



Telford & Wrekin
Co-operative Council

Protect, care and invest
to create a better borough

Telford and Wrekin Virtual School

Post 16 Handbook

2023-2024

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Virtual School Post 16 Priorities

The aim of the Virtual School Post 16 team is to work with a range of professionals to improve outcomes for all our children and young people in care in Years 12 and 13 and for our care leavers, through direct work with young people and driving improvement in practice amongst professionals and providers.

Virtual School Role and Responsibilities

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 looked after children and previously looked-after children** (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 looked after children is 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.

Looked-after children (Children in Care)

- Local authorities (LA) have a duty to promote the education attainment of looked after children 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

Previously looked-after children

- 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 previously looked after through provision of advice and guidance to relevant parties such as education provisions including early years.

Guidance Promoting the Educational Achievement of looked-after children and previously looked-after children: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities February 2018.

High Aspirations and High Expectations

It is important to have appropriate and high aspirations and expectations for looked after children and previous looked after children to support their future success.

Having good education attainment provides an opportunity for positive life outcomes. It is essential that looked after children 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 looked after children 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.

Looked after children and previously looked after children 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.

Looked-after children (LAC)

Different terms are used to describe children and young people in care. The term ‘children in care’ (CiC), or ‘children looked after’ (CLA), is also used to refer to looked after children. Telford & Wrekin have adopted the term Children in Care (CiC) after consultation with Voice Care council.

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.

Looked after Children 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 looked-after children

A previously looked-after 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 arrangements 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.

Post LAC - Special Guardianship Order (SGO); Special Guardianship 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, while preserving the legal link between the child and their birth family. The order ceases when the child turns 18.

Post LAC - Child Arrangement Order (Residence Order) the granting of a residence order to someone automatically gives him or her parental responsibility for the child if they do not already have it. Parental responsibility obtained as a result of a residence order will continue until the order ceases or until the child is 16 unless the circumstances of the case are exceptional, and the court has ordered that it continue for longer.

Post LAC – Adoption; Adoption is a way of providing new families for children who cannot be brought up by their biological parents. It is a legal procedure in which all parental responsibility is transferred to the adopters. Once an adoption has been granted, it cannot be reversed. An adopted child loses all legal ties with their birth parents and becomes a full member of the adoptive family, usually taking the family's name.

Attainment at Post 16

To support good lifelong outcomes, it is vital that the attainment of looked after children is a focus. All those connected to looked after children 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. Looked after children 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.

Attainment national expectations

To document and capture all attainment and targets of Children in Care the PEP either, working below, Age related and above.

Research & Learning

Keep up to date with government policy implications for looked-after children and previously looked after children including recent research and training opportunities. Engage with the Virtual School for help, support advice and guidance. Engage with ARC - Attachment Research Community - develop a network.

Some key factors contributing to the low educational outcomes of young people in care in secondary schools in England are listed below:

- Linking Care and Educational Data, November 2015. The research was funded by the Nuffield Foundation, and jointly undertaken by the University of Bristol and the Rees Centre, Department of Education, University of Oxford. [The educational progress of looked after children - Nuffield Foundation](http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk/research/educational-progress-of-looked-after-children)
- What works for Childrens Social Care [Supporting the education of looked after children - What Works for Children's Social Care \(whatworks-csc.org.uk\)](http://whatworks-csc.org.uk)

Attainment and Progress:

Time in care	Young people in care who have been in longer term care: (a) do better than those 'in need' but not in care, and (b) 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.

The research was funded by the Nuffield Foundation, and jointly undertaken by the University of Bristol and the Rees Centre, Department of Education, University of Oxford.

Attachment and Trauma Informed Schools - Relationship Model Approach:

Telford & Wrekin Virtual School has an ambitious three-year plan that all education establishments are accredited through the Attachment Research Community (ARC). They have purchased membership for all Telford & Wrekin schools. Schools need to:

- Complete the online SEF self-evaluation framework document.
- Generate an action plan.
- Meet with the VSH/VST case worker to discuss how this can be achieved.
- Attend the training offer.
- Compile evidence file and submit to VSH for sign off.
- Become a leading school as Attachment and Trauma Informed, share evidence of good practice with other education establishments.
- Participate in research projects to further support CIC and raise aspirations.

To date over the past few academic years, sixteen schools in T&W have already been nominated for the national prestigious John Timpson Attachment & Trauma Informed Awards.

