**Designated Teacher handbook for Children in Care and Previously in Care (September 2022)**



**Introduction**

The role of the Virtual School is to champion the needs of Norfolk’s children in care and previously children in care wherever they may be placed. This is achieved through support and challenge to schools and other education providers, the local authority, and any other relevant partners to ensure they have the best possible education.

The Norfolk Local Authority Virtual School is located within the Inclusion and Opportunity Service. The Virtual School holds a full list of all the Designated Teachers in Norfolk schools and out of county where Norfolk Children are on roll.

The Virtual School for children in care and previously in care is one of three virtual schools within the Inclusion and Opportunity Service, the other two being SEND and Sensory Support. Other elements of our service are EAL (English as an additional language) GRT (Gypsy, Roma, Traveller) Inclusion Service and SENDIASS (Special Educational Needs Disability Information Advice Support Service). Our service is responsible for ensuring all vulnerable children and young people have access to the best education provision to meet their needs and that they make progress and achieve success.

As the Designated Teacher your leadership in respect of inclusive practice, expertise on attachment and determination to raise attainment and diminish the difference is also reflected in the aims and ambitions of the Virtual School for Children in Care and Previously in Care.

We want to ensure you have support and advice when needed, the partnership between the Virtual School for Children in care and Previously in care and designated teachers is core to improving outcomes. As part of this, the handbook is designed to give you a quick reference to key information that you will need in your role as designated teacher. However, we will always respond promptly if you need information which is not contained within this document, our contact details can be found on the last page.

**Keeley White - Virtual School Head**

**Key points for Designated Teachers**

The guidance from the DfE (February 2018) sets out the roles and responsibilities of governors, head teachers and designated teachers to raise the attainment of children in care and previously looked after children, this is a change from previous guidance which was specific to looked after children.

The addition of children previously in care is in recognition of the early childhood experiences which can impact on attainment. The designated teacher will need to gather evidence from parents to satisfy themselves that the child has previously been looked after.

The designated teacher is a statutory role in school to ensure that effective practice becomes universal. The designated teacher should support staff and develop practice across the school.

The governing body and head teacher need to consider if the designated teacher has the appropriate seniority, experience, leadership, training and information to challenge and advise others to influence the teaching and learning needs of looked-after and previously looked-after.

Governing bodies and designated teachers will have regard for any guidance issued by the secretary of state.

The governing body of a maintained school and the proprietor of an academy must ensure that the designated teacher undertakes training that is appropriate to carry out this duty.

**High aspirations and high expectations**

It is important to have appropriate and high aspirations and expectations for children in care and children previously in care to support their future success.

Having good education attainment provides an opportunity for positive life outcomes. It is essential that children in care are surrounded by adults who invest and support them with their education, empowering them to progress forward, equipped with tools to benefit themselves and others.

Often children in care have had limited opportunities and experiences, so may require additional support to engage with events and activities such as theatre, trips, travel, visiting a diverse range of employers and having work experience opportunities.

Children in care and children previously in care benefit from clearly defined and often short-term support to overcome individual hurdles to learning. They should be offered support to catch up, especially when they may have missed a key building block to progressing forward in learning. Too much of a focus on what they struggle with or find hard, is detrimental to supporting future success.

Celebrating achievements in a specific and meaningful way and giving constructive feedback supports a feeling of safety, and a belief in their own abilities and understanding of themselves.

**Children in Care (CIC)**

Different terms are used to describe children/young people in care. The term ‘looked after child’ (LAC), or ‘children looked after’ (CLA), is also used to refer to looked after children.

In law, any reference to a child who is looked after by a local authority is a child who is:

A child ‘looked-after by a local authority’ is one who is looked after within the meaning of section 22 of Children Act 1989 or Part 6 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014;

**Children in care include the following:**

* Children who are accommodated under section 20 by Children’s Services when the parent(s) is unable to care for a child. This must be with the consent of the parent(s) or, if over 16, with the young person’s own consent (section 20, Children Act 1989).
* Children who are the subject of a Care Order (section 31, Children Act 1989) or Interim Care Order (section 38, Children Act 1989). Care orders can only be made by the court.
* Children who are the subject of emergency protection order (section 44 and 46, Children Act 1989).
* Children who are compulsorily accommodated through the criminal courts, usually the youth court. This includes children remanded to children’s services or subject to a criminal justice supervision order with a residence requirement. (Section 21 – Children Act 1989).
* Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) are children under the age of 18 who arrive in the country without a parent or a guardian. Many of these children will enter the care of Children’s Services as looked after children. This will be on a voluntary basis under section 20 of the Children Act 1989.

**Previously in Care children**

* A previously in care child is one who is no longer looked after in England and Wales because s/he is the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangement order which includes arrangements relating to with whom the child is to live, or when the child is; and
* A child is in ‘state care’ outside England and Wales if s/he is in the care of or accommodated by a public authority, a religious organisation or any other organisation the sole or main purpose of which is to benefit society.

**Special Guardianship Order (SGO)**

A Special Guardianship Order (SGO) grants care of a child to a special guardian and will normally last until the child is 18 years old. While they will no longer live with their parents, parents retain their parental responsibility, but the special guardian also gains parental responsibility for that child. It was introduced as a permanence option for children in December 2005. It provides a legally secure foundation for building a permanent relationship between the child and their special guardian.

To be considered previously in care, the child must have been in the care of the local authority (subject to a Care/Interim Care Order) immediately before the SGO was granted. If a suitable guardian stepped in and the child was never taken into care, and there was no Care Order then they would not meet the Department for Education (DfE) definition of being previously in care. This would mean they would not be eligible for the pupil premium plus.

**Child Arrangement Order (Previously Residence Orders)**

A Child Arrangement Order (CAO) means a court settles arrangement for matters such as what name a child will be known as, where and with whom they will live, what contact they will have with parents and siblings, where they go to school and other matters that might be in contention such as medical care. The Child Arrangement Order in relation to where the child will live can last until a child reaches 18 years old. In relation to contact, this ceases to have effect when the child reaches 16 years old, unless the court is satisfied that the circumstances of the case are exceptional. A person named in the order as a person with whom the child is to live, will have Parental Responsibility for the child while the order remains in force.

