



Designated Teacher / Designated Lead Handbook for Children in Care and VSH extension of duties



2025-2026

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Introduction

The role of the **Virtual School** is to champion the needs of Telford and Wrekin's looked after children (wherever they are placed), previously looked after children and children in kinship care arrangements. 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. The VSH extension to previously looked-after children grant has been consolidated into the wider Children and Families grant in 2025-26. This was to simplify the funding landscape for local authorities, consolidating smaller pots of funding into a larger settlement. The grant can be accessed here: [Children and Families Grant Determination 2025 to 2026: draft - GOV.UK](#)

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 \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

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. We are incredibly proud to have retained an outstanding judgment in the recent Ofsted ILAC Inspection (Children's Services Outstanding, April 2024 [50252260 \(ofsted.gov.uk\)](#) making us one of only a handful of councils to retain our outstanding rating. We are also the only 'Outstanding' authority in the region.

Our children and young people are our highest priority, and this latest report recognises that we put our young people at the heart of everything we do. In Telford and Wrekin, children have said that they 'feel cared about and that the adults in their lives are genuinely proud of them and their achievements'.

We work as part of a 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, Previously Looked After Children, children in kinship care arrangements and Children with a Social Worker.

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, this 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.

Meet The Team

Role
VS Head Teacher – Michelle Salter Strategic Lead SEMH Lead
Deputy Head Teacher (Children in Care) – Luke Baker
Deputy Head (VS Extended duties) – Suzy Rogers
PEP Lead- Sarah Summers Education Officer In Borough compulsory school age
PEP Coordinator/ Sports Lead- Curtis Tonks
PEP Support/ Tracking Officer Shannon Atkinson
Education Officer Out of Borough compulsory school age Events Lead – Sharron Jones
Education Adviser Early Years (2 years old upwards) Anita Farrant
Education Adviser In Borough compulsory school age CPD Lead Beth Fisher
Education Adviser Post 16 Lead Nick Cunliffe
Education, Employment, Training Officer Post 16 Team Suzanne Ellams
Education Officer – Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers Amy Shadbolt
Education Adviser Extended Duties Primary/ Arts Lead Zoe McLaughlin
Education Adviser Extended Duties Secondary/CSE Lead Rebecca Best

Children in Care (CiC)

Different terms are used to describe children/young people in care. The term 'looked after children (LAC), or 'children looked after' (CLA), are also used to refer to Children in Care. Telford & Wrekin have adopted the term Children in Care (CiC) after consultation with Voice Care Council.

Children in Care include the following:

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

Previously Looked After Children (PLAC)

Previously 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):

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.

Please see the following useful guide on meeting the needs of adopted and permanently placed children:

[Meeting the needs of adopted and permanently placed children – A guide for school staff; PAC-UK.](#)

Children in Kinship Care Arrangements

From September 2024 the remit of the Virtual School expands further to include championing better outcomes in school attendance, educational attainment and progress of children in kinship care. As a designated teacher you have responsibility for young people in kinship care and should be the main point of contact about issues relating to any kinship child's education.

Kinship care is when a child lives full-time or most of the time with a relative or close family friend, usually because their parents are not able to care for them. In the UK, there are more than 180,000 children in kinship care.

Grandparents are the most common kinship carers, but older siblings, aunts, uncles, and people who know the child well can also take on the role.

Kinship carers may also be referred to as 'family and friends carers' or 'connected people' by local authorities and in some documents.

The Designated Teacher may seek advice from the Virtual School about meeting the needs of children in kinship care, with the carers agreement.

Previously Looked After Children (PLAC) & Children in Kinship Care:

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, Headteachers and Designated Teachers to raise the attainment of children in care 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 Headteacher 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 children in care 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.
- Children in Care 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.
- 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.
- Previously looked-after children are the responsibility of the school they are on roll at and their 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. Schools should 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.
- 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 provide a range of bespoke CPD to schools which is led by Education Advisers. Furthermore, the VST PEP Lead & PEP Coordinator regularly provide group and 1-1 training regarding PEPs / PEP portal. It is mandatory for all new DTs to receive the bespoke PEP training.