[Attachment & Trauma Aware approaches in education | ARC \(the-arc.org.uk\)](http://Attachment & Trauma Aware approaches in education | ARC (the-arc.org.uk))

The Belonging strategy was implemented in April 2019, all schools have received a copy and it is the first in the country to whole a council wide approach -target vulnerable children to ensure all YP have a sense of belonging linked to five priority areas: Sense of belonging, SEMH and wellbeing, Transition and additional support to prevent breakdown in the sense of belonging in any learning environment. Please contact the virtual school directly if you require additional copies.

Role of the Designated Teacher in Post 16 Provision

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 looked after children who are on the school role. (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 at 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 role 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, Telford & Wrekin 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 Designated Teacher for looked-after children and previously looked-after children. Statutory guidance (February 2018)

- 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 role.

- 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; consult with school staff, social worker, and outside agencies to ensure there is consistent and effective communication within the network.
- Identify a key worker to 'hold them in mind' and support them as appropriate.
- Link regularly with the Virtual School for advice, support, and guidance.

Know the previous looked-after children as identified by parents/ guardians (parents/guardians are not required to disclose)

- Keep a register of previously looked after children.
- Ensure they are added to January school census, so they have access to the pupil premium plus.
- Ensure appropriate staff are aware on a need-to-know basis.
- Advocate for previously looked-after children; consult with school staff and outside agencies to ensure there is consistent and effective communication within the network.
- Identify a key worker to ‘hold them in mind’ and support them as appropriate.
- DTs can access support via the DT Network meetings available from T&W Virtual School as well as speaking with the PEP lead to access some 1-1 training.

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.
- Whole school approaches are in place to raise attainment.
- 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 looked after children 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: •

- Looked after children only have a current ePEP. 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.

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 Academies 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 looked after children 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.
- Ensure that the designated teacher:
 - contributes to a deeper understanding of looked after children and previously looked-after children 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.

Guidance: The designated teacher for looked-after children and previously looked-after children. Statutory guidance on their roles and responsibilities. February 2018

The Virtual School 16 Plus Service

Our service offers a spectrum of support according to need that can be defined as follows:

- Strategic monitoring and reporting to wider stakeholders
- Working collaboratively and alongside other key professionals and adults
- Supporting, challenging, and building capacity
- Direct work with young people in care/ care leavers
- Championing the voice of the young person
- A comprehensive offer of support, advice, and training to providers

We work extremely closely with Future Focus and Telford and Wrekin SEND in order to ensure young people have access to high quality Careers Information and Guidance. Referrals are made for young people in area as soon as it is deemed a young person is at risk of becoming NEET.

Intensive and extended one to one work to enable progress towards sustainable education, employment, or training (EET) is available, such as work with Smash Life and 1:1 tuition to close gaps in attainment.

Post 16 PEPs

The Personal Education Plan (PEP) is an evolving record of what needs to happen for Looked After Children and young people to enable them to make at least expected progress in line with their peers and to fulfil their potential. The PEP should reflect the importance of a personalised approach to learning that meets the identified educational needs of the student, raises aspirations, and builds life chances.

The PEP is the joint responsibility of the local authority and the education provider. Social workers, carers, VSHs, designated teachers and other relevant professionals work together to create and update the PEP. All those involved in the PEP process at all stages should involve the student (according to understanding and ability) and, wherever appropriate, relevant family members.

For students in years 12 and 13 we complete three PEPs a year (one per term) to ensure sufficient support is in place.

Termly PEPs

A PEP is the **statutory document** used when planning for the education of a looked after young person. All looked after children and young people 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 young person gets the support and provision needed to succeed.
- The views of the young person must be evidenced and used to inform the setting of targets.
- Targets should be young person specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and have clear timescales attached to them (**SMART**).
- The designated teacher leads on how the PEP is used as a tool in school (it is a live document) and monitor the progress towards education targets.

A young person 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. Where relevant, a PEP should occur alongside an EHCP review.
- A looked after young person should benefit from the interventions provided by their provision.
- Where pupils have had turbulent schooling, there will be gaps in understanding that must be identified and addressed in order to succeed.
- A looked after young person should be making progress at least in line with other pupils within the College, training provider or School, and nationally.
- Many looked after young people need to make more progress than their peers to ‘diminish the difference’ and attain at least expected standards.
- Any transition can be difficult for a looked after young person and should be planned for and actions documented.
- Always consider which adults the young person has a trusting relationship within the provision, 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 young person and young people.

****Please note: most sections of the PEP should be completed prior to the PEP meeting, including the voice of the young person if they are not going to attend the meeting. Please ensure that progress, attainment, concerns and proposed smart targets are discussed and obtained from subject teachers prior to the PEP meeting in order to ensure that targets and outcomes are as meaningful as possible.***

Collection of Attendance and Progress Data

Attendance and Progress Data will be monitored by the Virtual School through the PEP process, to enable us to support you in ensuring that our young people are attending their education, employment or training and making excellent progress. **We ask providers to submit weekly attendance data for our CiC to the Virtual School in box virtualschool@telford.gov.uk**

A excel spreadsheet is provided along with our Post 16 procedures.