**Adoption**

Where it has been decided it is in the child’s best interests, a child can be placed for adoption. Before the Adoption Order changing the legal parentage of a child is granted, there will be a Placement Order where the child is still in care and is placed with prospective adoptive parents. Once the Adoption Order is granted, the adoptive parents would gain full legal status as the child’s parent, including full parental responsibility. The birth parents lose their parental responsibility. While children adopted outside of England and Wales are within the remit for the Designated Teacher, they are not eligible for the pupil premium plus grant for previously in care children.

**Virtual School new duties – Children with a Social Worker**

The Department for Education announced in June 2021 how local authorities should extend the current responsibilities for the Virtual School Head to include becoming a strategic lead for promoting the education of children with a social worker to ensure that more focus in placed on this cohort of children, targeting support earlier and helping to improve how they engage in education.

A cohort that has been identified as a group of children who face significant barriers to education as a result of experiences of adversity and trauma, most commonly abuse and neglect. Using knowledge and expertise from promoting the educational outcome of looked after and previously looked after children, Virtual School heads have been identified to become a ‘strategic leader’ to champion the educational attendance, attainment, and progress of children with a social worker.

**Who are the children and young people identified within the new cohort?**

The cohort is defined as ‘children who have been assessed as being in need under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 and currently have a social worker and those who have previously had a social worker.’

* Children with a social worker is the phrase to refer to this group collectively
* Includes all children who have undergone a social worker assessment at any time due to safeguarding and/or welfare reasons under section 17.
* Includes all those subject to a Child in Need plan
* Includes all those subject to a Child Protection plan (Section 47)
* Includes children aged from 0 to 18 in all education settings

The extended Virtual School Head role will:

* + - make visible the disadvantages that children with a social worker can experience, enhancing partnerships between education settings and local authorities to help all agencies hold high aspirations for these children.
    - promote practice that supports children’s engagement in education, recognising that attending an education setting can be an important factor in helping to keep children safe from harm.
    - level up children’s outcomes and narrow the attainment gap so every child can reach their potential. This will include helping to make sure that children with a social worker benefit from support to recover from the impact of COVID-19.

Key activities that will be critical to the success of the Virtual School Head role include:

* + - enhancing partnerships between education settings and the local authority so agencies can work together.
    - identifying the needs of the cohort and addressing barriers to poor educational outcomes and ensure pupils make educational progress.
    - offering advice and support to key professionals to help children make progress, including through increasing their confidence in using evidence-based interventions.

**What this looks like in Norfolk:**

In Norfolk we will:

* Promote Trauma Informed practice to understand the barriers for this cohort and how best to understand and support their needs through training and online resources for those in social care and early years settings, schools and colleges.
* Offer advice and guidance to social workers, Designated Teachers, Designated Safeguarding Leads and other key professionals.
* Work to develop a culture of high aspirations for this cohort by facilitating opportunities to meet with educational settings and share best practice, with space for reflection and guidance on a whole-school approach from professionals within the LA.
* Make use of existing knowledge of evidence- based interventions that have proven impact for our existing cohorts. Continue to explore recommendations of promising projects through the EEF and links with research organisations within Norfolk and beyond. Share our evidence base of what works for children with partners.

**What is not covered by the new duties?**

* Work with individual children and their families
* Tracking and monitoring educational progress of individual children or providing academic or other interventions
* Respond to requests for advice, intervention and support in relation to individual children from parents or carers.
* Take responsibility for children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) who do not require or need a social worker.

**The Educational progress of looked-after children in England**

Research funded by the Nuffield Foundation in 2015, and jointly undertaken by the University of Bristol and the Rees Centre, found several factors have a detrimental effect on educational outcomes:

**Time in care**

Young people in care who have been in longer term care: (i) do better than those ‘in need’ but not in care, and (ii) better than those who have only been in short term care. So it appears that care may protect them educationally.

**Placement Changes**

Each additional change of care placement after age 11 is associated with one-third of a grade less at GCSE.

**Placement Type**

Young people living in residential or another form of care at age 16 scored over 6 grades less than those who were in kinship or foster care.

**Feeling secure and cared for**

Young people can engage with learning better when they feel secure and cared for in a placement

**School Changes**

Young people in care who changed schools in Years 10 or 11 scored over 5 grades less than those who did not.

**School Absence**

For every 5% of possible school sessions missed due to unauthorised school absences, young people in care scored over 2 grades less at GCSE.

**School Exclusions**

For every additional day of school missed due to fixed term exclusions, young people in care scored one-sixth of a grade less at GCSE.

**School Type**

Young people in special schools at age 16 scored over 14 grades lower in their GCSEs compared with those with the same characteristics who were in mainstream schools. Those in PRUs with the same characteristics scored almost 14 grades lower.

**Admissions**

Schools should give looked-after children and previously looked-after children the highest priority on their admission arrangements. “Such children must take precedence over those on a waiting list and cannot be refused a place because of challenging behaviour.” Designated teacher guidance. February 2018 page 42. Local authorities may issue a direction to a maintained school and ask the secretary of state to direct academies to admit looked-after children.

**Guidance:** School Admissions Code. Statutory guidance for admission authorities, gov

**Attainment**

To support good lifelong outcomes, it is vital that the attainment of children in care is a focus. All those connected to children in care should provide support and help them to have high aspirations for themselves and an ability to contribute to society. It is important that progress is monitored and evaluated with rigour. This can inform targets, actions and provide an opportunity to celebrate success. Children in care are more likely to have low prior attainment due to their personal circumstances. We must always challenge targets based on low prior attainment, and the default position should be that pupils can and will achieve expected standards as a minimum.

