Supporting Care-Experienced Children in Education

Cambridgeshire Virtual School
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the Virtual School?</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who are the Virtual School?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitions</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is a PEP?</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil Premium Plus</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Years</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-16</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UASC</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEND</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attachment and Trauma</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children previously in care</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and Development</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statutory Guidance and Further Reading</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is the Virtual School?

The aim of the Virtual School is to ensure that children in the care of the local authority have the opportunity to fulfil their educational potential. Since April 2014, every local authority in England has had to appoint at least one person to fulfil the local authority’s statutory duty to promote the educational achievement of its looked after children, wherever they live or are educated. This person is called the Head of the Virtual School. Within Cambridgeshire we have a team of educational professionals that support the Virtual School Head in fulfilling these responsibilities.

Our priorities are to...

Promote high aspirations and raise achievement through challenge, support and targeted intervention. In order to fulfil this we:

- Support our young people to access and do well in education and training;
- Promote our young people’s need to access high quality support, which meets their needs in a timely way;
- Work closely with all those involved in providing education to ensure they understand the issues and challenges facing our young people and their role in working together to respond to and overcome them;
- Work to reduce the challenges resulting from changes of care placement or school;
- Challenge barriers to engagement and good attendance
- Promote equality/equity and diversity.

Please also refer to the Cambridgeshire Virtual School Offer

Children in Care in Cambridgeshire have indicated that they do not like the term ‘looked-after’ and therefore the terms ‘child in care’ or ‘care-experienced child’ are used throughout this document. However it should be noted that the legal term and therefore that used in DfE publications is the term ‘looked-after’.
Who are Cambridgeshire’s Virtual School?

For any general enquiries please email virtualschool@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

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**Advisory Teacher Team**

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**Post-16 Team**

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Definitions of Children in Care

The term ‘looked after’ has a specific, legal meaning based on the Children Act 1989. The definition is as follows:

A child is looked after by a local authority if he or she has been provided with accommodation, for a continuous period of more than 24 hours, in the circumstances set out in Sections 20 and 21 of the Children Act 1989, or is placed in the care of a local authority by virtue of an order made under part IV of the Act (that is, under a care order).

What this means is that a child is looked after by a local authority either under a court order or through a voluntary arrangement made with the child’s parents.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section 20</td>
<td>This is a voluntary arrangement made with the child’s parents. Parents retain primary responsibility with the local authority acting as a corporate parent. A person with parental responsibility can remove the child from local authority accommodation at any time, without giving notice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 31</td>
<td>This is a court order and the local authority shares parental responsibility with parents. A Care Order will be made when a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm and the making of the order would be better for the child than if no order was made. A Care Order can last until the child is 18, or an alternative order is made (e.g. adoption) or the order is discharged.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Section 44</td>
<td>An Emergency Protection Order is sometimes issued in an urgent situation where a child is suffering from, or is likely to suffer from, harm or abuse and is a temporary arrangement pending an Interim Care Order hearing.</td>
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The term ‘accommodated’ refers only to those children looked after by voluntary agreement. The term ‘in care’ if used refers to children subject to a Care Order.

A child will also become looked after if he/she is being held in council accommodation on a court-ordered secure remand - i.e. he/she is looked after under a compulsory order.

Despite its legal status, Cambridgeshire children in care have indicated that they do not like the term ‘looked after’ and instead have requested that the phrases of ‘children in care’ or ‘care-experienced children’ are used.

PLACEMENTS FOR CHILDREN IN CARE
- The majority of children in the care of Cambridgeshire Local Authority are placed in foster care.
- Some children in care also live in children’s homes (which include homes, hostels or residential schools).
- A minority of children in care are placed at home with their parents.
- Young people, aged 16 or 17 in care may be living in semi-independent accommodation, such as supported lodgings, in preparation for leaving care.
- Children in the care of Cambridgeshire Local Authority may be living within Cambridgeshire, but may be living out of county (OOC).

CEASING TO BE IN CARE
- A child in care under 18 years of age may return home to his/her natural parent(s) or other person(s) with parental responsibility.
- A child in care may cease being in care if he/she reaches 16 or 17 years of age AND if he/she moves into independent living.
- A child in care will cease being in care on his/her 18th birthday if this has not happened beforehand.
- Cambridgeshire Local Authority may remain involved with a child after he/she has ceased being in care.
- Adopted children are not ‘in care’. If a child is looked after prior to adoption, he/she ceases to be looked after on adoption - i.e. when an adoption order is granted by the court. A child who has been adopted can become looked after again if his/her adoption placement breaks down.
What is a Personal Education Plan (PEP)?