Mental health and well-being

Children in Care and previously looked-after children 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 11-18. Schools may be asked to complete the teacher version for specific children at the request of the social worker.

For the POST 16 SDQ we ask the young person to complete this.

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 does not 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.

Guidance: Mental health and behaviour in schools. Departmental advice for school staff. DfE, March 2016

The Virtual School Team provide a variety of training packages including bespoke training to providers please contact us directly for further information virtualschool@telford.gov.uk

Supporting Care Leavers in Education, Training and Employment

[Support and advice - Post 16 and care leavers - Telford & Wrekin Council](#)

[Who is the local offer for? - Who is the local offer for? - Telford & Wrekin Council](#)

[Local offer to our care leavers - Telford & Wrekin Council](#) May 2023

The Virtual School work very closely with Personal Advisors, Social Workers, and Future Focus. For young people with an EHCP, the Virtual School will also work with SEND teams from the LA in which the EHCP is held to ensure statutory procedures are followed and that needs are met by the provision the young person attends.

Children's Services provide support for care leavers once they 16 to help them prepare for leaving care. Young people are allocated a Personal Advisor (PA).

Personal Advisors:

- Provide advice and support on a regular basis.
- Consider and participate in the Pathway Plan as this is written.
- Ensure that the Pathway Plan is being followed.
- Organise the services available to care leavers.
- Remain informed about progress and wellbeing.
- Provide housing options available when leaving care.
- Provide support in finding further education, employment, or training.

Personal advisers are now available to all care leavers up to the age of 25 years old, whether or not they are in education or training. It used to be the case that care leavers needed to be in education to get support between the ages of 21 – 25.

Care Leavers also have a pathway plan. A Pathway Plan will set out the support that you will be given once you have left care. This must be based on the needs assessment carried out. The plan should be prepared before a young person leaves care.

If a young person is at risk of NEET, or NEET young people also have an allocated Future Focus worker.

Care Leavers Covenant

The Care Leaver Covenant (CLC) is part of the government's keep on caring strategy to support people leaving care to become independent. It allows public, private, and voluntary sector organisations to pledge support, including:

- apprenticeships
- work experience
- free or discounted goods and services

All support given through CLC will help care leavers to make a transition to independence. This ranges from CV training to accommodation for care leavers in higher education. Every care leaver has a personal adviser who can provide information on CLC offers. CLC complements the offers that local authorities make to care leavers [Home - Care Leaver Covenant \(mycovenant.org.uk\)](http://Home - Care Leaver Covenant (mycovenant.org.uk))

Progression from Post 16/as a Care Leaver

There are a range of options for young people once they reach 18 – including Education, Training and Employment. This progression is important to consider as the young person approaches 18 and should be incorporated into PEPs.

Education

A young person may wish to remain or start at a college, where choices include a range of academic and vocational courses – for example, A- Levels, T-Levels, BTEC and Diplomas. Most colleges also now offer Higher Education courses to Degree level, to allow young people to study locally. If the young person has not yet achieved English and Maths Qualifications to GCSE Level 4/Functional Skills Level 2, support to achieve these qualifications will also be available. A young person may also wish to attend University, and the VST will provide support with this process, including support with UCAS.

Training

Traineeships are study programs for young people without level 3 qualifications to help prepare them for an apprenticeship or other sustainable employment where training is ‘on the job’. Traineeships should last for a minimum of six weeks and a maximum of six months.

The core aim of a traineeship is a high-quality work placement with an employer of between 100 and 240 hours, which is offered alongside work preparation training, and English and Math’s if required. Providers and employers can bring these elements together in the best way to engage and support individual trainees and to integrate other support and training, such as mentoring, careers guidance, vocational qualifications, and job search support.

The aim of traineeships is to support young people into apprenticeships and sustainable employment. Funding has been made available for providers to start or expand traineeship programs. Providers are encouraged to make more opportunities available in occupations where workplace learning is available and specific qualifications are not required.

Apprenticeship

Apprenticeships are jobs where young people can learn, gain experience and be paid for their work. By the end of their apprenticeship, they will have a wealth of hands-on experience and a formal qualification in their area of study. This is fully funded by the government and employer.

Supported internships.

Supported internships offer young people with an EHC plan an opportunity to develop the skills, experience, and confidence they need for employment. The core aim of a supported internship is a substantial work placement with the support of an expert job coach.