**Monitoring the attendance of Norfolk’s looked-after children**

Schools should follow their school attendance policy for children in care as they would any child and engage the support of the attendance service where appropriate. In addition, the Virtual School focuses on improving school attendance for Norfolk’s looked after children, by commissioning a specialist organisation; Welfare Call, to collect this data from every school. This is a statutory responsibility.

Welfare Call staff make a daily call to every school or specialist provider, including out of county provision, that has a Norfolk child in care on roll from Reception to Year 11. These calls will be to confirm that the pupil is in attendance. If they are not, Welfare Call will contact the carer (where relevant) and, if necessary, the social worker. In addition, where a pupil has been excluded, Welfare Call will send an immediate alert to the social worker enabling them to follow up.

This ‘real time’ data assists with tracking patterns of attendance and exclusions and in turn enables the virtual school to tackle underachievement where it is linked to poor attendance.

The Virtual School remains committed to working with our schools to improve attendance for the looked after cohort. The Virtual School follow an agreed process to track and support our young people using data analysis provided by schools and Welfare Call. Best Practice for schools and setting is always to share concerns regarding a young person as early as possible with the Virtual School especially if there has been a noticeable change in attendance patterns. The initial point of contact should be the Virtual School Adviser who has oversight of the young person.

**Holidays should not be taken in term time**

Only the school can give permission for carers to take a child out of school during term time for a holiday, but please talk to the Virtual School for Children in Care and Previously in Care if you are considering a request.

**Previously looked-after children**

Guardians and parents are responsible for monitoring attendance and school should follow usual procedures for all pupils.

The Children Missing Education team can be contacted on 01603 307716 or [cme@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:cme@norfolk.gov.uk)

<https://www.schools.norfolk.gov.uk/pupil-safety-and-behaviour/children-missing-education/contact-the-cme-team>

**Role of the designated teacher**

From 1 September 2009 the governing body of all maintained schools have been required under the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 (Section 20) to appoint a designated teacher to promote the educational achievement of children in care who are on the school roll. (Duty also applies to Academies and Free Schools through their funding arrangements. Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities 2018)

The Designated Teacher for Looked After Pupils Regulations 2009 (England)

The regulations require that the person designated is:

* a qualified teacher who has completed the appropriate induction period (if required) and is working as a school (regulation 3(2)) or
* a head teacher or acting head teacher of the school (regulation 3(3))

From September 2018 the governing body of maintained schools and proprietors of academy schools are required following amendments in the 2017 Act to the 2008 Act and Academies Act 2010 to appoint a designated member of staff to have responsibility of promoting the educational achievement of previously looked-after children.

Looked-after children on the school roll could be the responsibility of another local authority. Children remain ‘looked after’ by the local authority where they came into care even if they move out of authority. Only in exceptional cases do children move into the care of another local authority. If you need support in contacting the home local authority, Norfolk Virtual School will be happy to signpost you to the appropriate contact.

Previously looked-after children on the school role are the responsibility of the school and parents/guardians. The virtual school in the local authority where the child is educated has a duty to support and advise the parents/guardians and designated teachers.

The DT needs to understand the role of social workers, VSHs and carers, and how the function of the PEP fits into the wider care planning duties of the authority which looks after the child; and for previously looked-after children, the DT must understand the importance of involving the child’s parents or guardians in decisions affecting their child’s education and be a contact for parents or guardians who want advice or have concerns about their child’s progress at school.

**Get to know the children in care on the school roll**

* Identify a key worker to ‘hold them in mind’ and support them as appropriate.
* Keep a register, home local authority and key contact details.
* Ensure appropriate staff are aware on a need to know basis.
* Advocate for looked after children; liaise with school staff, social worker and outside agencies to
* Ensure there is consistent and strong communication within the network.

**Know the previous looked-after children as identified by parents/ guardians**

* Ensure families know who the Designated Teacher is and their responsibilities
* Keep a register of children previously in care where the school has been informed(parents/guardians are not required to disclose)
* Ensure they are added to October school census, to trigger the pupil premium plus funding paid directly to schools.
* Ensure appropriate staff are aware on a need-to-know basis.
* Advocate for previously looked-after children; liaise with school staff and outside agencies to ensure there is consistent and strong communication within the network.
* Identify a key worker to ‘hold them in mind’ and support them as appropriate.

**The Designated Teacher should:**

* Ensure that school policies reflect the needs and approaches to support the inclusion and attainment of looked-after children and previously looked-after children.
* Ensure that whole school approaches are in place to raise attainment.
* Ensure that Pupil Premium Plus funding is being used effectively in school to support delivery of the outcomes identified in the children’s personal education plans
* be a source of advice for teachers and school staff.
* work directly with carers, parents and guardians and be part of a supportive network.
* keep up to date with government policy implications for looked-after children and previously looked-after children including recent research and training opportunities.
* monitor how research and training to raise the attainment of children in care is impacting on school culture and practice and feedback to senior leaders and Governors, and work to strengthen this across the school.
* report to Governors providing an ‘Annual Report to Governors’; recognised as good practice and helpful as evidence during Ofsted.

**Ensure that looked-after children and previously-looked after children:**

* Children in care only have a current ePEP and ensure information about targets is shared with colleagues in school as appropriate.
* are set high expectations by school staff.
* benefit from generic school based and additional interventions, funded by the pupil premium plus.
* have accurate assessment data and if necessary initial diagnostic assessments are completed.
* are assessed and receive timely and appropriate support by outside agencies, as needed.
* have access to good quality extra-curricular activities
* While it is not statutory for a previously looked after child or young person to have a PEP, the Virtual School has a template for previously children in care available on their website should schools feel it beneficial. A

o Governors proforma available from Norfolk care

**Role of Governors**

* To appoint a designated teacher in accordance with the regulations (section 20 of the 2008 Children and Young People’s Act and regulations) to promote the educational attainment of looked-after children including those aged 16-18 who are registered at the school.
* Designate a staff member to have responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of previously looked-after children in accordance with the amendment in the 2017 Act, section 20A of the 2008 Act and section 2E of the Academes Act 2010.
* The designated teachers should be given the appropriate level of support to fulfil the role and be up to date even if they currently do not have children in care on roll.
* Governors in partnership with the head teacher ensure that the designated teacher has the opportunity to undertake appropriate training.
* The governing body and the designated teacher must have regard to this guidance and any other relevant guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
* Ensure there are appropriate monitoring arrangements in place.