A Personal Education Plan (PEP) is an active document belonging to a child in care; it is the education component of their Care Plan. It is a statutory document and should be reviewed termly.

Cambridgeshire has different versions of the PEP specific to Early Years, Statutory School Age and Post-16 children and young people. Since 2016 these have all been electronic based PEPs (ePEPs) administered by welfare call.

The document sets out desirable outcomes for progress, attainment and achievement, and recommends how this will be done. It also details spending of the pupil premium plus grant to support this.

Additionally, the PEP captures the educational history and supports the aspirations of looked after children, in partnership with social workers, parents and carers. It allows for a continuous record of the child’s school history, and identifies any additional needs that they may have and what support will need to be put in place to enable the young person to access an appropriate curriculum and reach their full potential.

The views of the child or young person should also be included, either at the PEP meeting itself or through discussions outside the meeting.

For young people new into care and of statutory school age a PEP will be initiated by the Virtual School, social worker and the school within 10 days of coming into care. Subsequent PEPs are lead by the school and social worker.

Cambridgeshire Virtual School maps termly submission dates for PEPs. These fall towards the end of each academic term and are found on the learn together and welfare call website. The Virtual School proactively shares these with schools in advance.

Guidance to support schools in completing ePEPs can be found in the ePEP User Manual which can be found under the documents section of the welfare call website. Additional guidance to support Designated teachers can also be found under the documents section of the welfare call website and on the learn together website.

Cambridgeshire Virtual School quality assures all PEPs. The criteria for this can be found under the documents section of the welfare call website and also on the learn together website.
The Pupil Premium Plus grant (PP+) of £2300 is available for every Child in Care of statutory school age from the date they enter care in order to support schools to close the gap between looked after children and their peers.

The funding distribution is the statutory responsibility of the Head of the Virtual School (HVS). Within Cambridgeshire £500 is top sliced by the HVS in order to commission services or activities that will benefit Cambridgeshire Children in Care more holistically; this includes the training offer, collaborative projects and also supporting children not currently on roll. The remaining £1800 is distributed to schools in x3 termly instalments up to £600 in response to requests from schools within the PEP document.

The HVS acknowledges that individual children and young people may at times need a higher level of support. Schools and settings can therefore request exceptional additional grant funding through the PEP. Requests must reach the threshold required to receive funding beyond the £600 and the criteria for this can be found on the learn together website.

Children in Early Years settings attract funding of £300 per financial year.

The PP+ is an opportunity to address the learning needs of a child in care through the provision of additional interventions and learning resources tailored to the individual child’s need.

For further details please refer to:
- Pupil premium 2019 to 2020: conditions of grant
- Cambridgeshire Virtual School: pupil Premium Plus Policy

Schools are accountable for the spending of the pupil premium plus grant through the PEP system.
The Early Years Advisory Teacher supports Cambridgeshire’s Children in Care from just before the child turns 2 years old until they enter school, when the primary advisory team take over. The role of the Early Years teacher includes:

- applying for 2 year old funding
- delivering universal Designated Person training to all settings or working with a setting to develop and undertake bespoke training around Children in Care
- supporting settings with the EYFS ePEP (electronic Personal Education Plan) process, ensuring they are completed within timescales, to statutory requirements and that they include appropriate and aspirational desirable outcomes
- managing the Early Year’s Pupil Premium Plus (EYPP+) for Nursery aged Children in Care, ensuring its use links to the child’s ePEP desirable outcomes and has the maximum impact on progress
- providing a link for foster carers and pre-adoptive parents, offering guidance and support in identifying a suitable setting or school

The Early Year’s teacher is pivotal to ensuring that all professionals are working effectively for the child by challenging drift as well as being able to support settings with accessing the correct professional support for the child.

A Child in Care is eligible for Early Years pupil premium plus in the term after their third birthday, providing they are attending an Early Years setting.
A Post 16 protocol agreement is established between post 16 providers and the Virtual School. This details key responsibilities and contacts of each party to provide ongoing working arrangements for Young People in Care (16-18) and Care Leavers (18+) to ensure a desirable outcome for all our learners.

