



Telford & Wrekin
Co-operative Council

Protect, care and invest
to create a better borough

Designated Teacher / Designated Lead Handbook for Children in Care and Previously Looked After Children



2023-2024

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Introduction

The role of the **Virtual School for Children in Care** is to champion the needs of Telford and Wrekin's looked after children and previously looked after children, wherever they may be placed. This is achieved through support, guidance and challenge to schools and other education providers, the local authority, and any other relevant partners to ensure these children have the best possible education. In addition, since September 2021, the VS Head Teacher extended duties encompasses advice support and guidance for Children with a Social Worker. [Virtual school head role extension to children with a social worker - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/virtual-school-head-teacher-extended-duties)

Telford and Wrekin Local Authority Virtual School is located within the Education & Skills Directorate and is part of the wider Children's Services. We are the Corporate Parent, meaning we advocate in the best interests of our young people, ensuring they are cared for and cared about as highlighted in the most recent Ofsted ILAC Inspection (Children's Services Outstanding, January 2020). We work as part of team around a young person and work closely with a variety of multi-agency key stakeholders. The Virtual School team is based at Darby House, Telford. The Virtual School holds a full list of all the Designated Leads and Teachers for all early years' provisions and schools where Telford and Wrekin children are on roll, both within Telford and out of county. We provide a variety of training to support education establishments further, including termly network meetings and an annual VS Conference which focuses on improving outcomes for our Children in Care.

As the Designated Teacher/Lead, 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.

We want to ensure you have support and advice when needed; the partnership between the Virtual School for Children in Care and designated leads/teachers is crucial 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 lead/teacher. However, we will always respond promptly if you need information which is not contained within this document. Our contact details are on the previous page. Together, if we **Dream, Believe**, then all our young people will **Achieve** positive outcomes.



Virtual School Head Teacher, Michelle Salter

Looked After Children (LAC)

Different terms are used to describe children/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.

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 (PLAC):

A previously looked-after child is one who is no longer looked after in England and Wales because s/he is the subject of arrangements order which includes arrangements relating to with whom the child is to live.

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.

Previously Looked After Children (PLAC)

Post looked after children include the following:

- Special Guardianship Order (SGO); Special Guardianship was introduced in December 2005 as a permanence option for children. 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.

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

Previously Looked After Children (PLAC):

To meet the needs of adopted children, a 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. Know the previously looked-after children as identified by parents/ guardians (parents/guardians are not required to disclose).

Key Points & Role 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 looked after children and previously looked after children. The Designated Teacher (DT) is a statutory role in school. It needs to be a qualified teacher who has completed the appropriate induction period (if required) and is working as a Senior Leader within the educational establishment.
- 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. 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 perform this duty.
- 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. Keep a register of previously looked after children and ensure they are added to January school census, so they have access to the pupil premium which is allocated directly to schools for PLAC.
- The DT needs to understand the role of social workers; the Virtual School; the carers; and how the function of the Personal Education Plan (PEP) fits into the wider care planning duties of the authority which looks after the child.
- 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 who have concerns about their child's progress at school.
- DTs can access support via the DT Network meetings available from T&W Virtual School.
- In addition, the VST led by Education Advisers provide bespoke CPD to schools and the VST PEP Lead & PEP Coordinator regular provide group and some 1-1 training re PEPS/ PEP portal. It is mandatory all new DTS receive the bespoke PEP training.

[Together 4 Children – For adoption, for family... we're Together4Children](#)

Our Young People

Advocate for Children in Care and previously looked after children; liaise with school staff, social worker and outside agencies including the Virtual School to ensure there is consistent and strong communication within the network.

Identify a key worker to 'hold them in mind'.

High Expectations and Aspirations

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 visits, trips, travel, visiting a diverse range of employers and having work experience opportunities.

Looked after children and previous 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.

Designated Teachers should ensure:

- 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.
- Monitor how research and training to raise the attainment of looked after children is impacting on school culture and practice, 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.
- Children in Care have a current Personal Education Plan (PEP). Ensure information about SMART targets are shared with colleagues in school as appropriate and high aspirations are set by all 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.

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.

Personal Education Plans:

A PEP is the **statutory document** used when planning for the education of looked after children. All looked after children must have a PEP as part of their overall care plan and this must be reviewed termly. When a young person comes into care, a PEP will be held within 20 days. For any school moves, a PEP will be held within 20 days, regardless of whether a PEP has already been held in the term.