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, high aspirations and expectations for children in care, children in kinship care arrangements, children with a social worker and previously looked after children to support their future success.

Having good educational attainment provides an opportunity for positive life outcomes. It is essential that the most vulnerable 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 vulnerable 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.

Children in care, children in kinship care arrangements, children with a social worker 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 progress 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 children in care, children in kinship care arrangements, children with a social worker 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 children in care 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 children in care, children in kinship care arrangements, children with a social worker 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

Personal Education Plans:

A PEP is the **statutory document** used when planning for the education of children in care. All children in care 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 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 will benefit from school-based interventions as detailed in their PEP.
- 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) and regular updates to the Virtual School including submitting daily attendance data. 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](#)

Pupil Premium Plus:

Schools should use the funding to:

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

Escalation Process:

Once the PEP is complete, we ask for plans to be completed on our online portal within three working days. If there are technical difficulties, or for any reason you will not be able to complete the PEP within this timescale, please get in touch with us and let us know, usually by emailing your Virtual School Caseworker. The following chart illustrates the process of escalations:

PEP takes place

(1-3 business days to complete and send to VST)



Day 4- The Virtual School Caseworker will send you a reminder email and copy in PEP lead & PEP Coordinator (Escalation 1)



Day 6- The PEP lead will send another reminder email, setting out the timelines that the PEP needs to be completed within (Escalation 2)



Day 10- A formal request will be sent by the Virtual School Headteacher if the PEP has not been received within 10 working days (Escalation 3)

Once the PEP has been received it will be quality assured (QA) by the Virtual School case worker within three working days. PEPs are rated Red, Amber or Green (RAG rated). If the quality assurance shows the PEP is not within our 'green' guidelines, we may reopen the pep and request revisions.



(Case Worker to send back to DT if revision is required)

DT to amend and resend back to VST (1-3 business days to complete and then PEP will be escalated again as per above timescales)



Once the PEP has been quality assured it will be uploaded to our portal. If you would like a copy of the quality assurance document, contact the VS caseworker.

In the following situations, The Virtual School reserve the right to amend PPG+ payments:

- 1) Quality Assurance (QA) of a PEP comes out as rated red eg. Costings are not listed as to how the PPG+ is to be utilised & targets are not deemed SMART.
- 2) PEP documents are consistently being chased in line with the escalation policy.

Support and Monitoring

We ask for Designated Teachers to provide us with regular updates on the young person or people at your school. This may be every week, fortnightly or every four weeks via email or telephone. How regularly updates are requested will be based upon our RAG rating of the young person. Please share any concerns you have around academic progress, attendance, behaviour or anything else of note.

If there are any change in circumstances or you have a concern about your young person, please notify your Virtual School caseworker immediately who will be able to provide support.

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](#)

Attainment and Progress:

To support good life-long outcomes, it is vital that the attainment of children in care 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. Children in Care are more likely to have low prior attainment due to their personal circumstances. We must always challenge targets based on low prior attainment, and the default position should be that pupils can and will achieve expected standards as a minimum. Many children in care 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 \(whatworks-csc.org.uk\)](#)
- Outcomes for children in need, including children looked after by local authorities in England, Reporting year 2024 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK
- New report reveals long-term outcomes for UK care-experienced children | National Centre for Social Research 2025

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 had an ambitious three-year plan that all education establishments are accredited through the Attachment Research Community (ARC). We are pleased the report that by the end of academic year 2025, all schools are now trained in relational practice level 1 and all our schools are on a journey of development. We all have several schools which are leading ARC hubs. We continue to purchase ARC 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 an 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.

We are proud that all Telford & Wrekin Schools have now been accredited for their Trauma Informed and Attachment Aware Practice and are now supporting more schools to Silver and Gold accreditation.

