



Virtual School for
Looked After and Previously
Looked After Children

Norfolk Virtual School for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children: Our SEND Offer

Our team of Advisers work with schools and other educational settings, as well as social care teams and carers, to help improve the educational journey and outcomes for looked after children from Early Years to the end of Year 13. Please note that advice and information is also available for young people beyond Y13 and until they are 25.

The Virtual School for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children (Virtual School)'s aim is to ensure all looked after children have the best possible education that matches their needs and enables them to realise all of their potential. By quality assuring all Personal Education Plans (PEPs) and providing training focussed on a wide range of issues for looked after children, including those with SEND, we are supporting and challenging practitioners to have the highest aspirations for every child and young person.

In this document we outline how our service supports carers if their children have an identified special educational (SEND) or additional need.

We all acknowledge there can be challenges for looked after children with SEND within any school system and we are here to enable our children and young people to flourish with the child and their voice at the centre of their educational plan. In this planning process carers provide the insight and knowledge of the child as an individual and we aim to work with carers to make sure this knowledge is valued.

The Head Teacher of the Norfolk Virtual School for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children is Keeley White.

Please note that the Virtual School also has a remit for English as an Additional Language and Gypsy, Roma, Traveller children and young people.

If you would like to find out more about the Virtual School or you have any questions or concerns please email us at virtual.schools@norfolk.gov.uk or call us on 01603 303323

For further information on a range of educational topics please visit the Virtual School's website and twitter feed:
<https://www.schools.norfolk.gov.uk/teaching-and-learning/virtual-school-for-looked-after-children> [@SchoolCic](https://twitter.com/SchoolCic)

How will I know how the child I look after is doing and be involved in discussions and planning for their education?

Communication between foster carers and schools should be taking place on a regular basis. In addition to school consultation evenings and normal reporting arrangements there will be other opportunities to discuss a child or young person's progress at a termly Personal Education Plan meeting. You, as the carer, should be invited to these meetings.

PEP meetings must be linked to another education focused meeting such as a SEN Review, Education Health Care Plan or Looked After Child Review.

What is my role in PEP meetings?

One of the key responsibilities for foster carers is being an advocate for the child and young person's education. A PEP meeting should always take account of the child's voice, either through the child or young person being present during the meeting or by making sure their views are expressed and collected outside the meeting.

Virtual School Advisers are available to support and attend meetings to make sure that foster carers' and children's views are appropriately communicated and that schools have responded to their thoughts and feelings about their education whenever practicable.

How does the Virtual School know if children and young people need extra help and what should I do if I think the child I look after may have SEND?

In the first instance, foster carers should always discuss their child's needs and provision directly with the school or setting's Designated Teacher.

If there are ongoing concerns about a child's progress then foster carers can:

- raise these at PEP and LAC Review meetings
- obtain further advice and support around SEND from the Norfolk Parent Partnership - <https://www.norfolksendpartnershiass.org.uk/>
- research the Norfolk SEND Local Offer page which has a lot of information on support for children and young people with SEND

The Virtual School has acquired a lot of information about the educational needs of Norfolk's looked after children through our ePEP record system. PEP records from each termly PEP meeting should indicate when children are requiring extra help and have an additional need or SEND and how these needs will be met.

Virtual School Advisers may have obtained additional knowledge about individual children and their needs through:

- attending PEP meetings
- planning meetings including EHCP annual reviews
- monitoring PEP records of meetings by the Virtual School for SEND (VS SEND)
- analysing data on attainment and progress
- working with schools and other partners
- monitoring children and young people's school attendance
- working with other LA partners such as the VS SEND
- supporting foster carers and social workers to ensure any issues/concerns with schools are responded to

How will the Virtual School support the child and young person who is in my care?

Please note that the Virtual School does not work directly with children and young people.

Our role is to promote the educational achievement of children who are looked after and to ensure their education is seen as a priority by everyone who has responsibilities for promoting their welfare. We aim to create a culture of high aspirations for our children. If a child or young person is identified as requiring SEND support, we monitor their progress through the PEP record and also by:

- supporting and challenging when necessary at PEP meetings to ensure quality of SEND provision
- signposting and bringing together LA and external partners to ensure needs are being met, e.g. VS SEND, VS for Sensory Support, Portage, Health agencies, Medical Needs Coordinator etc.
- planning for extra-curricular enrichment activities such as holiday events for looked after children, e.g. museum visits, art and craft activities, sports sessions
- advising on appropriate school provision
- advising on interventions or other services which may promote educational achievement, e.g. Forest Schools, Nurture Groups, literacy and numeracy programmes

