-after and previously looked-after children have mental health needs and whether those needs are being identified and met;
- ❑ whether the school's behaviour management policy is sufficiently flexible to respond to looked-after and previously looked-after children's challenging behaviour in the most effective way
- ❑ what impact Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) has in supporting the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children

Working with carers directly with looked-after and previously looked-after children and their carers, parents or guardians to:

- ❖ Ensure an effective induction
- ❖ transitions to the next phase of a child's education are supported effectively to avoid children losing ground – e.g. moving schools from primary to secondary school or because of a change in placement or exclusion
- ❖ promote good home-school links;
- ❖ support progress by paying particular attention to effective communication with carers, parents or guardians;
- ❖ ensure carers, parents or guardians understand the potential value of one-to-one tuition and are equipped to engage with it at home;
- ❖ ensure carers, parents or guardians are aware of how the school teaches key skills such as reading and numeracy; and
- ❖ encourage high aspirations and working with the child to plan for their future success and fulfilment.

Virtual School role for Post Care:

- respond to parental requests for advice and information and sign-post parents to other services that can offer advice and support, include promoting good practice to schools on identifying and meeting their needs, and guidance on effective use of the Pupil Premium Plus, which currently goes direct to schools;
- satisfy him or herself that the child is eligible for support by asking the child's parents for evidence of their previously looked-after status.
- ensure that there are appropriate arrangements in place to meet the training needs of those responsible for promoting the educational achievement of Children in Care and Post Care children
- signpost schools to appropriate tools to help them measure this group's emotional and behavioural difficulties
- ensure that schools are able to identify signs of potential mental health issues and know how to access further assessment and support where necessary

The importance of a good education for Children in Care

How education changes life chances

Sample group of care leavers of same age, gender, ethnicity and care experience but with 50% achieving 5 GCSEs (Jackson & Martin)

Group 1-5 GCSEs +

- All in employment
- Most owned home or lived in rented property
- Majority in stable relationships
- No involvement with Criminal Justice System
- 1 lone parent

Group 2- fewer than 5 GCSEs

- 73% unemployed
- Poor housing
- Homelessness
- Early parenthood
- Welfare dependency
- Addiction problems
- 18% of men were in prison

PEP Meetings

- All Children in Care have a formal statutory Personal Education Plan meeting every 6 months. Interim meetings may be held if there is a need due to less than expected progress or other difficulties.
- The meetings are led by the Designated Teacher of the school and must also involve the social worker and carer. There may also be other representatives such as the Virtual School to advocate with their educational expertise. The student may also wish to be involved in all or parts of the meeting but they must have already shared their views on all aspects of their educational need before the meeting
- At the meeting progress will be discussed along side any barriers to learning. Personal targets will be set to try and break down these barriers with clear review dates. Every school has an offer for students who may be disadvantaged or not making expected progress. They will use their own provision within these targets as well as discussing whether any of the annual Pupil Premium Plus would benefit the student in progressing further at school
- The PEP forms are then completed by the Designated Teacher and sent to the Virtual School to moderate quality. Pupil Premium Plus will then be allocated to the school twice a year.

Post Care Reviews

When children cease to be looked-after, their educational needs are unlikely to have changed significantly simply because their care status has changed. Although they will no longer be required to have a PEP, designated teachers will wish to consider what is best for continuity and meeting the child's educational needs. This will particularly apply to those who leave care through adoption, Special Guardianship or a Child Arrangements Order, where the designated teacher has a duty to promote their educational attainment.

The designated teacher should:

- help raise previously looked-after children's parents' and guardians' awareness of the PP+ and other support for previously looked-after children
- play a key part in decisions on how the PP+ is used to support previously looked-after children; and
- encourage parents and guardians' involvement in deciding how the PP+ is used to support their child and be the main contact for queries about its use.

Possible questions to ask at PEPs

Primary School

1. What interventions have the school put in place to improve Tom's reading/writing/maths?
2. How much did they improve his progress?
3. What help does he need to meet the expected standards in reading/writing/maths?
4. Would any 1 to 1 support with a teacher be possible to help his progress?
5. How is he being supported for transition to the next year/stage?

Secondary School

1. What are Tim's aspirational targets for English and maths? (Grade 5 is a high C now)
2. What interventions have the school put in place to improve Tim's progress in English/maths to reach these grades?
3. Did they work and what is the next step?
4. How is Tim supported to complete his homework at home and at school?
5. Has 1 to 1 tutoring with a teacher been considered, using Pupil Premium Plus? (Up to 750 can be claimed twice a year)
6. What encounters with employment or higher education has he had access to?