Governors should ensure that the designated teacher:

* contributes to a deeper understanding of children in care and children previously in care in the school and the resource implications to support them in their role.
* is a member of teaching staff with appropriate seniority and skills to work with the school leadership team.
* has appropriate professional experience and status to provide leadership, training, information, challenge and advice to others. Their

roles and responsibilities. February 2018

**Personal Education Plan (PEP)**

A PEP is the **statutory document** used when planning for the education of looked after children. All children in care must have a PEP as part of their overall care plan.

The PEPs feed into the statutory care planning framework, in collaboration with the social worker, independent reviewing officer, carer and other relevant professionals.

* The PEP includes information to help with conversations, planning and the delivery of strategies required to ensure the child gets the support and provision needed to succeed.
* The views of the child/young person must be evidenced and used to inform the setting of targets.
* Targets should be child specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and have clear timescales attached to them.
* The designated teacher leads on how the PEP is used as a tool in school (living document) and monitor the progress towards education targets.

**A child must have a PEP reviewed three times a year (termly)**

* A care plan is incomplete without a PEP and a health plan.
* At PEP meetings, the previous PEP should be reviewed.
* Children in care should benefit from school-based interventions.
* Where pupils have had turbulent schooling, there will be gaps in understanding that must be identified and addressed in order to succeed.
* Children in care should be making progress at least in line with other pupils at the school and nationally.
* Many children in care need to make more progress than their peers to ‘diminish the difference’ and attain at least expected standards.
* Any transition can be difficult for children in care& should be planned for and actions documented.
* Always consider which adults the child has a trusting relationship with at school, considering opportunities to facilitate contact.
* Always focus on life-long outcomes; how today’s decisions will impact on a young person at the age of 25, recognising that education impacts positively on the life chances of children and young people.

**Norfolk ePEP (Welfare Call)**

PEP forms used for Norfolk Children in care are electronic (ePEP), web-based and hosted by Welfare Call. Social workers and designated teachers with Norfolk children in care are provided with user name and passwords to access the ePEP system. For further information, please see the ePEP guidance from the Virtual School.

**Targets**

* SMART Targets for ePEP’s should be child specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and have clear timescales attached. The targets need to be aspirational and relevant. We would normally advise that three targets should be recorded.
* Academic targets can also include issues surrounding transition and career aspirations. If a target is based on the social, emotional needs of the child it is vital this is child centered and reflects their views.
* Each target must explain the specific actions required to achieve it, then who is responsible, the timescale,

expected outcomes and if relevant, how the pupil premium plus will be used to support the target.

* The targets must be achievable before the next PEP or contribute to a medium- or long-term target.
* Only a teacher should set targets, if the pastoral support team have contributed targets must be checked by the designated teacher.
* Targets will be reviewed at each PEP

**Five Elements of a Good PEP Record**

* There are clear links between all sections.
* The child “comes alive” in the PEP – especially (but not exclusively) within the pupil voice, minutes and parent and carer voice sections.
* Aspirational and SMART targets are influenced by the discussion at the PEP (minutes), the voice of the child, parent and carer and attainment.
* All sections are completed with context where appropriate.
* A child centered approach is used throughout. Creativity is used to engage the child in their PEP and the record of the PEP reflects this child centered approach.

**Pupil Premium Plus funding**

The Pupil Premium Plus grant is funding to improve education outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in schools in England, including children in care and previously in care. Virtual School Heads are responsible for managing the funding for children in their care and the Virtual School works with schools to ensure the funding is used to help deliver the outcomes identified in children’s PEPs.

**Children in Care**

The Norfolk Virtual School policy is to allocate £600 per eligible child on roll with a local authority funded school or academy, in the Autumn and Spring terms, when the PEP has been signed off as green by the Virtual School. In the 2022-23 summer term, all funding requirements will need to be requested through the PEP (further guidance about this will be issued before the summer term).

There will be some circumstances in which a child may require support costing more than £600 per term. Should this be the case, please speak with the Virtual School advisor to discuss making an application for exceptional funding. Independent settings are also able to request exceptional funding for interventions which have been identified to support the delivery of PEP outcomes and are in addition to what the setting would reasonably be expected to provide.

**Schools should use the funding to:**

* support the delivery of education outcomes identified in the child’s PEP.
* identify and narrow specific gaps in attainment.
* pool funding with other disadvantaged children or school funding to enable better provision and support in line with specific needs of students.
* support access to extra-curricular educational opportunities that will benefit the child’s ability, interests and motivation to learn.

For additional information please see the Norfolk Pupil Premium Plus policy and FAQs on our website.

**Pupils who were previously looked after by the local authority**

Pupil premium plus for previously looked-after children is managed by the child’s school, alongside their pupil premium funding. The designated teacher has a key role in ensuring the specific needs of previously looked-after children are reflected in how the school uses its funding to support these children.

Your designated teacher should:

* ensure adoptive parents and guardians are aware that they can declare their child eligible for pupil premium plus and work with them in deciding how the funding should be used
* consult the Virtual School Head on how to use the funding effectively, where appropriate
* be the main contact for queries about the use of pupil premium plus

To be eligible, a child must have left the care of a local authority within England or Wales immediately prior to adoption, Special Guardianship Order (SGO) or Child Arrangements Order (CAO - previously Residence Order) being granted. The children must be recorded in the October school census or the alternative provision census with permission from the parent/guardian to disclose their status for the purpose of claiming Pupil Premium Plus funding. This funding is not overseen by the Virtual School for Children in Care and Previously in Care and is paid directly to schools. The Virtual School can offer information and advice around Pupil Premium Plus.