Alongside their time with the employer, supported interns complete a personalised study program that includes English and Maths, and the chance to study for relevant qualifications, where appropriate. Internships normally last for a year and include unpaid work placements of at least six months. The aim is to support the young person to paid employment at the end of the program.

Mencap' Supported Internship Program

Telford & Wrekin SEND were offered the opportunity to provide placements for Post 16 students to take part in a pilot project in partnership with Mencap. It's based on a national project called Interns and Outcomes that offers young people with a learning disability aged 16-24 the opportunity to get a practical work-based learning experience, thus providing a smooth transition from education to paid employment or further study. It provides the opportunity to be part of a Supported Internship in a business based within the Telford area.

The Internship program offers a range of benefits, it can help to raise aspirations, build skills and confidence, better understand employment and progress towards paid work. Any young person can find the world of work challenging so being able to provide support to the young person can help them to transfer skills that have been learnt in classroom to the world of work. It can help employers to see past the

young person's disability and helps the young person to learn valuable skills in a real work setting which can help to overcome any barriers that the employer may have.

- Each program is tailored to the individual needs of the young person and their career aspirations. It is a full-time study programme. Offers a long-term work experience placement.
- Enables individuals to learn the skills they need for work through practical on the job learning, they will be supported by a job coach.

- A flexible provision and can be delivered as an accredited or non-accredited provision.

The young person's needs are always kept centre on the program's goals, parents and carers are involved throughout the process and lots of support is provided to make the program work. The success of this project is based on the young person moving into paid employment, the skills and confidence that they gain and that they thrive with a newfound independence.

To find out more about this project: <https://www.mencap.org.uk/interns-and-outcomes>

Employment

Some young people may wish to enter straight into employment. The Virtual School will work with Personal Advisors to help and support young people access potential employers and job opportunities.

Preparing for future success

Transitions

Any transition can be challenging for looked after children 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 looked after children 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

Looked after children should be prioritised for programs and opportunities available at school.

University visits

Many Universities in the UK now offer specific programs and interventions for looked after children in year 7 and up. Education and training providers should support looked after children to engage in programs 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. [Information for professionals | The Children's Society \(childrenssociety.org.uk\)](#) [Resources & Publications | The Children's Society \(childrenssociety.org.uk\)](#)

Voice of the young person

As part of the PEP process, it is especially important that the voice of the young person is heard and captured in planning and decision making for their future. The views of the child/young person must be evidenced in the PEP and used to inform the setting of targets.

Unaccompanied asylum seekers

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking young person (UASC) have very specific needs. Planning their provision effectively may require the presence of interpreters and an understanding of their immigration status. Talking about this with young people can be difficult for both the young person and for those working with them, but it is essential that their future planning is discussed within this context.

Most ESOL Courses take place in FE Colleges, but in contrast to other courses offer a 'roll on roll off' program, with flexible intakes.

Financial support for UASC

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children do not receive cash support from the Home Office and 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.

When these young people reach legal adulthood at age 18, institutions must consider their immigration status. If the asylum claim is decided in their favour, the local authority must provide them with the same support and services as they do care leavers. As such, they continue to be eligible for a bursary as a student from a vulnerable group until they reach the upper age limit.

Where an asylum claim is not supported, the individual may not be able to stay legally in the UK. When asylum claims have been fully heard/the appeals process exhausted, an individual has no entitlement to public funds (with a few exceptions where the withdrawal of support would be seen as a breach of human rights). [The Separated Child Foundation - Home Refugee & Asylum Seeker Myth Busters | The Children's Society \(childrenssociety.org.uk\)](#)

Financial support

Students who are staying in full-time further education and are 16-19 would be entitled to the 16-19 Higher Education Bursary of up to £1,200.

[16 to 19 Bursary Fund: Overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[16 to 19 Bursary Fund guide 2023 to 2024 academic year - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Care leavers get a bursary to help with education-related costs if they are aged 16 to 19 and:

- studying at a publicly funded school or college in England - not a university
- on a training course, including unpaid work experience.

A publicly funded school is one that does not charge for attending it.

There's a different [scheme in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland](#).

If they are 19 and over, young people could also get a bursary if they are either:

- are continuing a course they started aged 16 to 18 (known as being a '19+ continuer')
- have an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP)

A bursary is money that the young person, or their education or training provider, can use to pay for things like:

- clothing, books, and other equipment for your course
- transport and lunch on days they study or

train There are two types of 16 to 19 bursary.

Bursary for students in vulnerable groups

Young people could get a bursary worth up to £1,200, depending on [circumstances and benefits](#).