- PEPs are completed on the Telford online portal. Some parts are completed prior to the meeting and other sections during/after the meeting.
- 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.
- Targets should be child specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and have clear timescales attached to them (**SMART**).

- At least three targets should be recorded.
- The targets must be achievable before the next PEP or contribute to a medium- or long-term target.
- The designated teacher leads on how the PEP is used as a tool in school (living document) and monitors the progress towards education targets.
- At PEP meetings, the previous PEP should be reviewed and, where relevant, a PEP should occur alongside an EHCP review.
- Children in Care should benefit from school-based interventions.
- There is a robust quality assurance model in situ and PEPS are RAG rated. If a PEP is graded as red, then the VST caseworker will have further discussion with the Designated Teacher - support is available to ensure PEPs are graded as green.
- 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.

Pupil Premium Plus

Telford & Wrekin Virtual School will allocate PPG+ funding each term on completion of the PEP which has been quality assured as green. The Virtual School recognise that, on occasions, exceptional funding would provide additional support. Should this be the case, please speak in the first instance to the Virtual School Caseworker or Head Teacher.

For additional information please see the T&W pupil premium policy available on the [virtual school website](#) [Virtual school for children in care - Telford & Wrekin Council](#)

Personal Education Plans:

Schools should use the funding to:

- Deliver key actions for the child/young person agreed in the PEP.
- Identify and narrow specific gaps in attainment/raise attainment.
- Provide additional or enhanced support and/or interventions, to improve educational outcomes.
- Provide support to extra-curricular or out of school hour's educational opportunities that will benefit the child's ability, interests, and motivation to learn.

Previously Looked After Children PPG:

A separate allocation of pupil premium plus is in place for children adopted from care or who have left care under a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) on or after 30th January 2005 or children who left care under a Residence Order (RO) or Child Arrangement Order (CAO) on or after 14th October 1991. The children must be recorded in the January school census or the alternative provision census with permission from the parent to disclose status. **This funding is not overseen by the Virtual School for children in care and is given to schools directly.** [Pupil premium: overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Attainment and Progress:

To support good life-long outcomes, it is vital that the attainment of looked after children is a focus. 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. Many looked after children need to make more progress than their peers to 'diminish the difference' and attain at least expected standards.

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](#)
- What works for Childrens Social Care [Supporting the education of looked after children - What Works for Children's Social Care \(whatworks-csc.org.uk\)](#)

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.

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 \(the-arc.org.uk\)](https://www.the-arc.org.uk)

Belonging:

The Belonging Strategy was implemented in April 2019 and all schools have received a copy. Telford & Wrekin is the first council in the country to develop a more consistent, borough-wide approach to include children and young people (CYP) with social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) needs. It will ensure all vulnerable YP have a sense of belonging linked to five priority areas: a sense of belonging; wellbeing and SEMH needs; effective early interventions; preparation for transitions; additional support to prevent school and setting breakdowns. Please contact the Virtual School directly if you require any additional copies of the Belonging Strategy.

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.”

The 2021 School Admissions Code requires children who appear (to the admission authority) to have been in state care outside of England, and who have ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted, to be given equal first priority in admission arrangements alongside looked after children (LAC) and children who were previously looked after by English local authorities (PLAC). The advice refers to these children as internationally adopted previously looked after children – “IAPLAC.”

School admissions code 2021 (publishing.service.gov.uk) [School admissions code - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-admissions-code-2021)

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, governing bodies, local authorities, schools' adjudicators, and admission appeals panels (December 2014, revised September 2021).

Monitoring Attendance:

Attendance – We pride ourselves as a Virtual School that the attendance of all CIC is consistently above national since 2018. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, our CIC attendance was in the top quartile nationally. Research demonstrates that better outcomes are produced when attendance is above 95%. Attendance reports are run weekly, and any anomalies are followed up with schools via the Senior Education Adviser.