[Attachment & Trauma Aware approaches in education | ARC \(the-arc.org.uk\)](https://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 children in care 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 children in care (CiC) 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 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

This is replaced by the 'School admissions code 2021', which came into force on 1 September 2021. **Key changes include new provisions to support the in-year admission of vulnerable children and help reduce to a minimum any gaps in their education** [School admissions code 2021](https://www.gov.uk)

Local authorities may issue a direction to a maintained school and ask the Secretary of State/DFE to direct academies to admit children in care. 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.

Attendance must be reported to the Virtual School regularly - schools are to utilise the Synergy Schools' 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 virtualschool@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)

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 that schools communicate with the Virtual School in the first instance. If any of our CIC are experiencing any difficulties as there is 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 a suspension 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 (MTT):

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 VSHT 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. The Virtual School Team ensure a weekly audit of MTT is completed to ensure the above is adhered to.

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 children in care 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 children in care on roll.
- Governors, in partnership with the Headteacher, 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 children in care 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 children in care due to their previous experiences and separation from family. During a child's education life, there will be a number of significant transitions that need to be planned for, ideally over at least a 6-month period.

Career planning

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

Extra-curricular school opportunities

Children in Care should be prioritised for programmes and opportunities available at school. 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](#). In 2024-2025 in partnership with the Share foundation the stepping forward Arts programme was launched.

[Stepping Forward — The Share Foundation](#)

University visits

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

Access to culture and leisure activities

The engagement in cultural and leisure activities has been shown to positively impact on the educational attainment of children in care. Involvement in clubs, sports, arts etc contributes to a young persons' confidence, ability to work with others and the development 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 children in care 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 Children in Care’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 children in care 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 support to 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: Children in care, 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 the young person's bank account and is intended to be used for travel and equipment to support educational progress. Young people need to declare their care status to access the bursary. [16 to 19 Bursary Fund: Overview - GOV.UK](#)

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 the course from their local authority. [Higher education Activities and Resources - Care Leaver Covenant](#)

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 **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 care plan. Where a child in care is being assessed for SEND, it is vital to take account of information set out in their 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. [SEND - Local offer](#)

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 children in care.

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 \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- SEND Review Updated 2024 - [Special educational needs and disability: an analysis and summary of data sources](#)
- [SEND review: right support, right place, right time - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

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.

Many of the changes within the most recent data release [Children looked after in England including adoptions, Reporting year 2024 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#) can be explained by the large increase in unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) in recent years. UASC influence many of the changes seen in the figures as they are a distinct cohort with specific characteristics, for example they are generally male, aged 16+ years, with relatively short period of care.

[Unaccompanied asylum seeking children: national transfer scheme - GOV.UK](#)

[The Separated Child Foundation - Home](#)

[Refugee & Asylum Seeker Myth Busters | The Children's Society \(childrenssociety.org.uk\)](#)

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. **Designated Teacher for LAC & PLAC** [The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

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 Virtual School offers, via the T&W CPD booklet (at a cost), a Youth Mental Health First Aider course to support schools further. 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 \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[How we’re helping children and teachers with their mental health and wellbeing – The Education Hub May 2025](#)

Attachment and Trauma Informed Practice

Telford & Wrekin Virtual School advocates for all schools 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.

Attachment and Trauma Informed Practice for Schools Training:

Telford & Wrekin Virtual School offers free Attachment and Trauma Informed Practice Training for all in-borough schools. This training session is for all staff in a school community, whether they be teachers, learning support assistants, school meals supervisors, or taxi drivers. The training provides an overview of the impact of trauma and the key principles and strategies that work to support young people who may have experienced trauma.

This course aims to:

- Enable delegates to understand the key tenets of relational and attachment and trauma informed practice
- Explore the importance of strong relationships for young people who may have experienced trauma and how to strengthen these
- Understand the impact of trauma and how this may affect presenting behaviours.
- Enable delegates to understand behaviour as a communication of need.
- Demonstrate how to produce bespoke plans that support young people at each stage of emotional regulation.
- Enable delegates to explore strategies to help young people regulate.
- Help delegates understand what is meant by a restorative approach and how this can be used to support young people.