**Preparing for future success**

**Transitions**

Any transition can be challenging for children in care due to their previous experiences and separation from family. During a child’s education life there will be a number of significant transitions that need to be planned for, (ideally over at least a 6-month period)

**Career planning**

It is essential that children in care have access to career planning and are encouraged to take up opportunities to engage in work experience to broaden their world view and see the possibilities available to them.

**Extra-curricular school opportunities**

Children in care should be prioritised for programmes and opportunities available at school.

**University visits**

Many Universities in the UK now offer specific programmes and interventions for children in care in year 7 and up. Schools should support children in care to engage in programmes offered by the school to raise aspirations.

**Access to culture and leisure activities**

The engagement in positive culture and leisure activities has been shown to impact on the educational attainment of looked after children. Involvement in clubs, sports, arts and specific activities contributes to confidence, working with others and developing new skills.

**Whole school approaches**

Adopting whole-school approach which support mental health and well-being, benefiting not only looked-after or previously looked-after children but all pupils and staff in school.

**Voice of the Child**

As part of the care planning process including the PEP it is important that the voice of the young person is heard and considered in planning and decision making. The views of the child/young person must be evidenced in the PEP and used to inform the setting of targets.

The Norfolk in Care Council (NiCC) represents children and young people in care and leaving care. All children in careand care leavers are invited to be members of the NiCC to support the voices of all children in and leaving care to be heard and considered.

For more information email: [nicc@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:nicc@norfolk.gov.uk)

**Coram Voice**

Provides an independent service for children in care and care leavers who are in the care of Norfolk LA. Coram Voice advocates to make sure children know their rights and have a right to say what they think when decisions are made about their care, regardless of their age, understanding, status or geography. The service is independent from social services and supports young people to express their views when they feel that they are not being listened to or action is not being taken.

Coram Voice telephone number – 0808 800 5792

**Local authority duty and role**

The 2018 guidance sets out the framework through which local authorities discharge their statutory duty under 22(3A) of the Children Act 1989 to promote the education of children in care and previously in care (added by section 4 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017).

The guidance incorporated the requirement for each local authority to appoint an officer employed by that local authority or another in England to ensure that the duty to promote the education children in careis discharged. This officer is referred to as the Virtual School Head (VSH). **Children and Families Act March 2014 (99)** Addition of (3B) &(3C) to Children Act 1989 section 22 after (3A). **The Children and Social Work Act 2017** extended the role of virtual school heads and designated teachers to promote the education attainment of certain previously looked-after-children. Local authorities to appoint an officer to role of Virtual School Head.

**Children in Care**

Local authorities (LA) have a duty to promote the education attainment of children in care wherever they live or are educated and give attention to the education implications of any decision about welfare.

Duty should also be applied to eligible children and those placed for adoption before a court hearing.

Expectation that LA workers and departments work together to ensure that education provision is arranged at the same time as care placement and relevant staff should work together

All looked-after children should have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) which is part of the care plan or detention placement plan. The PEP should include the VSH contact details.

LA has a duty to support care leavers up to 25 as outlined in Children and Young Person’s Act 2008

**Children Previously in Care**

The Virtual school head to be a source of advice and information to help parents to advocate as effectively.

Duty applied to children who are in early years provision (secured by LA) and throughout compulsory education where child is in provision full or in part funded by the state.

Virtual school head to promote the educational attainment of children previously in care through provision of advice and guidance to relevant parties such as education provisions including early years.

r Local Authorities February 2018

**Social care service**

Recently adopted children will be classed as looked after until the final court hearing (usually 6 months after placement in new family). Adopted children will remain the responsibility of the placing local authority for 3 years from the date of the adoption order. After 3 years adopted children are the responsibility of the residing local authority.

To meet the needs of adopted children school needs to recognise the impact of early life experiences. Having a key adult in school will allow for good communication between home and school. Schools may find the following booklet useful in understanding the needs of adopted children: <https://www.adoptionuk.org/lets-learn-together-ni>

**Norfolk County Council**

At any point a parent can ring up for adoption support for their child. The **Adoption Support Team** are available to discuss adopted children with written consent attending school.

Contact 01603 638343

**Norfolk Social Care Structure**

Children’s Social Care in Norfolk is delivered through three area localities:

* Norwich and South
* North, Broadland and East
* West and Breckland

Each locality is led by a Head of Social Work. These three localities are further broken down into social work team ‘patches’ and are led by a team manager who is accountable to the Head of Social Work.

Each Locality is supported by a specialist team which includes Clinical Psychologists, Team Managers, Clinicians, Corporate Parenting Support Workers and Family Network Advisors.

Children in care have an allocated Social Worker predominately from one of the following teams;

* Assessment
* Family Intervention
* FAST
* Children with Disabilities
* Children in Care.

The children in care team hold cases where the permanence plan for a child is to remain looked after by the local authority.

In the first instance, always speak to the allocated social worker for a child where you have a concern. If they are not available, teams operate a duty system which means that you can at any time request to speak with a duty social worker who will be able to assist you or, if the matter is urgent and you are unable to speak with the Duty Social Worker then ask to speak with the Team Manager or Assistant Team Manager.

**Children’s Advice and Duty Service (CADS) Norfolk County Council**

Norfolk Children’s Advice and Duty Service (CADS) is made up of a team of Consultant Social Workers who have had specialist training and use a coaching style to empower partners to be more confident in working with families and meeting needs. The Consultant Social Workers will provide advice, support and signposting, identifying the correct services and support for the child or young person

If you are a professional, i.e. working with a child or young person in a formal or voluntary setting and not a family member or member of the public, you can contact the Children’s Advice and Duty Service on their direct line: **0344 800 8021**.