Discretionary bursary

Young people could get a discretionary bursary if they need financial help but do not qualify for a bursary for students in vulnerable groups. The education or training provider decides how much they get and for what it is used.

If a learner is over 19, you will only be eligible for a discretionary bursary.

If a learner lives in Wales and travel to England to study, you should contact the local authority where they live to apply for Welsh EMA (Education Maintenance Allowance). They may also apply to your institution for a discretionary bursary. They cannot get a vulnerable bursary.

All students who live in England and travel to Wales to study and who meet the criteria for the bursary for vulnerable groups can apply. If you think this applies to a learner, you should contact your local authority in England to apply.

Further advice on cases such as these can be obtained from Sue Marston sue.marston@telford.gov.uk

Learners who go to university are entitled to the Higher Education Bursary of £2,000. Learners are encouraged to contact their school or college to find out how to claim the bursary.

If a learner is attending university, the Local Authority should provide accommodation and financial support during the holidays.

Universal Credit

Bursary funds awarded to a student should not form part of the UC assessment undertaken by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). How DWP treat any funding for education depends on whether the student is undertaking advanced full-time education. It is unlikely that 16- to 18-year-olds will be in advanced full-time education as they are generally on study programs at Level 3 or below.

However, if a student is in advanced full-time education, the position is slightly different. Any educational grant or award, such as the bursary fund, would be treated as grant income. However, the UC assessment excludes any grant payment intended to meet the cost of books and equipment or travel expenses incurred because of attending a course.

We do encourage institutions to provide support from the bursary fund by making payments in kind where possible. Institutions must not make bursary fund payments as regular payments for living costs. This is out of scope of the bursary fund and any such payments would be subject to the Social Security Amendment (Students and Income-related Benefits) Regulations 2000

Disabled Students' allowance

The [**Gov.UK information on higher education student finance**](#) can provide you with help regarding the support you may need in higher education they will also provide guidance and information on how you can make an application for The Disabled Students Allowance (DSA).

The [**disabled students allowance \(DSA\)**](#) may be available to help you with the extra costs you may incur. Applications for DSA should be made at least six months before the start of the academic year in which you commence your placement, or as soon as the student finance application service opens; this can vary each year.

To enable your well-planned transition to higher education it is important that you apply as early as possible.

Social care

If a young person is receiving social care support, and where this may continue, please discuss this with the social care representative and young person, which will support you when planning your transition into higher education.

Special Education Needs (SEN) or Disabilities (0-25 years)

SEN professionals must work closely with other relevant professionals involved in the child's life to ensure that the child's **Education Health Care** plan works in harmony with his/her **Looked After Children Care Plan** and **Personal Education Plan** so that it adds to, but does not duplicate, information about how education, health and care needs will be met. When referencing information contained within the EHC plan should only include relevant information to the child's SEN from the looked after children care plan. Where a child in care is being assessed for SEND it is vital to take account of information set out in their looked after children care plan and personal education plan. The Virtual School will also liaise directly with the SEND team and support in writing educational advice in relation to request for EHCP in addition to schools providing educational advice reports.

A considerable number of our SEND Post 16 children and young people are placed Out of Borough. Therefore, whilst Telford and Wrekin remain financially responsible, the authority in which the child lives holds the plan and is responsible for formally consulting. Please see further details on Belonging Regulations.

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 Telford and Wrekin Virtual School for Children in Care in the first instance.

Terminology from Social Care

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 HCPC 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 HCPC approved worker. Adoption social workers specifically working with Adopter's, recruiting, and supporting them during the process and as required after adoption order.
Independent Reviewing Officer	An HCPC 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.
Children remand – on 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 a number of 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.
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.
Looked After Children 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. T&W Council have to be told about a child's living arrangements.

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.

Useful Links

- Coram Voice; <https://coramvoice.org.uk/get-help/alwaysheard/>
- Children’s Commissioner; <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/help-at-hand/leaving-care-your-rights/>
- [Local offer to our care leavers - Telford & Wrekin Council](#)

- Promoting the Education of Looked After Children; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-the-education-of-looked-after-children>
- HE information and advice; <http://propel.org.uk>
- General Financial Entitlements information; - http://propel.org.uk/media/2648706/factsheet1_financial_entitlements_english.pdf
- National Youth Advocacy Service; www.nyas.net
- The Care Leavers Foundation; www.thecareleaversfoundation.org
- Bee U; www.beeu.org.uk
- Become; www.becomecharity.org.uk
- West Mercia Youth Offending Service; telford.team.wmyos@westmercia.pnn.police.uk

Notes for Designated Teachers