Both

- a. Has Tim had any lates? If yes, how are these being prevented? Are the lates on certain days or times?
- b. Is his attendance over 95%? If not, how can we improve this?
- c. Tim has been through a lot of change. How is the school supporting his behaviour so he doesn't have fixed term exclusions?
- d. How is Tom encouraged to be part of extra activities such as playing sport or learning an instrument?
- e. How is the school supporting Tom to make and keep friendships

Pupil Premium Plus Funding:

For looked-after children, PP+ funding is managed by the Virtual School Head (VSH) for the purpose of supporting their educational achievement. The VSH and schools, including the designated teacher, should work together to agree how this funding can most effectively be used to improve looked-after children's attainment. All PEPs should include information about how that looked-after child is benefitting from the use of PP+ funding to improve their attainment.

For previously looked-after children, PP+ funding is managed by the child's school. The amount a school receives is based on the number of eligible children recorded in the school's annual January School Census return to the Department for Education.

For both looked-after and previously looked-after children PP+ is not a personal budget for individual children. The VSH and school manage their PP+ allocation for the benefit of their cohort of looked-after or previously looked-after children and according to children's needs.

Prepare 4 Success Pupil Premium Plus Guidance

Expected expenditure of 75% (£1125) of the £1500 a year	Expenditure of the other 25% (£375) could be spent	Impact measures expected	Not recommended due to little evidence of impact on academic progress
<p>75% should be used on specific strategies to improve English and maths. English also includes communication for children in care with SEND needs but this should not be requested where EHCP funding is provided to meet this need.</p> <p>Specialist teacher support on a 1 to 1 basis is the preferred option to accelerate progress</p>	<p>Transition planning including extra days at a new school with a key member of staff.</p> <p>Strategies to support holistic progress, aspiration and self esteem</p> <p>Music tuition Enrichment activities Sports coaching Teacher support in other subjects</p>	<p>75%</p> <p>Clear data evidence of progress towards or above expected standards through standardised tests or assessments from the start date</p> <p>25%</p> <p>Evidence of progress. Examples could be teacher comments on more confidence answering questions, taking on bigger roles etc</p>	<p>Kit or equipment</p> <p>ICT hardware</p> <p>Transport</p> <p>Support already offered within school core offer</p>



Early Years Foundation Stage

- *Within the early years, progress is measured in 7 different areas. The main 3 areas are called the prime learning areas and these are the key areas that we monitor to make sure any child is making the expected progress. These areas are: Communication and language, Personal social and emotional development and physical development.*
- *The Virtual school attend PEPs for all early years children once they start nursery.*
- *Support is given to both the nursery and carers about to help development in these key areas as often a looked after child is behind at the start of their early years phase.*
- *Once a child reaches the age of 3, in the term after their third birthday they are entitled to the early years pupil premium plus. This amounts to £300.00, paid in 3 instalments over the year direct to the nursery.*
- *The year prior to starting school is an essential time in any child's development. For many looked after children, this can be a difficult time and some struggle with the personal development needed to make them 'school ready'. For these children, we can apply for extra funding known as inclusion funding. There are 3 tiers to the funding and it allows nurseries to put extra support in place.*
- *For some children extra support is going to be needed throughout their education. With the support of the virtual school, guidance can be given to apply for an education and health care plan which will support them through their primary school years.*

Behaviour policies that all positive actions and early intervention to prevent exclusions

*“Schools must also ensure that their policies and practices **do not discriminate** against pupils by unfairly increasing their risk of exclusion.*

***Early intervention** is needed to address underlying causes of disruptive behaviour. The exclusion rates for certain groups of pupils are consistently higher than average. This includes: pupils with SEN; pupils eligible for free school meals; **looked after children**; and pupils from certain ethnic groups.*

*In addition to the approaches on early intervention above, the head teacher should consider what **extra support** might be needed to identify and address the **needs of pupils** from these groups in order to **reduce their risk of exclusion**. The head teacher should take account of any **contributing factors** that are identified after an incident of poor behaviour has occurred. The head teacher should also consider the use of a **multi-agency assessment** for a pupil who demonstrates persistent disruptive behaviour. The head teacher should consider **whether exclusion is providing an effective sanction**.*

Statutory guidance for those with legal responsibilities in relation to exclusion
September 2017