For further information visit the CADS website:

<https://www.norfolklscb.org/childrens-advice-duty-service-cads/>

**Virtual School Advisers**

Statutory school aged children in care are allocated a named adviser within the Virtual School and each school will have an allocated named Virtual School advisor. The locality responsible for child is based on where the child lived when they entered care; it is not related to where a child attends school or is currently living.

**Signs of Safety**

Norfolk County Council are currently using the intervention Signs of Safety to work with families. This involves the use of specific terminology and types of questioning. Training is available to school staff, for more information please visit: <https://www.norfolklscb.org/>

or contact NSCB Support team **01603 223409**

**Adults around looked-after children and previously looked-after children**

**Key Worker**

A social care worker employed within residential settings. They will often be the “link person” for the child between their placement and other agencies – including schools.

**Children’s Guardian**

An officer appointed by the court to represent the views of the child during care proceedings and in private law proceedings.

**Social Worker**

A qualified social care professional who holds a registration with the HCPC. It is a legal requirement that Looked After Children’s cases are allocated to a qualified, registered Social Worker, who is accountable for case management decisions.

**Supervising Social Worker**

A Health and Care Professionals Council approved worker, working specifically with foster carers, in both private fostering agencies and within local authorities. Supervising social workers offer support for carers, ensuring training/development and good care.

**Adoption Social Worker**

A Health and Care Professionals Council approved worker. Adoption social workers specifically working with Adopters, recruiting and supporting them during the process and as required after adoption order.

**Independent Reviewing Officer**

A Health and Care Professionals Council approved professional with responsibility for conducting statutory reviews of care plans. An IRO will need to be consulted on placement moves and all major decisions regarding a child’s care plan.

**Independent Fostering Agency**

These agencies are based outside of the local authority and are privately run. They assess and support their foster carers directly and feed back to the local authority.

**Personal Advisor**

Individuals employed by the LA to work with care leavers to support them with their preparation for adulthood. The PA role is a statutory role.

**Adoption Support Team - Children and Families Team**

The Children and Families team appreciates and expects that most adopted children and their families will require some level of adoption support at some point in their journey. As a team, they understand the huge impact that early trauma can have on children throughout their lives, and the effect that this can have on them and their families. As a team of social workers and support workers they provide support to adoptive families and they encourage parents to contact them as early as they can if they have worries or concerns or feel that additional support or therapy might be helpful.

**Kinship Team**

The Kinship team is available to support families where a Special Guardianship order has been granted. As a team, they understand the huge impact raising a child can have on families’ lives. As a team of social workers, they provide support as a first point of contact for any queries through their dedicated Kinship Advice & Support Line. Further support is available through the support groups they run, the expertise within the team and the Adoption Support Fund which has been extended to help support Special Guardians.

Norfolk Virtual School for children in care and previously in care has an offer to support all internal and external partners working with Norfolk’s Children in care aged 0-8.

The Early Years Advisers based in the Virtual School work across the county, with a focus on ensuring that all 0-8 children coming into care have their educational and developmental needs addressed. This model fits with Norfolk’s Children’s Services early intervention approach. Norfolk Virtual School aims to promote the best quality outcomes for all 0-8 children in carethrough high quality PEPs (from age 2) and careful transition planning.

Every child has an allocated Early Years Adviser based across the county.

Our Previously Looked After Adviser can offer information, support and guidance for children who are adopted, subject to SGOs or Child Arrangement Orders.

**Early Years and Key Stage One**

**The Virtual School Early Years Advisers offer information, advice and guidance in the following areas:**

* home learning for foster carers
* quality and inclusion for children in care in schools and early years settings, (including childminders)
* advice and support for early years children with SEND or additional needs requiring signposting to relevant services
* The use of the Early Years Pupil Premium and Pupil Premium Plus
* Early Childhood and Family Service (ECFS)
* Early education and child development
* Transitions for children previously in care including those placed for adoption
* EY CPD offer and resources on VSCIC website
* The distribution of ‘My Play and Discover’ bags to 0-5’s
* The ‘Watch Me Play’ programme for caregivers with their babies or young children that aims to enhance child development and caregiver-child relationships.
* The importance of infant mental health and how it can be promoted through signposting to key organisations such as the Association of Infant Mental Health (AIMH) and the Anna Freud Centre

**Children previously in care**

The remit of the Virtual School has been extended to include information, advice and guidance for children who have been in care i.e. children adopted from care, and who have left care under a Special Guardianship Order or a Child Arrangement Order.

The Virtual School has an adviser who can offer advice on the attachment issues and complex trauma these children may have experienced. They can signpost schools and settings to sources of information and expertise to meet such needs and offer guidance on how Pupil Premium and Early Pupil Premium can be used to benefit previously looked after children.

**Post 16 education**

**The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund**

Children in care attending Post 16 education may be entitled to a 16-19 bursary. The bursary fund is intended to help students with the essential costs of participating in their study programme, for example to help with the cost of essential books or equipment or with the cost of travelling to school or college. The bursary fund is not intended to support costs not related to education (living costs), extra-curricular activities or provide learning support – services that institutions give to students – such as counselling, mentoring or extra tutoring.

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are the responsibility of the local authority. They are treated as looked after children and are eligible for a bursary for vulnerable groups (‘in care’ group), where they have a financial need.

**Eligibility criteria**

Students who meet the criteria, and who have a financial need, can apply for a bursary for vulnerable groups. The defined groups reflect that these students are unlikely to be receiving financial assistance from parents or carers, so may need a greater level of support to enable them to continue to participate. Students should be awarded the amount of support they need to participate based on an assessment of the types of costs they have and must not be automatically awarded £1,200. Institutions must ensure students are eligible for the bursary for defined vulnerable groups in each year they require support.

More information about the Post 16 Bursary can be found here:

[16 to 19 Bursary Fund guide 2022 to 2023 academic year - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide-2022-to-2023-academic-year)

**The Care Leaver Local Offer Page**

Information for care leavers can be found on the care leaver local offer page:

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/children-and-families/children-in-care/care-leavers-local-offer>

**University and Higher Education funding**

Applications for courses are made via UCAS and finance applications by university student finance. Care leavers are entitled to the HE bursary of £2000 over the duration of course from their local authority.

