

Norfolk Virtual School

Professional Development Calendar

2026 - 2027



Welcome from the Head of the Virtual School

I am delighted to share our professional development offer for 2026-2027. This year's programme includes an expanded range of opportunities, alongside projects available through sign-up or invitation.

Our planning reflects national and local priorities, the current education landscape, feedback from schools and young people, and our own data analysis.

The programme supports strong inclusive practice across our cohorts, with both core and specialist training. This includes areas such as sensory needs, speech, language and communication, progress and attainment, and our continued trauma and attachment-aware training, delivered in over 67 settings last year.

A key highlight is our conference, *Empowering Every Voice, Inspiring Every Future*, taking place in person on 17 March, featuring expert speakers and showcasing excellent practice from Norfolk schools.

We continue to work in partnership with schools and trusts to support ongoing improvement. If there are areas you would like us to develop, please contact us at virtual.schools@norfolk.gov.uk.

Our offer is updated throughout the year—please sign up to our [newsletter](#) to stay informed and I look forward to welcoming you.

Keeley White, Virtual School Head

The Virtual School Offer

The Virtual School Professional Development Offer for 2026-2027 supports schools to improve outcomes for children within Virtual School cohorts while strengthening inclusive practice for all learners.

It recognises that approaches such as trauma-informed, attachment-aware and relational practice not only benefit targeted groups, but also enhance wellbeing, engagement and learning across whole-school communities.

Developed through strong partnerships, the programme reflects feedback from schools, local and national priorities, and current research evidence, while aligning with statutory guidance and Ofsted expectations around inclusion, personal development and leadership.

The offer is organised into three strands: Training, Opportunities and Projects, designed to build knowledge, strengthen practice and promote collaboration.

As a Virtual School, we remain committed to supporting inclusive, evidence-informed practice and achieving the best possible outcomes for all children and young people.

Training

Please be advised that training sessions are for all Norfolk schools and settings working to support Virtual School cohorts and schools and settings outside of Norfolk with Norfolk children in care on roll. Any bookings made by colleagues outside Norfolk where they do not support our cohorts will be contacted and cancelled where appropriate.

Cancellation Policy:

The Professional Development Offer is currently fully subsidised by the Virtual School; there are no charges to delegates. If you need to cancel, we kindly ask that you contact us 5 working days before the course start date. This allows us to offer your space to other potential delegates. The Virtual School reserves the right to cancel or postpone a training course if there are fewer than 6 delegates for an online event or fewer than 10 for an in-person event. If we must cancel, we will notify delegates 5 working days for virtual and 10 working days for in-person courses, before the scheduled start date. A member of the Virtual School team will contact delegates who have signed up to discuss alternative dates or CPD options.

To help us manage training places effectively, we reserve the right to charge a cancellation fee in cases where a place is booked but the delegate does not attend and no prior notification is received.

Training Calendar

September

Date (Click to book)	Course / Event (Click for info)	Location	Time
15 September	Breakfast Briefing	Norwich	08:00–10:00
16 September	Breakfast Briefing	King's Lynn	08:00–10:00
17 September	Breakfast Briefing	Great Yarmouth	08:00–10:00
21 September	Supporting Children with a Social Worker	Online	09:30–11:00
21 September	The Power of Play	Norwich	09:30-12:30
22 September	Getting it right for those who need it most: Ofsted Senior HMI perspectives on context, expectations and impact in relation to underserved learners	Online	15:30 – 16:40
24 September	Better Serving Underserved Learners	Taverham, Norwich	09:00 – 15:00
25 September	Better Serving Underserved Learners	King's Lynn	09:00 – 15:00
30 September	Introduction to DESTY	Online	15:30–16:15
30 September	TA Network: Ready, Steady, Play	Norwich	13:00–15:00

30 September	SALT: Total Communication: Using sign, symbols and objects to support language	Norwich	13:00 – 15:00
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October

Date	Course / Event	Location	Time
1–2 October	Supporting Unaccompanied Minors in day to day trauma aware practice	Norwich	09:00–16:00
2 October	Developing a Trauma Responsive School – Day 1	Norwich	09:15–15:30
5 October	SDQ Training	Online	15:45–16:45
8th October	Cultivating a sense of belonging for kinship families through shared reading	Online	15:30 – 17:00
9 October	Developing a Trauma Responsive School – Day 2	Norwich	09:15–15:30
13 October	PEP Outcomes Training – Day 1	Norwich	08:30–13:00
13 October	Journey of the Unaccompanied Minor (UASC)	Norwich	09:30–16:00
14 October	Supporting the Education of children in kinship care	Online	15:30–17:00
14 October	SALT: Supporting Transitions in the Day: between environments, tasks and people	Norwich	13:00 – 15:00
16 October	Sensory Inclusion: Using Movement breaks to support learners	Acle	09:30–12:30
21 October	TA Network: It's Not Just Speech	King's Lynn	13:00–15:00

November

Date	Course / Event	Location	Time
3 November	SDQ Training	Online	15:45–16:45
4 November	SALT: Co-Regulation: to re-regulate and de-escalate	Norwich	13:00 – 15:00
10 November	Care-Experienced Children Understanding Barriers and Promoting Education	Online	15:30–17:00
11 November	Trauma and Attachment Network	Online	16:30–17:30
11 November	TA Network: Sensing What Learners Need	Great Yarmouth	13:00–15:00
12 November	The Power of Play	King's Lynn	09:30 – 12:30
16 November	Developing a Trauma Responsive School – Day 1	Norwich	09:15–15:30
18 November	SALT: Child-Led Play: how to support their language development in their way		
23 November	Developing a Trauma Responsive School – Day 2	Norwich	09:15–15:30
26 November	PACE Workshop – Day 1	Norwich	09:30–15:00
30 November	PEP Outcomes Training – Day 2	Online	15:00–17:00