The Virtual School Post 16 Education Advisors will support transition into post 16 provision by:

- forwarding information directly to the Safeguarding or Designated Teacher to enable a positive transition;
- ensuring settings have a good understanding of child in care status;
- negotiating appropriate learning support.

All post 16 young people in care continue to have a PEP which is reviewed each term (up to and including their 18th birthday, or academic year).

The relevant Virtual School Post 16 Education Adviser must be informed if a learner's attendance is low, or at risk of being removed from a course (and thus becoming NEET).

Children in care and/or Care leavers will require additional support to complete applications for the **Vulnerable Bursary** and **transport passes** when enrolling. This should be supported by staff and documentation supporting the application will be provided by social care.
Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

An Asylum Seeker is a person who has made a claim for asylum within the meaning of s 16 (3) Nationality Immigration Asylum Act (NIAA) 2002 and is awaiting a decision from the Home Office.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) is a term used to describe children who enter the country, apply for asylum and meet the following criteria:

- is, or (if there is no proof) appears to be, under eighteen
- is applying for asylum in his or her own right
- has no adult relative or guardian in this country
- or those young people who enter the UK accompanied but become unaccompanied during their stay in the UK and subsequently claim Asylum in their own right.

UASC are entitled to care and protection under the provisions of the Children Act 1989 & 2004 and where appropriate the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000. They are children first and asylum seekers second, regardless of their immigration status. All UASC have 'Looked After Child' status until their 18th birthday.

As with all children in care, UASC are vulnerable. In particular, some UASC may be particularly vulnerable to radicalisation, trafficking or Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). School and college staff are important as they may be able to identify concerns in these areas and help to prevent them from escalating.

Additionally, some UASC are at a heightened risk of absconding. Schools and colleges should work closely with housing providers and social care to help prevent this wherever possible.

It is recognised that the admission of UASC to schools and colleges may present a challenge in terms of organising appropriate provision and resources. Many UASC are determined and enthusiastic learners. One of the obvious and common barriers for UASC is a lack of English language skills. They may find conversations difficult to begin with and will often appear shy or reserved; therefore making group work and informal situations like break and lunch times difficult for them. UASC may require additional support to acquire basic oral English before progressing to reading and writing. Their English language and communication skills may be limited but this in no way reflects their intellect or ability to learn with the right support.

Besides provision considerations for schools and colleges, cultural differences and lack of experience of school environments may also be a challenge. Some UASC may be overwhelmed by the size of a school, the day to day routine of school life, and mixing with people of the opposite sex.

Further barriers which may present include:

- Significant mental health difficulties (PTSD) arising from traumatic experiences
- Disputes by home office regarding age assessments
- Delays in communication between social care and virtual school
- Challenges in appointing interpreters/translators
- Clarification about a child’s details (specifically misspelling of names and incorrect dates of birth)
- Enabling UASC to attend interview
- Child not put on roll until an ESOL beginners class is available.
- Confusion between Virtual School and social care regarding roles
**Special Educational Needs and Disabilities**

Children in care should be supported through established school processes regarding special educational needs; this should include all aspects of the assess, plan, do, review cycle.

If a school chooses to make a referral to District SEND 0-25, then the attached Virtual School teacher should be notified in which case they will make an attempt to accelerate the referral.

Children who are in care do not need to have an Early Help Assessment, in lieu of this PEP paperwork should be submitted to the relevant service.

If a child in care has SEND identified through an EHCP, then statutory paperwork still needs to be reviewed annually (minimum) with all of the relevant professionals and people with parental responsibilities in attendance. It is good practice to combine one of the termly PEP meetings with the annual EHCP review to reduce duplication and ensure consistency of planned outcomes.

The Virtual School have initiated a Local Authority Protocol with SAT (CCC statutory resources team) which enables provision for children in care to be prioritised and timescales to be minimised whenever possible.