Attendance must be reported to the Virtual School regularly - schools are to utilise the Telford and Wrekin School Portal to record attendance daily or at least weekly. **If you require a user to be set up with an account access rights, please provide kerriann.hughes@telford.gov.uk with a name and work email address.**

Monitoring Attendance:

This 'real time' data assists with tracking patterns of attendance and suspensions and in turn enables the Virtual School to tackle underachievement where it is linked to poor attendance. If attendance is below 95%, then an attendance target is set at the termly PEP and a clear action plan is devised by the school to improve attendance. Attendance reporting is also linked to the allocation of termly PPG+ funding allocation. The VS does not authorise holidays being taken in term time - please talk to the Virtual School for Children in Care if you are considering a request. For previously looked-after children, guardians and parents are responsible for monitoring attendance and school should follow usual procedures for all pupils. [Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance)

Suspensions and Permanent Exclusions:

Suspensions - should only be used as a last resort and if all other methods have failed. In Telford & Wrekin, suspensions are significantly below national for our Children in Care, and this is achieved through the following: close working partnerships with schools, early identification, assessments, and effective intervention to prevent situations reaching crisis point.

All our CIC are allocated a VST case worker, and every CIC is RAG rated weekly. Our expectations are noticeably clear, in that schools communicate with the Virtual School in the first instance if any of our CIC are experiencing any difficulties as there are a variety of support, training and intervention available to prevent exclusions linking to our belonging strategy.

A school can only permanently exclude:

In response to serious breach or persistent breaches of the school's behaviour policy; and

- a. 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. The 2022 DfE guidance states that '*In the case of a looked-after child or child with a social worker, the school and the local authority should work together to arrange alternative provision from the first day following the suspension or permanent exclusion*'. (Part 6 paragraph 92).

If a school is considering issuing to a CIC, please can the Designated Teacher/ School contact the Virtual School Head Teacher to discuss. If issued, there is an expectation that the local authority is informed immediately. A copy of the letter must be sent to accessandinclusion@telford.gov.uk and the virtual school caseworker copied in as well as sending to virtualschool@telford.gov.uk

The VS also needs to be informed and attend any re-integration meeting with the school following any suspensions.

Modified Timetables:

We expect all of our young people to have a full-time offer; it is their legal right to an education. In exceptional circumstances as per Telford & Wrekin Guidance distributed to schools in relation to MMTs, modified timetables for our Children in Care should be created in consultation with the Virtual School and Social Worker and reviewed every 6 weeks. All modified timetables require a parental signature. For Children in Care, this would normally be the Social Worker, but there is an expectation that the Virtual School agrees this prior to a Social Worker signing. The VSH has complete oversight of any MTT and any CIC who is placed on a MTT is reviewed regularly.

It is the responsibility of school at which the child is on roll, to consult with the VS regarding number of hours the child is receiving. We review all MMT weekly and expect to see an increase in the number of hours of education a CIC is attending.

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 and previously looked after children including those aged 16-18 who are registered at the school.
- 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 collaborate with the school leadership team.
 - Has appropriate professional experience and status to provide leadership, training, information, challenge, and advice to others.

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

Children in Care should be prioritised for programmes and opportunities available at school. Refer also to My Creative Track which was launched in the PEPS 21-22 which further develops cultural entitlement offer. [My Creative Track – A Pathway to Arts and Culture | Arts Connect](#)

University visits

Many universities in the UK now offer specific programmes and interventions for looked after children in year 7 and upwards. Schools should support looked after children to engage in programmes offered to raise aspirations.

Access to culture and leisure activities

The engagement in positive culture and leisure activities has been shown to positively impact on the educational attainment of looked after children. Involvement in clubs, sports, arts, and specific activities contributes to confidence, working with others and development of new skills. The VS also offers a variety of out of term activities, including a Y6 Residential to support transitions to Key Stage 3.

Whole school approaches Adopting a whole-school approach which supports 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 \(childrenssociety.org.uk\)](#)

Adults around Children in Care 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 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 Adopters, 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.

Early Years:

T&W Virtual School for Children in Care has an Education Advisor for early years and primary to offer to support all internal and external partners working with T&W’s Children in Care. T&W VSCIC’s aim is to promote the best quality outcomes for all pre-school and primary-aged looked after children through high quality PEPs and careful transition planning. PEP meetings should begin when a child in care starts to attend an early year’s educational setting and should take place once a term.

Early years PEPs should focus on identifying learning and development gaps and setting SMART targets, with the aim of ‘plugging’ these gaps to support the child to reach age-related or above age-related expectations and development goals. When eligible, Early Years Pupil Premium should be used to support with this process.