December

Date	Course / Event	Location	Time
<u>2nd</u> 10am	<u>Two children and Maths: small changes, big breakthroughs - unlocking maths potential in underserved learners</u>	Norwich	10:00 – 12:00
<u>2nd</u> 14:00			14:00 – 16:00
<u>2nd</u>	<u>SALT: Demand Avoidance ... and how to avoid it!</u>	Norwich	13:00 – 15:00
<u>16th</u>	<u>SALT: Speech Recasting: Supporting children with speech sound difficulties</u>	Norwich	13:00 – 15:00

January

Date	Course / Event	Location	Time
<u>11</u> <u>January</u>	<u>Supporting Children with a Social Worker</u>	Online	15:30– 17:00
<u>20</u> <u>January</u>	<u>TA Network: It's Not Just Speech</u>	Norwich	13:00– 15:00
<u>26</u> <u>January</u>	<u>Virtual School and PiXL Network</u>	Online	15:45– 17:00
<u>28</u> <u>January</u>	<u>Developing a Trauma Responsive School – Day 1</u>	Norwich	09:15– 15:30
<u>28</u> <u>January</u>	<u>The Power of Play</u>	Norwich	09:30 – 12:30
<u>29</u> <u>January</u>	<u>Sensory Inclusion Using movement breaks to support learners</u>	King's Lynn	09:30– 12:30

February

Date	Course / Event	Location	Time
3 February	Supporting the Education of children in kinship care	Online	15:30–17:00
4 February	Developing a Trauma Responsive School – Day 2	Norwich	09:15–15:30
4 February	Journey of the Unaccompanied Minor	Norwich	09:30–16:00
4 February	Care-Experienced Children Understanding Barriers and Promoting Education	Online	15:30–17:00
10 February	TA Network: Ready, Steady, Play	Great Yarmouth	13:00–15:00
24 February	Trauma and Attachment Network	Online	16:30–17:30

March

Date	Course / Event	Location	Time
8 March	The Power of Play	Great Yarmouth	09:30 – 12:30
10 March	TA Network: Sensing What Learners Need	King's Lynn	13:00–15:00
12 March	PACE Workshop – Day 2	Norwich	09:30–15:00
16 March	Virtual School and PiXL Network	Online	15:45–17:00
17 March	Virtual School Conference	Norwich	09:00–15:30

April

Date	Course / Event	Location	Time
16 April	Developing a Trauma Responsive School – Day 1	Norwich	09:15–15:30
20 April	Equity Through Oracy (Primary)	Online	15:45–17:00
22 and 23 April	Supporting Unaccompanied Minors in day to day trauma aware practice	Norwich	09:30 – 16:00
23 April	Developing a Trauma Responsive School – Day 2	Norwich	09:15–15:30
27 April	Equity Through Oracy (Secondary)	Online	15:45–17:00
28 April	Trauma and Attachment Network	Online	16:30–17:30

May

Date	Course / Event	Location	Time
6 May	The Power of Play	Great Yarmouth	09:30 – 12:30
11 May	Virtual School and PiXL Network	Online	15:45–17:00
11 May	PEP Outcomes Training – Day 1	Norwich	08:30–13:00
19 May	TA Network: Sensing What Learners Need	Norwich	13:00–15:00
26 May	Supporting the Education of children in kinship care	Online	15:30–17:00

June

Date	Course / Event	Location	Time
4 June	Journey of the Unaccompanied Minor	Norwich	09:30–16:00
8 June	PEP Outcomes Training – Day 2	Online	15:00–17:00
9 June	TA Network: It's Not Just Speech	Great Yarmouth	13:00–15:00
10 June	Supporting Children with a Social Worker	Online	09:30–11:00
10 June	TA Network: Ready, Steady, Play	King's Lynn	13:00–15:00
14 June	Care-Experienced Children Understanding Barriers and Promoting Education	Online	15:30–17:00
17 June	The Power of Play	King's Lynn	09:30-12:30
18 June	Sensory Inclusion Using movement breaks to support learners	Norwich	09:30–12:30

July

Date	Course / Event	Location	Time
6 July	Virtual School and PiXL Network	Online	15:45–17:00

Breakfast Briefings *In person*

Start the school year with the Virtual School Head and our team of Advisers. Join us for breakfast at one of our venues across Norfolk to receive the latest national and local updates, influence our future plans, and collect a complimentary resource from our new 'kinship book list'.

Key Outcomes

- **Early Access:** Be the first to see the 2026-2027 offer and understand its impact on your setting.
- **Strategic Input:** Share your views to directly influence Virtual School planning.
- **Guidance Updates:** Get the latest on the extended remit for children with a social worker and those in kinship care.
- **Local Networking:** Connect with fellow professionals and meet your locality Advisers to arrange school visits.

Briefings are held county-wide to support in-person attendance. While Advisers will attend their specific locality sessions, delegates are welcome to attend any briefing that is most convenient

Getting it right for those who need it most: Ofsted Senior HMI perspectives on context, expectations and impact in relation to underserved learners ***Online***

Delivered by: Dan Lambert HMI Senior His Majesty's Inspector and the Virtual School

What does it truly mean to *get it right for those who need it most*? This session, featuring insight from Dan Lambert, Senior HMI alongside contributions from the Virtual School team, will explore how underserved learners are brought into sharp focus through the inspection lens. Moving beyond headline groups, it will consider how schools identify and respond to the full range of barriers children face, and how this translates into meaningful impact on outcomes.

Trauma and Attachment Aware Practitioner (TAAP) Training *In Person*

TAAP is a fully funded, three-hour session designed to help whole-school staff teams develop trauma-aware practices. Delivered by experienced Virtual School Advisers, this training bridges the gap between theory and the classroom. It is available as INSET or twilight sessions for early years, primary, secondary, and specialist settings.