Where a Cambridgeshire child in care is placed out of county, the educating school and authority assume the administrative responsibilities of the EHCP although Cambridgeshire SAT continue to provide funding.
行为

当支持在养儿童的行为时，重要的是学校要单独考虑每个年轻人，并根据他们的背景和社会和情感需求来制定方法。

学校自己的行为管理政策可能会适合大多数年轻人，但有时对在养儿童来说，未满足的基本需求会影响他们的行为，因此所采用的方法可能需要调整以实现最大的成功。

虚拟学校教师可以提供支持和指导，围绕计划可接受的行为；可以通过各种方式实现，如定期讨论和审查，建议使用资源或与在养儿童有关的整体制教师会议。

可以提供支持的其他来源可能包括：
- **区级SEND 0-25**（包括EP服务、专业教师和专业实践者）
- **单元临床医生**（有临床背景的专业人员，附属于社会工作部门 - 将通过年轻人员的社会工作者进行转介）
- **县替代性安置经理**（为学校和校长提供关于管理性转移和面临被开除风险的年轻人的建议）
- **教育包容性官员**（主要针对高中的学生，提供关于社会和情感需求以及风险的排除的建议、支持和直接工作）

**替代性安置**

对于需要调整时间表以满足其需求的在养儿童，可以根据需要寻找适当替代性安置（除非年轻人员有EHCP，在这种情况下，可以通过EHCP审查并带到委员会）。

任何为在养儿童提供的替代性安置都必须经过县的认证和批准。目前可用的替代性安置目录，定期更新。

**排除**

应确保每种替代性方案在被排除的儿童在被排除前都被讨论，包括通知虚拟学校和社会工作者。

如果在养儿童被开除，他们应从开除的第一天开始接受等同于全职的替代性安置。父母有责任告知。

临时安排的部分时间日程表或‘放学回家’被认为是非法的排除，将不受到虚拟学校的支持。

对在养儿童的永久性排除应避免。如果在养儿童被永久性排除，学校仍然有责任提供全职的替代性安置，直到董事会确认了排除。在剑桥郡，小学由LA负责儿童的教育。在剑桥郡的中学，学校在新的学校安置开始之前仍然负责。这是一种剑桥郡的协议，其他郡可能不会是这种情况。
Attachment and Trauma

All children enter school with a variety of differing experiences. Some come from stable home environments, where they have built strong relationships with their main caregivers and others may not. Where early experiences have been chaotic or hostile and have not met the child’s developmental needs it is likely that the child may display an unhealthy or disorganised attachment style. This may be due to a range of factors including physical or psychological illness, drug or alcohol dependency, mental health issues, highly aggressive behaviour or exposure to domestic violence.

Where a child has suffered trauma, whether as an isolated event or over a prolonged period; it is likely that this has caused neurological responses. In response to trauma, the brain releases stress hormones which cause major areas of the brain to close down affecting rational thought, feelings, reflectivity, empathy and memory. This may be perceived in the classroom as poor behaviour.

In some cases it can, like attachment, affect the development of the brain. The extent to which the child responds to the trauma will depend on the type of trauma, the age of the child (stage of brain development) and the attachments the child has in their life.

A majority of the behaviours these children display will make those around them feel disorientated and uncomfortable, both children and adults. For professionals this can make us feel de-skilled and affect the way we respond to the child. For their peers it might be confusing and lead them to give up on the pursuit of that friendship. This can result in the child not making sustainable relationships and in turn to lead to more feelings of desperation and isolation as they grow into adulthood.
Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders

Foetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) is the umbrella term for a range of preventable alcohol-related birth defects.

The exact prevalence of FASD in the UK is not known. Misdiagnosis is common because symptoms are similar to some of those traditionally seen in children with autism or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. It is estimated that up to 3% of the UK population has the condition.

It is likely that many children in care suffer from a FASD. Research carried out in Peterborough in 2015 investigated the prevalence of FASD among children in care and concluded that a third of them referred for a health assessment had the condition.

There can be considerable impact on brain development as a result of FASD and this might result in:
- attention deficits
- memory deficits
- hyperactivity
- difficulty with abstract concepts (eg maths, time and money)
- poor problem-solving skills
- difficulty learning from consequences
- poor judgement
- immature behaviour
- poor impulse control
- confused social skills

The effects of FASD can be mild or severe. Many children experience serious behavioural and social difficulties that last a lifetime. Although alcohol can affect the development of cells and organs, the brain and nervous system are particularly vulnerable.
Children previously in care (care-experienced)

What does care-experienced refer to?
For the purpose of this document care-experienced is a collective term which refers to children and young people who have been ‘looked after’ by the local authority for at least one day and have gone on to be:

- Adopted
- Subject to a Special Guardianship Order (SGO)
- Subject to a Child Arrangement Order (CAO)

It does not refer to children who have been ‘looked after’ and have returned to the care of their parent/s.