Many universities will offer a non-repayable bursary specifically to students who are care leavers. Check out individual university websites or the Propel website. Young people should be encouraged to tick the care leaver box on the UCAS form to access university support.

**Staying put (England only)**

Local authorities have a duty to provide ‘staying put’ arrangements for care leavers to continue to live with foster carers or in residential placements until the age of 21. The local authority will monitor the arrangement and provide advice and support with a view to maintaining the arrangement.

**Pathway plan**

To support the transition into adulthood, young people in care are supported by a social worker and/or personal advisor (PA) to plan for their future and access appropriate provision through a pathway plan, this includes access to education, employment and training.

**Access to education support to 25**

Young people who have been care leavers are able to request support from the LA to engage in education up until their 25th birthday, even when they have had no contact with the service for a number of years.

**Special Educational Needs and Disability - SEND**

SEN professionals must work closely with other relevant professionals involved in the child’s life to ensure that the child’s Education Health Careplan works in harmony with his/her Personal Education Plan.This will ensure that plans and targets are aligned to ensure that education, health and care needs will be met. When referencing information contained within the EHC plan it should only include relevant information to the child’s SEN from the children in care care plan. Where a looked after child is being assessed for SEND it is vital to take account of information set out in their children in care care plan and personal education plan.

**Belonging regulations**

‘Belonging Regulations’ refers to the Education (Areas to which Pupils and Students Belong) Regulations 1996 and are underpinned by DCSF guidance 2009. The SEN Code of Practice 2015 can be confusing as it cites that the area where the child is ordinarily resident has responsibility for the EHC plan and this is not strictly true for looked after children.

Where a child or young person is in foster care, the LA where they reside will assume the administrative responsibility for the EHC plan, the local authority where the child entered care retains financial responsibility. If a child or young person is in residential care, administrative responsibility may be retained by the LA where the child or young person entered care. If you have any queries about the ‘belonging regulations’, please contact Norfolk Virtual School for looked after and previously children in care in the first instance.

More information on Norfolk County Council SEND local offer is available on the website:

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/children-and-families/send-local-offer>

**Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC)**

Unaccompanied minors are children and young people who enter England alone without family members. Their knowledge of English and prior access to education can be varied. It is important that on entry to school their education needs are assessed including written and oral skills. As they settle into school it is important to consider how they are processing experiences and trauma both externally and internally and how school can be a ‘safe’ place for them.

**School interventions**

Ensure staff are supported and trained to teach children with (English additional language) EAL and to differentiate their work and homework.

Place the child in the appropriate year group and arrange an appropriate timetable.

Offer the child a pupil ‘buddy’ and a staff ‘mentor’ to help them orientate and ask questions or seek help etc.

Provide the child with a place to pray if required, and accommodate requirements the child’s diet and changing for PE etc.

**Pupil premium intervention ideas**

Facilitate educational interventions such as catch-up literacy and maths sessions, specific time-limited subject support in class, focused one to one EAL lessons, access to EAL computer programmes such as:

* Rosetta Stone or Flash Academy.
* Provide a bi-lingual dictionary for the child and ensure they receive additional provision in exams where needed.
* Provide a laptop for older children and access to Google translate in the early stages of learning English (via the laptop, tablet or ipad) to support communication with teachers and peers.
* Additional tutoring, sports club memberships, music lessons to build knowledge, skills and promote social integration.

The virtual school EAL Advisers, are available to offer advice and support including assessment on entry to school. Please contact the virtual school for more information.

**Exclusions**

The Virtual School remains committed to work with all schools to support our young people to avoid exclusions.  It is important that we work in collaboration and that early identification regarding concerns are discussed with all professionals. The Virtual School will monitor any concerns through data analysis and shared information from schools and other professionals working with the looked after cohort. Best Practice is always to share concerns regarding a young person as early as possible with the Virtual School especially, if there has been a noticeable change in behaviour and concerns have been raised by professionals. The initial point of contact should be the Virtual School adviser who has oversight of the young person.

Schools should seek to avoid the exclusion of looked-after and previously looked-after children. Should a looked-after or previously looked-after child be at risk of exclusion schools must liaise at the earliest opportunity with the designated responsible staff within the school and the child’s local authority to consider all possible options. **The virtual school head should be informed at the earliest opportunity** of the decision to exclude a looked after child.

**A school can only permanently exclude** in response to serious breach or persistent breaches of the school’s behaviour policy; and where allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupil or others in the school.

An exclusion must be lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate and must be in accordance with the school’s published behaviour policy and the statutory guidance on exclusion.

If a period of exclusion is unavoidable, for a fixed period of more than 5 days schools have a statutory duty to arrange suitable full-time education for any pupil of compulsory school age. This provision must begin no later than the 6th day of the exclusion. However, the 2017 DfE guidance states that ‘the school and the local authority should work together to arrange alternative provision from the first day following exclusion’ for children in care (Section 5 paragraph 50).

Schools should engage proactively with parents in supporting the behaviour of pupils with additional needs. In relation to looked after children, schools should co-operate proactively with foster carers or children’s home workers, the local authority that looks after the child and the local authority’s virtual school head.

If exclusion is unavoidable, the head teacher must, without delay, notify the carer and person holding parental responsibility of the period of the exclusion and the reason(s) for it. Ideally, notification should be in person or by telephone in the first instance.

For more information, please refer to the Norfolk School’s website via: <https://www.schools.norfolk.gov.uk/pupil-safety-and-behaviour/school-exclusions>

If you require support or advice around the inclusion of children and young people at risk of exclusion, call the **Inclusion Helpline** on **01603 307736**.

for those with legal responsibilities in relation to exclusion September 2017

**Mental health and well-being**

Children in care and previously in care are more likely to experience the challenge of social, emotional and mental health issues (as identified in Special Needs and Disability Code of Practice 0-25 years) than peers. They may struggle with executive functioning skills, forming trusting relationships, social skills, managing strong feelings (shame, sadness, anxiety and anger) sensory processing skills and coping with transitions and change. All of which can impact on educational attainment. Designated Teacher statutory guidance. DfE 2018.