Key Outcomes

- **Theoretical Foundation:** Gain a solid introduction to trauma and attachment theories and their impact on child development.
- **Neurological Insight:** Understand how toxic stress and ACEs affect brain development and emotional regulation.

- **Practical Frameworks:** Learn to apply the 'Window of Tolerance' and 'Hand Brain' models to support students in distress.
- **Relational Mastery:** Develop trauma-aware techniques, including co-regulation and the PACE approach.
- **Applied Practice:** See how experienced teachers translate complex psychological theories into daily classroom strategies.

Please contact: virtual.schoolsCWSW@norfolk.gov.uk

Developing a Trauma Responsive School: Two-Day Course *In Person*

This enhanced course builds upon our foundational training to help school leaders and practitioners foster a deep culture of inclusion and belonging. It is designed to equip delegates with the tools and actions necessary to embed trauma-responsive theory into whole-school policy and practice.

Key Outcomes

- **Enhanced Understanding:** Deepen your ability to recognize and respond to the individual needs of pupils who have experienced trauma
- **Immersive Reflection:** Use Virtual Reality (VR) headsets to gain a unique perspective on the lived experiences of children and young people.
- **Strategic Application:** Apply theory across seven key areas: safety, connection, identity, belonging, autonomy, resilience, and future planning.
- **Practice Review:** Reflect on and improve current practices at a pupil, staff, and policy level.
- **Leadership Toolkit:** Gain practical tools and specific actions to lead the transition toward a trauma-responsive setting.

Please note:

Your setting must have completed (or committed to booking) the 'Becoming a Trauma and Attachment Aware Practitioner' whole-school training. Completion of two pre-course tasks is required, including a review of foundational content and a pupil survey (or planned delivery of pupil survey).

All attendees must sign a delegate agreement regarding the Virtual Reality content to ensure participant wellbeing.

Trauma and Attachment Aware Practice Termly Network *Online*

The Norfolk Virtual School provides a strategic program of termly meetings and professional support designed to strengthen trauma-aware practices county-wide. The network builds school capacity to create emotionally safe environments, specifically supporting children in care, previously in care, those with a social worker or those in kinship care.

Key Outcomes

- **Strategic Support:** Access a structured program of termly meetings and professional dialogue to strengthen school-wide practice.
- **Evidence-Informed Approaches:** Implement relational strategies that underpin student wellbeing, engagement, and inclusion.
- **Specialist Expertise:** Learn from guest speakers and experts to build internal capacity for supporting vulnerable learners.
- **Collaborative Practice:** Engage in shared practice opportunities to improve educational outcomes across the locality.

Autumn Term: Reframing Behaviour

Autumn session featuring **Huw Lloyd** from Crisis Prevention Institute International.

- **Focus:** Practical strategies for reframing behaviour and supporting students who have experienced trauma.
- **Interactive Q&A:** An opportunity to discuss specific challenges and strategies directly with the speaker.
- **Expert Insight:** Learn from Huw's 20+ years of experience leading PRUs and Special Schools for SEMH pupils in high-deprivation areas.

Spring Term – delivered by the Harmful Sexual Behaviour Team (HSB)

The Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) Team is a partnership service, delivered by Norfolk County Council and Norfolk and Suffolk Foundation Trust. They provide support & specialist advice for the team around the child for children under the age of 18 living in Norfolk & Waveney. They enable professionals to assess, understand and offer interventions for HSB to manage levels of concern and risk through training, consultation and support. This session will explore the links between developmental trauma and Harmful

Sexual Behaviour (HSB), exploring the following;

- How developmental trauma might impact upon a child's sexual development
- Reflecting on some of the reasons why young people who have experienced

developmental trauma might display HSB

- Introducing approaches to frameworks to help identify HSB in context of developmental trauma
- Introduce some ideas for working with young people displaying HSB in context of developmental trauma

Summer Term to be announced

Introduction to PACE: Two-Day Workshop *In person*

Trauma-Aware Relational Practice for Schools

This two-day workshop introduces **PACE** (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy)—a relational mindset designed to guide how adults connect with children.

Rather than a simple technique, PACE is a "way of being" that fosters emotional safety, trust, and co-regulation, particularly for those who have experienced trauma.

Key Outcomes

- **Relational Mindset:** Shift from a "control" focus to a "connection" focus when responding to student behaviour.
 - **De-escalation Skills:** Learn to reduce classroom escalation using calm, attuned, and empathetic responses.
 - **Applied Techniques:** Master the four elements of PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy) for daily student interactions.
 - **Self-Regulation:** Gain the ability to recognize personal stress responses and maintain emotional regulation in challenging moments.
 - **Reflective Practice:** Strengthen your capacity for reflective practice to support a consistent whole-school relational culture.
- Staff are encouraged to attend in pairs to better support the implementation of PACE within their specific school setting.

Care-Experienced Children: Understanding Barriers and Promoting Achievement Online

This online session provides an essential overview of the statutory responsibilities and practical strategies required to support care-experienced children. It combines data-driven insights with relational approaches to help educational settings improve outcomes for this vulnerable cohort.

Key Outcomes

- **Statutory Knowledge:** Develop a clear understanding of who care-experienced children are and your setting's legal responsibilities toward them.
- **Insight into Barriers:** Gain insight into the specific attainment gaps and barriers to success faced by care-experienced children in Norfolk.
- **Risk Identification:** Identify the key factors linked to poor attendance, disengagement, and the increased risk of suspension or exclusion.
- **Relational Practice:** Hear lived experience and professional examples that support the use of trauma-aware approaches in school.
- **Educational Stability:** Explore best practices for promoting attendance, engagement, and long-term stability for learners.
- **Effective PEP Management:** Understand how to use Personal Education Plans (PEPs) as high-impact tools to drive student progress.
- **Practical Toolkit:** Receive specific strategies, tools, and signposting to help care-experienced young people reach their full potential.