Pre-adoptive placement and Adoption

When a child moves into a pre-adoptive placement they continue to be a child in care. Parental responsibility is held by social care.

There is a minimum time period of ten weeks, for which a child must be resident with the pre-adoptive family, before the family can apply to the courts, to finalise the adoption.

Once the adoption is finalised, the adoptive family hold full parental responsibility and the child is no longer ‘looked after’. This is the time when legally, the child’s surname and sometimes middle names will change.

Child Arrangement Order

This has replaced Residence Orders and Contact Orders. The order will state who a child lives and with and can determine who they can spend time with and for how long.

It gives parental responsibility (PR) to the person that the child will live, with allowing them to make day to day decision about the child including medical or dental treatments or signing for thing like school trips. There are restrictions in that carers cannot change a child’s name or take them out of the country for more than a month without parental consent or permission from the court.

Special Guardianship Order

This is deemed to be a permanent order that determines who the child will live with for the duration of their minority. The order grants parental responsibility to the carers, which overrides that of anyone else with PR, allowing them to make all of the decisions for the duration of the child’s minority. The order will also outline the arrangements for whom the child should have contact with and the frequency of contact.

What are the duties placed on schools regarding care-experienced children?

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 places the following requirements on schools.

The governing body of a maintained school in England must:

- designate a member of the staff at the school (the “designated person”) as having responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of children previously in care
- ensure that the designated person undertakes appropriate training and has regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
In order to access pupil premium for children previously in care, schools need to see a copy of the legal documentation which the family will hold and then indicate on the January school census that the child is previously looked after. Early years settings need to complete an online form.

Virtual School staff can assist in procuring additional information, advice and guidance for children previously in care in Cambridgeshire schools.
**Training and Development**

The Virtual School provide advice, guidance and training for all education providers. We run a variety of training across the county.

**Designated Teachers**

This training takes place termly around the county. Induction training is offered to new DTs in order to examine their role, look at the legal framework and statutory guidance and also consider Ofsted expectations. Enhanced training is offered to those experienced in post.

Separate training for the Designated Person in Early Years and Post-16 settings is also offered.

**Themed Courses**

The Virtual School offers a variety of themed courses on issues that specifically affect looked after children and the role of schools in supporting these. These include:

- Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
- Attachment Difficulties
- Trauma
- Bespoke ePEP training
- Previously-LAC and Adoption
- Developing case studies
- Post 16 LAC

**Whole School Training**

The Virtual School will also come into schools and deliver bespoke training as and when required. This is a traded offer, for more information about prices please contact the Virtual School.

To see the current courses available from the Virtual School please visit: [https://www.cambslearntogether.co.uk/school-improvement/cambridgeshire-s-virtual-school-for-looked-after-children/](https://www.cambslearntogether.co.uk/school-improvement/cambridgeshire-s-virtual-school-for-looked-after-children/)
Statutory guidance and other references

Key Documents
- ‘Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children: DFE-00053-2018
- ‘The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children: DFE-00052-2018

Other Useful Documents:
- ‘School admissions code’ DFE-00728-2014
- ‘Exclusion from maintained schools, Academies and pupil referral units in England: A guide for those with legal responsibilities in relation to exclusion’ DFE-00728-2014
- ‘Participation of young people in education, employment or training: Statutory guidance for local authorities’ DFE-00255-2016
- ‘Promoting children and young people’s emotional health and wellbeing: a whole school and college approach’ PHE publications gateway number: 2014825
- ‘Pupil premium 2017 to 2018: conditions of grant’ EFA 2017
- Pupil Premium Plus Policy and Practice for Looked After Children: Guidance for schools, Early Years settings, social workers and foster carers Cambridgeshire Virtual School, 2016
- Cambridgeshire’s Model Policy for LAC (can be found on VS website)

For further information please visit Cambridgeshire’s Virtual School website:

https://www.cambslearntogether.co.uk/school-improvement/cambridgeshire-s-virtual-school-for-looked-after-children/