Designated teachers are not expected to be mental health experts; however, they have an important role in working with other staff in school who link with mental health services ensuring they and other school staff can identify signs of potential issues and understand where the school can draw on specialist services, such as CAMHS and educational psychologists.

understand the impact trauma, attachment disorder and other mental health issues can have on looked-after and previously looked-after children and their ability to engage in learning.

support the school to become “attachment aware”, i.e. ensuring that the school understands. attachment theory and the impact of attachment disorders on a child’s emotional development and learning and adopts a whole school approach to identifying and supporting pupils with attachment. difficulties.

**Strengths and difficulties questionnaire**

All children in care are assessed using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). It includes versions for parents and carers, teachers and self-evaluation for children aged 11-17. Schools may be asked to complete the teacher version for specific children at the request of the social worker.

**Attachment, trauma and resilience**

**Attachment** theory began to take shape in the 1950’s with the work of John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth. Bowlby’s premise was that the relationship between infant and the primary caretaker is responsible for; shaping all future relationships; shaping an ability to focus, an awareness of feelings, an ability to calm and the ability to rebound from misfortune.

**Trauma** can be as a result of a single event or a number of repeated stressful events, such as impersonal (e.g. hurricane), interpersonal (e.g. assault) and attachment trauma (e.g. physical, sexual and psychological abuse).

In addition to any identified therapy, key contributors to supporting children to overcome some of the difficulties as a result of an insecure attachment and multiple traumas include:

* Positive, secure and stable relationships
* Being able to express what has happened – create a narrative
* Feeling safe and secure emotionally and physically

Successful intervention is based on providing a structured environment with firm boundaries and nurturing empathic relationships. From this secure foundation other areas – developing social skills, self-esteem, emotional literacy, autonomy and self-identity can be developed. This in turn creates a readiness to learn.

**Resilience** is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress. People commonly demonstrate varying levels of resilience, being resilient does not mean that a person doesn’t experience difficulty or distress. Resilience is not a trait that people either have or do not have. It involves behaviours, thoughts and actions that can be learned and developed in anyone.

**Legal terminology**

**Children on remand – care status**

Children remanded into custody who are not looked after, become looked after until they are sentenced. Whilst remanded into custody they are entitled to all the support and statutory duties as other looked-after children. Children subject to care orders who offend and receive custodial sentences remain looked after. Where a young person has previously been accommodated under section 20 of the 1989 Act and is detained in custody they do not remain looked after. However, they may resume looked after status on release.

**Exit from care**

Children and young people can exit care for several reasons; including returning home to their family, being placed with a family member or put under a post care order; e.g. adoption, special guardianship

**Section 20**

A voluntary arrangement which can be terminated at any time by the parent(s) and parental responsibility remains with them.

**Section 47**

Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 places a duty on LAs to investigate and make inquiries into the circumstances of children considered to be at risk of ‘significant harm’ and, where these inquiries indicate the need, to decide what action, if any, it may need to take to safeguard and promote the child’s welfare.

**Section 17**

Section 17 of the Act places **a general duty on all local authorities to 'safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need**. ' Basically, a 'child in need' is a child who needs additional support from the local authority to meet their potential.

**Case conference**

A child will be made subject to a child protection plan at a child protection case conference if the child is at risk of significant harm.

**Care Plan**

Care Plans set out what services will be provided to a looked after child and their family. The Care Plan will say what the council and other agencies will do to meet the child’s needs around health, education, religion, culture and hobbies and sets out the longer-term plan for the child’s future.

**Private fostering**

Private fostering is when a child under the age of 16, (under 18 if disabled) is cared for by someone who is not their parent or a ‘close relative’. This is a private arrangement made between a parent and a carer, for 28 days or more. Norfolk County Council must be told about a child’s living arrangements. For more information:

<https://www.schools.norfolk.gov.uk/pupil-safety-and-behaviour/safeguarding/private-fostering-guidance>

**Corporate Parent**

The council, elected members, employees, and partner agencies are ‘corporate parents’ who have a responsibility for providing the best possible care and safeguarding for the children who are looked after by the local authority. A child in the care of the local authority looks to the whole council to be the best parent it can be to that child. Every member and employee of the council has the statutory responsibility to act for that child in the same way that a good parent would act for and for their child.

**Parental responsibility**

If the child is being accommodated by the local authority under voluntary measures, the parent(s) still retain full parental rights. If the child is subject to a compulsory supervision order or an order of the court, the parent(s) retain full parental rights, although these may be limited by the children’s hearing or the court. If the local authority has a permanence order for a child, the parent(s) do not have the right to have the child living with them or to control where the child lives. Parental responsibility should be clarified during the PEP meeting and the social worker should invite the relevant people to the meeting. Schools should ensure that they hold the correct contact information for the person(s) holding parental responsibility as advised by the social worker.

**Legal parent**

During Adoption Parental Responsibility for a child is transferred from their birth parent or other person with Parental Responsibility to their adopters, it is a legal procedure. An adopted child loses all the legal ties with their original parents it is a significant legal order and is not usually reversible. When an adoption order is made in respect of a child, the child becomes a full member of their new family, taking the family name, and assumes the same rights and privileges as if they had been born to the adoptive family including the right of inheritance.

**Norfolk Virtual School Contact Details**

**General Enquires:** 01603 303323

**Email:** [virtual.schools@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:virtual.schools@norfolk.gov.uk)

**Website:** [Virtual school for children in care and previously in care - Schools (norfolk.gov.uk)](https://www.schools.norfolk.gov.uk/teaching-and-learning/virtual-school-for-children-in-care)

**Follow us on Twitter:** @SchoolCic