Supporting Children with a Social Worker in Education Online

Children with a social worker are present in 98% of state schools and often face significant barriers to education due to experiences of adversity, such as domestic abuse, mental ill-health, or substance misuse. This online session explores the Virtual

School Head's extended role and provides practical strategies to help children reach their full potential.

Key Outcomes

- **Understanding Barriers:** Identify the specific obstacles to success for children with a social worker, including local data on Norfolk-specific attainment.
- **Attendance Strategies:** Share and implement best practices designed to improve and sustain school attendance.
- **Risk Mitigation:** Explore key risk factors associated with permanent exclusion to develop early intervention strategies.
- **Practical Toolkit:** Leave with a bespoke toolkit to raise awareness and equip your team to support vulnerable learners effectively.

Supporting the Education of Children in Kinship Care Online

Nearly half (48%) of kinship carers report that children's previous adverse experiences negatively impact their ability to cope in education. This training uses data, reports, and lived experiences to help education settings identify and support this distinct cohort within the Virtual School's extended remit.

Key Outcomes

- **Defining Kinship Care:** Enhance your knowledge of what kinship care is and the distinct needs and disadvantages of this cohort.
- **Identification Skills:** Learn about the different types of kinship arrangements to better identify these children within your setting.
- **Understanding Barriers:** Gain insight into the specific obstacles to success for kinship learners, including attainment data for Norfolk children.
- **Lived Experience:** Hear direct examples of kinship families' experiences to better inform your professional approach.
- **Engagement Best Practice:** Explore proven strategies to support attendance and active engagement with education.
- **Support & Signposting:** Access information on the specific resources and support networks available for kinship families.
- **Advocacy Tools:** Leave equipped to raise awareness within your team and provide young people with the tools to achieve their potential.

Two children and Maths: small changes, big breakthroughs - unlocking maths potential in underserved learners In person

Trainer: Professor Rose Griffiths

Rose Griffiths is a Professor of Education at the University of Leicester and a National Teaching Fellow. She began her teaching career as a secondary school mathematics teacher and has also taught in pre-school, primary, special and adult education.

Rose's major teaching and research interests are in mathematics education, including early years mathematics and low attainment in mathematics across ages 5 to 19.

'My workshop will look at the cases of two children in care (aged between 8 and 10), labelled as 'the worst in their year group in maths', whom I followed for over a year, involving their teachers, foster carers, and many other adults, and asking the children themselves to get a picture of how they were learning (or not learning) in maths lessons. I will talk through the classroom arrangements, show examples of the children's work and film clips of them working with me, to uncover small and significant things that can make a big difference to a child's progress.' The workshop will include practical strategies to take away.

There are two workshops available 10am – 12pm and 2pm – 4pm

Norfolk Virtual School and PiXL Network Focus Online

Communication and Language Programme

This four-session programme is designed for primary schools with PiXL membership. It provides a research-grounded, step-by-step guide to strengthening communication and language—the essential foundation for improving outcomes for vulnerable pupils.

Key Outcomes

- **Purposeful Talk:** Learn to develop and lead purposeful classroom dialogue to enhance student engagement.
- **Supportive Environments:** Gain practical strategies for creating communication-supportive classrooms.
- **Vocabulary Mastery:** Implement effective, research-backed techniques for teaching vocabulary across the curriculum.
- **Oracy & Literacy Links:** Explore the critical connections between oracy, reading, and writing to boost overall attainment.
- **Barrier Removal:** Identify and remove communication-based barriers to learning to build pupil confidence and participation.

Equity Through Oracy: An Inclusive Whole-School Approach – Primary Online

This online session places oracy at the heart of inclusive practice, exploring how a dedicated oracy curriculum can unlock equity for vulnerable children, especially those known to social care. The training focuses on "inclusive by design" planning to ensure every child has the opportunity to be heard.

Key Outcomes

- **Inclusive Curriculum Design:** Learn what works when planning a curriculum that is inclusive by design, featuring insights from local mainstream primary Oracy Leads.
- **Learning To and Through Talk:** Develop teaching and learning approaches that support all children in mastering both communication and active listening skills.
- **Unlocking Equity:** Understand how to use oracy to specifically support children who need it most, ensuring under-served groups can develop their voice.
- **Barrier Removal:** Identify strategies to remove participation barriers for less confident pupils, allowing them to participate fully and be heard.

- **Shared Best Practice:** Gain first-hand knowledge of successful implementation strategies directly from Norfolk primary school settings.

Equity Through Oracy: Making Oracy Ordinary in Secondary Schools Online

This online session focuses on implementing a whole-school oracy curriculum across secondary settings, integrating it into both subject-specific areas and personal development frameworks. It aims to create a culture where confident talk and active listening are embedded in the daily experience of every student.

Key Outcomes

- **Whole-School Implementation:** Identify effective strategies for embedding oracy within subject-specific curriculums and wider well-being programs.
- **Impact on Vulnerable Learners:** Learn how secondary oracy frameworks specifically improve outcomes for under-served groups, including those known to social care.
- **Staff Empowerment:** Gain practical guidance on supporting staff to weave oracy naturally into their existing teaching practices.
- **Monitoring & Development:** Discover how to help staff identify, monitor, and support the oracy development of all learners.
- **Cultural Shift:** Explore how to create a school culture where "confident talk" and "considerate listening" become ordinary and expected behaviours.
- **Local Success Stories:** Hear directly from Norfolk Secondary Oracy Leads about their implementation journeys and the impact on their students.

Better Serving Underserved Learners In person

We are delighted and excited for Norfolk Virtual School and VNET to host Rachel MacFarlane for this conference. Rachel is the author of 'Obstetrics for School' and 'The A-Z of Diversity and Inclusion' amongst other titles. This conference will examine the reasons why Underserved Learners typically attain and progress less well than their more advantaged peers and challenge the inevitability of this situation. We will focus on the role of leaders in addressing assumptions and assuring aspiration; adapting language and terminology; forensic use of data; smart and ambitious target setting; forging deeper relationships; building belonging; considering purpose and sharing successes to build status and self-efficacy.