- monitoring the appropriate use of Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) expenditure to improve progress and outcomes. (The Head of the Virtual School is responsible for the appropriate use of PP+ by schools and settings. All of Norfolk's looked after children have access to the same funding and processes.)
- working with the school or setting's Designated Teacher to make sure appropriate provision is in place
- supporting transfer between phases of education or in preparation for adulthood / independence and at any time of transition
- delivering training to Designated Teachers on a range of educational issues for looked after children

If a young person is Post 16:

- give support to young people to access further education, employment, training and university
- provide advice and guidance to social care teams and young people on further education, employment, training and university

If a child is in Early Years:

- offer support and guidance to the setting on any adjustments needed to provision in order to meet needs
- offer support and guidance to foster carers for home learning including 'Play and Discover' resources and books provided by the Dolly Parton Imagination Library
- provide observations to support with strategies for learning and development

How will the educational provision be matched to the needs of the child I look after?

Schools are responsible for identifying and matching their provision to meet the needs of any child who they have on roll.

The Virtual School ensures that termly PEP meetings are held and quality assures all PEP records to make sure that targets are linked directly to the child/young person's education progress and to their interests and voice. At the PEP meeting, targets and interventions are agreed and written in a way that everyone, including the child/young person, can understand. Interventions are then reviewed at the next meeting and adjusted according to the progress achieved. All attendees at the PEP meeting are engaged in making sure that the educational provision meets the needs of the child.

Also at the PEP meeting, the targets, interventions and progress need to demonstrate the appropriate use of PP+ funding. The Head of the Virtual School is responsible for the PP+ budget and is accountable for making sure that the funding is used to improve outcomes for all of our looked after children.

The Virtual School is not responsible for the actual provision for our looked after children however, it does support children with SEND by doing the following:

- monitoring the use of PP+ so that it has the maximum impact for our children
- ensuring that targets are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-framed (SMART)
- making sure that all SEND information is updated on the PEP record, enabling us to track the progress for EHCP requests and annual reviews, etc
- offering information, advice and guidance about specialist provision for looked after children
- working closely with the Virtual School for SEND to enable school provision and the use of funding for looked after children with SEND
- working with other LA partners to ensure all services for looked after children are involved, e.g. Portage, Virtual School for Sensory Support, Access through Technology etc.
- working with external partners and a range of providers to ensure access to education and services
- attending regular SEND team surgeries to discuss provision for children with SEND

How is the voice of the child and young person part of SEND provision?

SEND provision is the responsibility of the school or setting the child or young person attends, however the Virtual School can monitor that our looked after children have their views and voice gathered in a variety of ways.

Schools should make sure that the child's voice is collected in preparation for each PEP meeting, SEND or EHC Plan review and that there are ongoing conversations with children and young people about their views of their education.

The Virtual School is keen to build links with Norfolk In Care Council, where looked after children are actively involved in discussing their views about being in care in order to improve their experiences. We also work closely with the VS SEND which is establishing a range of ways of collecting the feedback of children and young people with SEND about their educational provision.

Norfolk is also working towards coproduction of plans at a more strategic level with parents/carers and young people.

What support will there be for the wellbeing of looked after children?

Besides collecting a great deal of data on our children's interests through the PEP record to enable the Virtual School to plan enrichment events, we also support the wellbeing of all our children and young people by:

- listening to and valuing the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people captured on their PEP record
- tracking and monitoring attendance
- monitoring children and young people who are in part-time or alternative provision with a view to returning to full-time education as soon as possible
- including topics relevant to wellbeing and emotional needs of our children in our training offer to educators
- promoting the wellbeing needs of looked after children at strategic level and liaising with a range of internal and external partners
- ensuring we have agreed plans to support children with disabilities and/or medical needs taking part in our interventions
- working together with colleagues in social care and health to update and share learning
- advocating in the exclusion process

Some of our children will require therapeutic interventions and this is generally led by social care professionals, however PEP meetings also include discussions with schools around their social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) provision for our children.

The Virtual School can offer some information, advice and guidance about the kind of interventions and assessments that can support and maintain children's wellbeing and health.

What training have the Virtual School team had to support children with SEND?

- the Virtual School team have a regular training and CPD programme which includes SEND issues
- an Inclusion Adviser and EHCP Co-ordinator are based in the Virtual School and support the team with SEND processes/systems for Norfolk looked after children so that statutory timelines are adhered to
- all advisers are qualified teachers and some have been part of leadership teams, SENCOs, Designated Teachers in schools or worked in SEND roles for the local authority
- throughout the academic year all staff receive regular updates on SEND initiatives on a termly basis,
- the Virtual School has representatives on a range of groups and panels, e.g. VS SEND Advisory Group

- professional development includes shared moderation of VS SEND funding, including high needs and exceptional funding panels
- regular meetings with the Assistant Director, Inclusion and Opportunity

What specialist services and expertise does the Virtual School provide?