Learning outcomes

After completing this training delegates will be able to:

- Reflect on, develop and improve you own knowledge, understanding and practice in working with young people who may have experienced trauma.
- Describe the key tenets of attachment and trauma informed practice.
- Describe strategies that can be used to meet the needs of young people who may have experienced trauma.

The course is also accompanied by a pack of resources which can be used to support the school's development of attachment and trauma informed practice.

Duration: 1.5 hours

Cost: Free to all T&W LA Schools & Academies; £300 for Non T&W Schools

To book training please email virtualschool@telford.gov.uk for enquiries.

Telford & Wrekin Virtual School Bespoke CPD offer:

Telford & Wrekin Virtual School also offer bespoke training which can be tailored to your school. These sessions are charged at a rate of £300 for up to three hours (half day) and can also be delivered as a twilight session. We are continuing to add to our courses, so if you have a training need in mind, please contact us at virtualschool@telford.gov.uk and we will be happy to work with you to develop a training package or signpost you to existing training.

Please see below for details of our current package of training. All sessions are scheduled for a duration of approximately 2 hours as standard, however this can be flexible to suit the needs of your school.

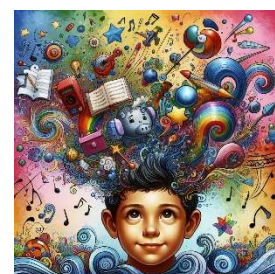
To book training, please email virtualschool@telford.gov.uk to request a booking form and to enquire further.

ADHD – What is ADHD and How Can we Best Support our Young People?

Learning objectives

After completing this training delegates will be able to:

- Understand and describe the three main presentations of ADHD in young people.
- Understand the route that leads to a diagnosis of ADHD for young people.
- Understand what a lived experience of ADHD is like for a young person
- Describe strategies that can be used to meet the needs of young people who may have ADHD
- Create a comprehensive support plan for a young person with and ADHD.



Emotionally Based School Avoidance

Learning objectives

After completing this training delegates will be able to:

- Understand the definition of emotionally based school avoidance.
- Explore the use of language around school avoidance.
- Be able to identify the common push and pull factors which can lead to emotionally based school avoidance.
- Use an assess, plan, do review cycle to identifying underlying need and provide the right support to young people with EBSA
- Create a comprehensive support plan for a young person with EBSA.
- To support staff to be skilled in supervising young mentors and understand best practice and how to effectively safeguard.



When Children Grieve: How we can help young people deal with death, divorce, pet loss, moving and other losses

Learning objectives

After completing this training delegates will be able to:

- Understand the common losses which can lead to grief in young people.
- Understand a definition of grief and spot the signs of this in young people.
- Be able to identify the common push and pull factors which can lead to emotionally based school avoidance.
- Understand the impact of six major myths around grief.
- Use key questions to review the relationships around loss and support incomplete grief in young people.
- Understand key things to say that will support a young person who is grieving and what to avoid saying.
- Understand and describe strategies to build relationships and support families who are grieving.



Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder:

The Hidden Disability

Learning objectives

After completing this training delegates will be able to:

- Identify the possible signs of FASD in a young person
- Explain how FASD differs from other diagnosis and attachment disorders
- Identify and explain the common barriers to learning for a young person with FASD.
- Understand the lived experience of a learner with FASD
- Understand the key principles behind a collaborative approach to working with learners with FASD and their families
- Describe and explain classroom strategies that support a learner with FASD.



Attachment styles: What are they and how do they affect classroom management strategies?

Learning objectives

After completing this training delegates will be able to:

- Understand the identifying features of each attachment style (secure, avoidant, ambivalent, disorganised)
- Describe some of the research which supports attachment theory.
- Understand the ways in which attachment styles will affect a young person's experience of the classroom.
- Describe and be able to apply classroom management and teaching strategies that support learners with different attachment styles.