Key Outcomes

By the end of the conference, designated teachers will:

- **Feel confident and proud** in their role as champions of Virtual School cohorts
- **Understand the key drivers** impacting underserved learners, including belonging, status, self-efficacy and purpose
- **Gain practical strategies** to strengthen inclusive, high-expectation cultures
- **Use data more effectively** to identify need and set ambitious targets
- **Complete a preliminary audit** of provision in their setting
- **Develop a clear action plan** to implement with senior leaders

The Power of Play *In person*

This session explores the importance of play in early child development and how it supports learning, communication and emotional expression.

Play is central to children's physical, social, emotional and cognitive development, helping them build key skills, form relationships and prepare for later learning and life.

Key Outcomes

- **Develop** a clear understanding of what play is and its role in childhood
- **Explore different types of play** and how these support development and long-term outcomes
- **Understand key aspects** of brain development and neuroscience, including why play is critical in shaping the developing brain
- **Recognise how play can support** children to communicate difficult thoughts and feelings
- **Reflect on the role of adults** in therapeutic play approaches
- **Consider practical links** to current practice and identify opportunities to strengthen provision

SALT Series *In person*

This six-part training series explores practical, play-based and relationship-centred approaches to support children's communication, interaction and emotional regulation. Sessions combine discussion, real-life examples and strategies that can be applied immediately in early years and school settings. Delegates are encouraged to attend all workshops that they feel are relevant to their practice and CPD needs. You do not need to be able to attend all six sessions in order to attend these workshops

Session 1: Total Communication: Using sign, symbols and objects to support language
Session 2: Supporting Transitions in the Day: between environments, tasks and people
Session 3: Co-Regulation: to re-regulate and de-escalate
Session 4: Child-Led Play: how to support their language development in their way
Session 5: Demand Avoidance ... and how to avoid it!
Session 6: Speech Recasting: Supporting children with speech sound difficulties

Key Outcomes of series:

- **Confident Practice:** Develop confidence in using communication-supportive approaches within everyday routines and play.
- **Understanding Communication:** Strengthen understanding of how emotional regulation, environment and adult interaction influence communication.
- **Inclusive Environments:** Gain practical strategies to create inclusive, language-rich environments that benefit all children, including those with speech and language needs.

Teaching Assistant (TA) Network *In person*

The TA Network recognises and strengthens the significant impact TAs have on learners. This professional space provides collaboration and evidence-informed practice to boost expertise in supporting Virtual School cohorts.

2026-2027 Key Themes & Outcomes

- **Sensing What Learners Need:** Develop the ability to notice and respond to emotional and social cues. Understand how trauma and attachment affect readiness to learn and respond in ways that promote safety.
- **Ready, Steady, Play!:** Gain simple strategies to make break times inclusive and active. Use playground games to support social interaction and confidence during unstructured parts of the day.
- **It's Not Just Speech:** Understand hidden Speech, Language, and Communication Needs (SLCN). Reflect on how adult communication styles—tone, pace, and instructions—can remove barriers for children.

Network Schedule

Locality	Autumn Term	Spring Term	Summer Term
Great Yarmouth	11 Nov: Sensing Needs	10 Feb: Ready, Steady, Play!	09 Jun: It's Not Just Speech
Norwich	30 Sep: Ready, Steady, Play!	20 Jan: It's Not Just Speech	19 May: Sensing Needs
King's Lynn	21 Oct: It's Not Just Speech	10 Mar: Sensing Needs	10 Jun: Ready, Steady, Play!

Sensory Inclusion: Using Movement Breaks to Support Learners *In person*

Delivered in partnership with Norfolk Steps

This practical, active session explores how the eight sensory systems develop and how early trauma can disrupt them. It focuses on identifying unseen barriers to learning and providing children with the necessary sensory input to maintain focus in busy environments.

Key Outcomes

- **Sensory Theory:** Develop a deep understanding of the eight sensory systems, their typical development, and how they integrate.
- **Trauma Awareness:** Learn how early trauma impacts sensory processing and how this presents in a school setting.
- **Self-Regulation Insights:** Relate sensory theory to adult self-regulation, exploring your own sensory strengths and difficulties.

- **Identifying Barriers:** Learn to recognize when a child is struggling with regulation and identify hidden sensory barriers to learning.
- **Practical Toolkit:** Develop a range of low-cost, low-resource strategies and movement-based activities to support student regulation.

This is a hands-on session. Please wear comfortable clothing suitable for movement.

PEP Outcomes Training with Judith Carter *In person*

High-Quality, Targeted Outcomes for Measurable Progress

The Virtual School, in partnership with Judith Carter, offers a two-part training session designed to help educators develop purposeful Personal Education Plan (PEP) outcomes. This training aligns with current guidance and best practice to ensure every outcome drives tangible impact.

Key Outcomes

- **Overcoming Challenges:** Identify and address the common difficulties associated with writing effective and purposeful PEP outcomes.
- **The 7 C's Model:** Gain a deep understanding of the key principles within Judith Carter's 7 C's curriculum model.
- **ABC-D Scaffolding:** Learn to use the ABC-D scaffold to structure clear, targeted, and measurable outcomes for learners.
- **Toolkit Integration:** Utilize the *Essential SENCO Toolkit* to accurately identify and address specific barriers to learning.
- **Practical Strategies:** Develop actionable strategies and access resources to help children and young people overcome barriers to engagement.

Each school represented will receive a set of Judith Carter's Essential SENCO Toolkit Trilogy books to support long-term implementation.

SDQ: Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire in Education *Online*

This session is designed to support Designated Teachers (DTs) in effectively using the SDQ to inform their work with children in care. As a valuable tool for identifying emotional and behavioural needs, the SDQ helps shape targeted interventions and ensures wellbeing is central to educational planning.