The Virtual School team works directly with schools, settings and residential units. Within the team there is expertise to support:

- Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people (GRT)
- children and young people with English as an additional language (EAL)
- a higher-level teaching assistant (HLTA) who can work with children and young people in residential accommodation
- the local authority annual 'quality conversations' with schools monitor provision and promote self-evaluation with head teachers and senior leadership teams in looking at their provision for looked after children
- training on a range of issues relevant to SEND, e.g. attachment, developmental trauma, etc
- applications for electronic devices, to support access to learning through ACT
- previously looked after children who are now subject to orders such as adoption and Special Guardianship
- mental health and wellbeing

How will the Virtual School help others to support the education of a looked after child?

- By providing information around SEND processes and specialist provision
- By offering regular training for schools and other settings, social care teams and carers on a range of topics and in different locations in Norfolk
- By monitoring SEND provision for our children placed in other counties
- Every year we publish information for Designated Teachers, social workers, carers, early years practitioners and Post 16 providers which provides up-to-date information on educational issues

How will the Virtual School support my child or young person who is previously looked after and may have SEND?

The Virtual School's remit includes the support of children and young people who have been previously looked after, who now live with families through adoption, Special Guardianship Orders or Child Arrangement Orders.

In the first instance, parents and guardians should always discuss their child's needs directly with the school or setting's Designated Teacher to establish how they can be supported. If there are ongoing concerns about a child's progress then parents and guardians can:

- obtain further advice and support around SEND from the Norfolk Parent Partnership - <https://www.norfolksendpartnershiass.org.uk/>
- research the Norfolk SEND Local Offer page which has a lot of information on support for children and young people with SEND
- contact the Virtual School's Adviser for Previously Looked After Children, Harriet Tunnicliff for information or advice.

What information and advice can the Virtual School give to support a previously looked after child or young person with SEND?

Please note that the Virtual School does not work directly with children and young people

Our information and advice to families and school settings to support children and young people with SEND may include:

- claiming and effective use of the Pupil Premium Plus (PP+)
- providing information around SEND processes and specialist provision
- signposting and bringing together LA and external partners to ensure a joined up approach in supporting the child or young person
- working with the school or setting's Designated Teacher to make sure appropriate provision is in place

How will the Virtual School identify who should be invited to take part in activities and interventions?

The Virtual School uses a number of datasets to identify children and young people who may benefit from additional or different provision.

Children and young people will be invited to take part in these activities. Designated Teachers, social care teams and carers will be informed and events publicised as appropriate to ensure the maximum take up and participation.

What do I do if I have a question or suggestion about something that is not covered here?

We do have a foster carer representative on the Virtual School Reference Group but we always welcome feedback so don't hesitate to get in touch.

How accessible is the Virtual School?

The Virtual School is available via phone and email, our contact details are provided on page 1 of this document. You can also visit our website and twitter feed:

<https://www.schools.norfolk.gov.uk/teaching-and-learning/virtual-school-for-looked-after-children> [@SchoolCic](#)

Each child has an allocated adviser from the Virtual School team who will be named on their PEP record.

Who is the main SEN contact in the Virtual School?

All Virtual School staff will have SEND pupils as part of their caseload and they should be contacted in the first instance if there are issues that haven't been resolved at school level.

June Sewell is the Inclusion Adviser based in the Virtual School and David Abrahams is the EHCP Co-ordinator for all Norfolk looked after children with EHCPs.



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GLOSSARY

Designated Teacher	A designated teacher is responsible for the educational achievement of any looked after children in their school
Electronic Personal Education Plan (ePEP)	<p>The personal education plan is a legal part of the care plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it must be written for children and young people from Reception to Year 13 (4-18) • it is good practice to complete an ePEP for a younger child in Early Years if they are in education • in Norfolk we use an ePEP system provided by Welfare Call https://www.welfarecall.com/
Pupil Premium Plus (PP+)	<p>Pupil premium plus is additional funding to support raising the attainment of looked after children and close the gap between them and their peers. This takes two forms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Early Years Pupil Premium for 3 to 4 year olds, • the Pupil Premium Plus for young people in years Reception to Year 11 (5 -16 year olds)
Special Education Needs or Disability (SEND)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A child or young person has special educational needs if he or she has a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her. 2. A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or (b) has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream Post-16 institutions
EHC Plan (EHCP)	The purpose of an Education and Health Care plan is to make special educational provision to meet the special educational needs of the child or young person to secure the best possible outcomes for them across education, health and social care and, as they get older, prepare them for adulthood.