Children in Care or Previously in Care

Aged 3 or 4 are eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) as part of the PEP process. The Virtual School would expect providers and social care to identify (in the targets section) how the EYPP will be used to benefit the child's educational attainment or development needs.

Post 16 Education:

Children in Care: T&W Virtual School for Children in Care has an Education Advisor for Post 16 to offer to support all internal and external partners working with T&W's Children in Care. T&W VSCIC's aim is to promote the best quality outcomes for all post 16 children in care through high quality PEPs and careful transition planning.

16-19 Bursary: Looked after children attending Post 16 education are entitled to a 16-19 bursary worth £1200. It is often based on attendance and paid pro rata for part-time courses. Applications need to be made directly to the college or Post 16 education provider. Money is paid into young person's bank account and is intended to be used for travel and equipment to support education progress. Young people need to decide to declare their care status to access the bursary. [16 to 19 Bursary Fund: Overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-bursary-fund-overview) [16 to 19 Bursary Fund guide 2023 to 2024 academic year - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide-2023-to-2024-academic-year)

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.

A large number of universities will offer a non-repayable bursary specifically to students who are care leavers – see individual university websites. 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 assisted by a social worker and/or personal adviser (PA) to plan for their future and access appropriate provision through a pathway plan. This includes access to education, employment, and training.

Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND):

SEND professionals must work closely with other relevant professionals involved in the child's life to ensure that the child's **Education and 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, the PEP 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.

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 - 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, while 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 T&W Virtual School for Children in Care in the first instance.

- SEND COP June 2014- Updated April 2020 [SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/special-educational-needs-code-of-practice-0-to-25-years)
- SEND Review 2022 - [Special educational needs publication June 2022 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/108444/special-educational-needs-publication-june-2022.pdf)
- [SEND review: right support, right place, right time - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/special-educational-needs-review-right-support-right-place-right-time)

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.

[The Separated Child Foundation - Home](https://www.secfoundation.org/)

[Refugee & Asylum Seeker Myth Busters | The Children's Society \(childrenssociety.org.uk\)](https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/our-services/refugee-and-asylum-seeker-myth-busters)

School Interventions:

- Ensure staff are supported and trained to teach children with EAL (English as an additional language) 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 regarding the child's diet and changing for PE etc.

Pupil Premium Plus 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 the Learning Village. Flash Academy online learning EAL tool is also an option as is additional support could be available via the T&W Multi-Cultural Team.
- Provide a bi-lingual dictionary for the child and ensure they receive additional provision in exams where needed.
- Provide 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, and music lessons to build knowledge, skills and promote social integration.

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

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 the Special Needs and Disability Code of Practice 0-25 years) than their 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 Teacher for LAC & PLAC February 2018** [The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/682242/Designated_Teacher_for_LAC_and_PLAC_Feb_2018.pdf) **Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children – 2014 Updated 2018** [Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/682242/Promoting_the_education_of_looked-after_and_previously_looked-after_children_-_2014_Updated_2018.pdf)

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. Collectively, with the VST as a multi-agency approach, we can advise schools further to understand the impact that trauma, attachment disorder and other mental health issues can have on Children in Care and previously looked-after children and their ability to engage in learning. We can support the school to become “attachment aware/relational approach,” 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.

The VS offers, via the T&W CPD booklet (at a cost), a Youth Mental Health First Aider course to support schools further. The VS has a dedicated Educational Psychologist (0.4) to further support schools. Additional useful resources are available on the VS website [Useful links and resources - Emotional, mental health and wellbeing - Telford & Wrekin Council](#)

[Mentally healthy schools | Primary, secondary school, and FE settings mental health resources \(annafreud.org\)](#)

[Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) Updated July 2022

Attachment and Trauma Informed Practice

Telford & Wrekin Virtual School advocates for all school to develop and embed attachment and trauma informed practice in their settings. This is an approach that places relationships and connection at the heart of all we do, sees behaviour as a communication of need and then works to meet those needs.

The following useful links provide further details on the strategies and approaches that can be used to embed this approach:

<https://www.emotioncoachinguk.com/>

<https://www.annafreud.org/schools-and-colleges/resources/classroom-wellbeing-toolkit/>

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-evaluations for children aged 11-17. SDQs are conducted in the Spring Term and form part of the Spring Term PEP meeting. SDQs with a score above 12 will be ‘unpicked’, with next steps and appropriate interventions identified and put in place.

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 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) - 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 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 child'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.