Key Outcomes

- **Purpose and Structure:** Gain a clear understanding of the SDQ's framework and its role in identifying pupil needs.
- **Data Interpretation:** Learn how to interpret SDQ scores and translate what they mean for individual pupils.
- **Strategic Integration:** Explore how to use SDQ data to inform Personal Education Plans (PEPs) and wider pastoral support.
- **Professional Collaboration:** Discuss best practices for engaging with carers, social workers, and other professionals regarding findings.
- **Empowered Practice:** Build the confidence to use the SDQ meaningfully to improve outcomes for children in care.

The Journey of the Unaccompanied Minor *In person*

This session provides professionals with a deep insight into the life experiences of unaccompanied minors seeking asylum. Delivered through a trauma-aware lens, the training explores the complexities of the migration journey and the ongoing struggles young people face upon arrival in the UK.

Key Outcomes

- **The Migration Journey:** Understand pre-migration experiences, reasons for flight, and the risks encountered during transit, including trafficking and smuggling.
- **Navigating the Asylum System:** Gain a clear overview of the UK Home Office process, including substantive interviews, appeals, and the impact of the "Hostile Environment" policy.
- **Trauma-Aware Practice:** Explore how trauma and re-traumatisation occur throughout the asylum stages and learn how to embed supportive principles through practical activities.
- **Impact on Behaviour:** Learn how the lack of information about home and the pressure of UK assessments affect a young person's wellbeing and presentation in education.
- **Resources & Context:** Access country-of-origin profiles, terminology guides, and a toolkit of online resources to support daily practice.

Core Themes

- **Pre-Arrival:** Country profiles, reasons for displacement, and journey routes.
- **Arrival & the Home Office process:** Understanding age assessments, dates of birth, and Home Office timelines.
- **Ongoing Support:** Practical strategies to mitigate the impact of separation and uncertainty.

Supporting Unaccompanied Minors in Day-to-Day Trauma-Aware Practice *In person*

This practical, two-day programme is designed for non-psychotherapeutically trained practitioners. It provides a hands-on exploration of trauma-aware tools, enabling key workers to creatively adapt their support to the cultural and psychosocial needs of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) while maintaining safe practice.

Key Outcomes

- **Understanding Trauma:** Gain awareness of the multiple layers of trauma experienced by UASC and how this impacts learning and social skills.
- **Practical Strategy Toolkit:** Develop a range of tools for psychoeducation, distress management, and problem-solving.
- **Informed Practitioner Status:** Transition to a trauma-aware practitioner capable of supporting children with high-level trauma.
- **Safe Engagement:** Learn clear boundaries on what is safe or not safe when engaging in trauma-aware narratives.

Programme Structure

The 2-day programme consists of four discrete sessions:

- **Session 1: Understanding & Engagement:** Identifying how trauma presents and using simple tools for psychoeducation and engagement.
- **Session 2: Managing Distress:** Utilising body maps and labelling emotions to address anxiety; exploring relaxation techniques and daily hassle management.
- **Session 3: Memories & Narratives:** Using simple tools to support UASC in managing traumatic memory intrusions, nightmares, and sharing their stories.
- **Session 4: Future & Networks:** Addressing the topic of a negative decision and developing support network maps for the future.

Opportunities

As part of the Virtual School Professional Development Offer, the Opportunities strand provides schools and settings with access to a range of targeted activities designed to respond to the diverse needs of different learners.

This strand is designed to be flexible and responsive, allowing schools to engage in ways that are meaningful and appropriate to their specific context and priorities.

Key Features

- **Targeted Support:** Access a variety of offers designed to address the unique needs of different settings and learners.
- **Flexible Engagement:** These opportunities are optional, intended for schools where the offer aligns with their specific development priorities.
- **Responsive Design:** The strand allows schools to engage at a level that is appropriate for their individual pupil cohorts.

Eligibility and Access

- **Open Access:** Some opportunities are available to all schools across the county.
- **Targeted Criteria:** Other offers are subject to eligibility criteria to ensure resources are directed where they can have the greatest impact.
- **Clear Guidance:** Any specific eligibility requirements will be clearly outlined alongside each individual opportunity.

Shared Reading: Cultivating Belonging for Kinship Families Online

October 8th 2026

In celebration of Kinship Care Week and the National Year of Reading, Dr. Lisa Cherry—author, researcher, and leading trauma specialist—leads this webinar on how shared reading can foster a sense of belonging for kinship families. The session explores reading as a powerful relational practice for those living with the legacy of trauma.

Key Outcomes

- **Relational Practice:** Gain insights into Dr. Cherry's work on attachment and how shared reading helps kinship children feel safe, seen, and connected.
- **Belonging & Mattering:** Understand how reading serves a deeper purpose beyond literacy outcomes by promoting a sense of identity.
- **Opening Conversations:** Discover practical ways to use children's books to discuss identity, family experience, and belonging with children and carers.
- **Evidence & Resources:** Explore recommended texts and research-based strategies specifically curated for kinship cohorts.

Norfolk Virtual School Conference 2027 *In person*

Empowering Every Voice, Inspiring Every Future

Date: March 17th, 2027

Norfolk Virtual School is proud to announce our 2027 Conference, a day dedicated to the transformative power of education and self-belief. This event brings together professionals to explore strategies for empowering vulnerable learners and fostering a culture of high aspirations.

Keynote Speaker: Professor Katriona O'Sullivan

We are thrilled to welcome Professor Katriona O'Sullivan—psychologist, memoirist, and author of the No.1 bestseller, *"Poor: Grit, Courage, and the Life-Changing Value of Self-Belief"*.

Drawing from her personal journey of overcoming poverty and adversity, Professor O'Sullivan offers a unique blend of academic expertise and lived experience. Her story is a powerful testament to the impact of resilience and the essential role of educator support.