Developing bespoke wellbeing support plans to support learners with complex behavioural needs

Learning objectives

After completing this training delegates will be able to:

- Understand the different stages of emotional arousal in young people

and the responses we may see at each stage.



- Describe and explain strategies and regulation techniques which support young people to stay calm.
- Describe and explain strategies and regulation techniques which support young people to when they are anxious or defensive.
- Describe and explain strategies and regulation techniques which support young people to when they are in crisis.
- Describe and explain strategies and regulation techniques which support young people to when they are in recovery.
- Explore different co-regulation plans, both simple and more complex which can support young people.
- Describe how a bespoke wellbeing support plan would be used in practice with young people.

Building Resilience.

Learning objectives

After completing this training delegates will be able to:

- Understand some of the theory behind Cognitive Behaviour Therapy.
- Understand the link between thoughts, feelings and actions.
- Identify and describe common thinking errors or traps.
- Understand how to support young people to identify their feelings.
- Explore and describe ways to help young people overcome fears and anxieties.
- Describe and be able to use evidence-based interventions with young people in a structured programme to build resilience.



Attunement and Co-Regulation

Learning objectives

After completing this training delegates will be able to:

- Understand what is meant by the terms attunement and co-regulation.
- Describe and explain the key principles of being attuned.
- Explain ways that we can demonstrate each of the key attunement principles as practitioners.
- Describe how schools can build attunement into a whole school approach.
- Observe co-regulation in action.
- Explore and apply practical co-regulation games and strategies that can support a young person



Inclusive Mentoring

Learning objectives

After completing this training delegates will be able to:

- To understand the role of a mentor within school and the benefits this can bring.
- To understand effective ways that young people can be trained to become mentors for others.
- Explore the barriers that can stand in the way of a successful mentor / mentee relationship.
- Describe models of best practice for implementing a school-wide inclusive mentoring system.
- To support staff to be skilled in supervising young mentors and understand best practice and how to effectively safeguard.



Supporting Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers in Educational Settings.

Learning objectives

After completing this training delegates will be able to:

- Understand what it means to be an Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker in the UK.
- To understand the barriers these learners may face when learning.
- To explore and understand some strategies that can support this group of learners.
- To know the process of an asylum, claim and the impact that an asylum claim can have on education.
- To understand what statutory DfE guidance means for best practice in schools and other educational settings.



Legal Terminology:

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

Care Plan: Care Plans set out what services will be provided to a child in care 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.

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill:

[The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill](#) was introduced in Parliament on 17 December 2024, and is currently before the House of Lords. This bill includes provisions related to children's social care, including strengthening the role of virtual school heads and requiring local authorities to publish their local support for children in kinship care.

Key points are:

- **Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill:**

This bill, which is currently undergoing legislative review, contains various provisions related to children's wellbeing, including those supporting children in care.

- **Enhanced Virtual School Head Role:**

The bill aims to extend the role of virtual school heads (VSHs) to include all children in need and those living in kinship care. VSHs play a crucial role in ensuring children in care are achieving their full potential educationally.

- **Local Authority Responsibilities:**

The bill mandates local authorities to publish their local offers for kinship care and to ensure they provide support to care leavers through "Staying Close" initiatives, helping them find and maintain accommodation.

- **Kinship Care:**

The bill seeks to define kinship carers in law and requires local authorities to offer families a group decision-making meeting before considering taking a child into care.

- **Improved Support for Care Leavers:**

The bill emphasizes the need for ongoing support for care leavers, including assistance in transitioning to adulthood and independent living.

- **Focus on Well-being:**

The overall focus is on improving the educational, social, and emotional well-being of children in care, ensuring they have strong, loving relationships and access to appropriate support services.

Other key points:

- The bill also includes provisions on school attendance, free breakfast clubs, and limiting branded items in school uniforms.
- It also aims to strengthen safeguarding measures for children in care, including regulations on the use of agency social workers and the establishment of a single unique identifier for children.

- The bill also includes provisions regarding the pay, conditions, and curriculum at academies.