Further speakers to be announced

Conference Highlights

- **Success and Resilience:** Gain actionable insights into how students from working-class backgrounds can overcome significant barriers to achieve academic and professional success.
- **The Power of Self-Belief:** Explore the "life-changing value" of fostering confidence in children facing adversity.
- **Actionable Insights:** Participants will leave with a renewed commitment and practical approaches to driving positive change in their settings.
- **Multifaceted Perspective:** Learn from a speaker who has navigated the system both as a student facing challenges and as a leading academic.

An Introduction to the DESTY Island Programme *Online*

With Educational Psychologist & DESTY Founder Stephanie Fitzgerald

This information session provides an introduction to the DESTY Island Intervention Programme. Led by the programme's founder, the session explores how this digital platform supports emotional resilience and wellbeing for children through a structured, evidence-based approach.

Key Outcomes

- **Programme Overview:** Learn about the core benefits of the DESTY Island programme for learners.
- **Platform Introduction:** Meet the DESTY character and explore the online platform used to deliver the intervention.

- **Evidence-Based Practice:** Review the psychological evidence-base and the specific approaches that underpin the programme.
- **Implementation Support:** Discover how the Norfolk Virtual School can support your setting in accessing and utilizing this resource.
- **Expert Q&A:** Engage in a live question and answer section to tailor the programme to your setting's needs.

Further Information

- **Visit:** www.educationdesty.com

Virtual School Book Groups

Research by the National Literacy Trust shows that children and young people's enjoyment of reading is at a crisis point, having fallen drastically in the past year alone. The research indicates that 2 in 3 children and young people don't enjoy reading.

Guidance states that, *'pupils in key stage 2 should participate in discussion about both books that are read to them and those they can read for themselves, taking turns and listening to what others say'* In response, the Virtual School, in collaboration with Norfolk Library Service, is supporting schools to establish book groups across the county.

Michael Rosen has given his support to this project and is of course enthusiastic for schools to establish book groups. All schools who participate will receive a letter from Michael, some copies of his books for their library and a recorded message from Michael which has been especially recorded to share in an assembly.

If you have a member of your team or a school volunteer who would like to establish and run a book group, Norfolk Library Service and the Virtual School can support by providing:

- A complete framework for a book club, covering 6 sessions alongside suggestions for book related activities
- A member of the Norfolk Library Service will visit your school and will run the first session of the club for your school if required. This would also offer the opportunity to discuss the book club and offer support to the person running the club
- An invitation template for pupils
- A letter template to parents and carers explaining the invitation to the book club
- A termly set of books to be provided for the book club
- A termly letter/ video clip from the author of the book
- Additional support for the school from the Norfolk Library Service and the Virtual School

In addition to the above resources, all participating schools will receive a donation of books. There is no charge for any of the resources mentioned. To find out further information please email virtual.schools@norfolk.gov.uk

National Year of Reading: Virtual School 'Week of Reading'

Week beginning 16th November

The Virtual School is proudly supporting the National Year of Reading 2026 with a dedicated 'Week of Reading'. This programme features a mix of live and pre-recorded sessions designed to engage pupils across all age phases and foster a lifelong love of reading.

Live Events

Rosie Tells Tales (EYFS): Imaginative, interactive storytelling experiences that encourage children to participate, play, and explore creativity.

Michael Rosen (KS1 & KS2): The former Children's Laureate delivers a high-energy poetry performance followed by a live Q&A. Schools are invited to share favourite poems and submit pupil questions for Michael Rosen in advance.

Pre-Recorded Sessions (Accessible anytime)

Lucy Strange (KS3): Focused on fiction writing, research, and the journey from book-lover to published author.

Alkin Emirali (KS4): Exploring writing and storytelling for film, focusing on emotionally resonant narratives and creative careers.

Kate Powling (KS4): Examining the role of reading in journalism and how strong reading habits support reporting for major news platforms like ITV and Channel 4. Kate plans coverage for Good Morning Britain, ITV Lunchtime News, ITV Evening News and News at Ten

To register your interest in any event, please email virtual.schools@norfolk.gov.uk.

THIS IS ME – Beacon East

Introductory Careers Education for Year 6

The Virtual School is funding careers-related education sessions delivered by Beacon East for eligible primary schools. These sessions support pupils' personal development by broadening aspirations and helping children understand how their current learning connects to the world of work, in line with Ofsted inspection frameworks.

Key Outcomes

- **Future Pathways:** Develop an early awareness of future career paths and the rapidly changing labour market.
- **Transferable Skills:** Highlight the value of adaptability and personal choice in supporting future work opportunities.
- **Skill Mapping:** Enable students to identify their own skills—such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving—and link them to future choices.
- **Enterprise Foundation:** Build a strong foundation for future careers education in line with the latest national guidance.

- **Professional Delivery:** Sessions are delivered by fully qualified and highly experienced Beacon East careers advisers.

Session Features

- **Interactive Learning:** Flexible, fun, and engaging practical activities designed to build pupil confidence.
- **Goal Setting:** Encourage pupils to reflect on their personal ambitions and goals from an early age.
- **Curriculum Support:** Directly supports PSHE and existing school careers education programmes.

For further information and to check eligibility, please contact:

virtual.schools@norfolk.gov.uk.

Writing for Wellbeing with Zohab Zee Khan

Years 5 and 6 **Online**

The Virtual School invites Key Stage 2 pupils to join Zohab Zee Khan for an inspiring virtual workshop. Zohab is a world-renowned educator, spoken word poet, hip-hop artist, and motivational speaker who has conducted workshops in over 30 countries.

Key Outcomes

- **Inspiration & Change:** Workshops aim to inspire positive change and build confidence in young people.
- **Creative Expression:** Utilising spoken word poetry as a primary medium for exploration and self-discovery.
- **Mindset Mastery:** Incorporating "brain hacks" to help pupils overcome barriers and foster resilience.
- **Collaborative Creation:** An opportunity for pupils to work virtually alongside a global artist to create something unique.
- **Wellbeing Centred:** The session specifically targets emotional health through creative writing and performance.

To register your school or receive further details, please email virtual.schools@norfolk.gov.uk.

Moving Up with Christian Foley - Year 6 Classes Online

The Virtual School invites Year 6 pupils to an energetic workshop with Christian Foley, author of *'Moving Up'*. Through a blend of poetry and rap, Christian helps students navigate the emotional journey of transitioning from primary to secondary school.

Key Outcomes

- **Performance:** Christian will perform raps and poems from his book, including *"Shout out to Year Sixes"* and *"The Benches,"* specifically themed around school transition.
- **Musical Myth-Busting:** An interactive session designed to dispel rumours and anxieties about secondary school through language games and music.

- **Student Expression:** Pupils are encouraged to write, perform, and articulate their feelings about "moving up" in their own unique words.
- **Emotional Springboard:** The session serves as a foundation for classroom discussions regarding how students are feeling about their upcoming changes.

Christian uses contemporary styles like rap to engage students who may be "at sixes and sevens" about their next steps. This is not just a performance; it is a workshop that gets students talking and creating. Directly addresses the personal development and wellbeing needs of pupils during a critical educational milestone.

Please email virtual.schools@norfolk.gov.uk.

Beacon House Licenses: Emotional Regulation

Eligibility Criteria applies

The Virtual School provides funding for the **Beacon House Emotional Regulation** course for professionals working with its cohorts. This training supports a consistent, trauma-aware approach to meeting pupils' emotional and behavioural needs.

Key Outcomes

- **Consistent Approach:** Develop a unified, trauma-aware method for addressing emotional and behavioural needs within your setting.
- **Standards Alignment:** Align school practice with Ofsted's expectations regarding inclusive practice, pupil wellbeing, and safeguarding.
- **Professional Expertise:** Access specialist training specifically designed to support vulnerable cohorts through emotional regulation strategies.

Target Audience

- **Education Professionals:** Specifically those working with Virtual School cohorts who require advanced tools for emotional regulation.

To request further information, please email: virtual.schools@norfolk.gov.uk

Storytime Magazine - Eligibility Criteria applies

The Virtual School is proud to fund monthly subscriptions to *Storytime Magazine* for children who meet specified criteria. This initiative aims to put high-quality, engaging literature directly into the hands of children to support literacy development and a love of reading at home.

Key Features

- **Monthly Delivery:** A beautifully illustrated magazine delivered once a month to keep children excited about reading.
- **Diverse Content:** Each issue features a range of fairy tales, myths, poems, and puzzles designed to build vocabulary and comprehension.
- **No Adverts:** A pure reading experience with no advertisements, focusing entirely on storytelling and engagement.

For further details please email: virtual.schools@norfolk.gov.uk.

Projects

The Virtual School supports a diverse range of targeted projects designed to improve outcomes for our specific cohorts while driving whole-school development. These initiatives are intentionally structured to strengthen inclusive practice, ensuring that the benefits of participation extend to the wider student population and enhance overall school wellbeing. We encourage schools to explore the projects outlined to identify those that best align with their current improvement plans.

For further information on any of the projects please contact virtual.schools@norfolk.gov.uk.

Voice 21 Project - Eligibility Criteria applies

Voice 21 is the UK's national oracy charity, dedicated to improving life chances by developing students' speaking and listening skills.

In partnership with the Virtual School, Voice 21 helps Norfolk schools embed oracy—the ability to express ideas and engage others through spoken language—across the entire curriculum and school culture. Rather than treating communication as an isolated activity, this project supports a comprehensive, whole-school approach to teaching and learning through talk.

Parent-Friendly Schools - Eligibility Criteria applies

A flagship initiative by Parentkind, this programme helps schools build effective, respectful partnerships with parents and carers. It provides a structured framework and professional development suite focused on trust, inclusive engagement, and collaboration.

Strategic Alignment:

- **Ofsted:** Meets expectations for inclusion, engagement, and safeguarding.
- **Statutory Guidance:** Aligns with requirements for parental partnerships.
- **School Improvement:** Supports attendance, wellbeing, and pupil outcomes.
- **Impact:** Schools utilising this framework report significant improvements in parental engagement and student attendance. The Virtual School currently supports settings across Norfolk in accessing this accreditation.
- **Accreditation:** Settings can work towards formal accreditation to demonstrate their commitment to parent-friendly practices.

StoryZoo - Eligibility Criteria applies

The Virtual School is supporting a select group of schools in **accessing StoryZoo**, a literacy resource for Early Years and Primary settings. Using engaging characters and music, it strengthens language, communication, and reading through four key areas:

- **Oracy & Storytelling:** Enhances listening skills and the ability to retell and discuss narratives.

- **Early Literacy:** Builds vocabulary, comprehension, and phonological awareness.
- **PSED:** Explores emotions and behaviour through relatable animal characters.
- **Engagement:** Uses multisensory elements to motivate young learners.

Developed alongside Dyslexia UK and ASD charities, the platform is "inclusive by design." It features dyslexia-friendly fonts, colour overlays, and personalized libraries specifically for SEND and EAL pupils. All stories are colour-banded and compatible with all major phonics programmes.

Play Leaders Training - Eligibility Criteria applies

Play leaders are trained staff or students who facilitate structured activities during lunch and break times. By leading games like team sports, skipping, and hula-hoop challenges, they increase physical activity and promote social inclusion.

Key Benefits:

- **Student Development:** Participants build essential leadership, communication, and problem-solving skills.
- **Positive Environment:** Leaders act as role models, fostering friendships and reducing the need for adult intervention through peer-led conflict resolution.
- **Inclusive Play:** Support for all children, including the creation of quiet play zones and the teaching of traditional playground games.