

Virtual School

Annual Report 2024

Welcome from the Virtual School Management Board

As the new Chair of the Virtual School Management Board, I welcome the opportunity to introduce Gloucestershire County Council's Virtual School Annual Report (2023 – 2024).

The past year has given rise to many challenges for the Virtual School and for colleagues in schools, social workers and all those working for and with our young people who experience living in care.

The Virtual School Management Board noted the improvements in performance highlighted during the 2022 OFSTED review and commends the drive by the Virtual School leadership to continue the journey to secure an overall grading of "Good." There has been a continued focus on quality assurance of children's education planning and a relentless focus on reducing inconsistency last year the Virtual School introduced new elements to the Personal Education Plan (PEP) one being 'Remarkable Me' which allows children and young people the ability to capture one of their achievements of their choice in each PEP. The management board were pleased to hear about this new element which supports the county approach to 'Every Story Matters'.

The Personal Education Plan meeting has continued to discuss in depth any school attendance issues that may be impacting on children in care and the management board approved the Virtual School's new attendance policy, launched in January 2024 and the revised attendance plans within the PEP.

There has been a keen focus on working closely with schools and social care colleagues to stabilise the number of placements and school moves faced by children and young people. Additionally, the leadership team have worked to reduce the number of social workers a young person may be allocated, stabilising the situation of the young person, and increasing chances of progress made in school. The Virtual School has had an audit of school moves in the academic year which has led to refining the school move protocol, which we will monitor as a board in the next academic year.

The Virtual School will see its remit expand once more in September 2024 and the board has heard how they are developing their Toolkit on-line to support the wider group of professionals they are now working alongside.

To conclude, the Virtual School has a clear understanding of the challenges faced and is actively seeking and implementing solutions to enable our young people to thrive.

Yours sincerely

Claire Greatbanks

Chair Virtual School Management Board

Gloucestershire

County Council

Virtual School Annual Report 2023-24



1.0 Head Teachers Foreword

As Head Teacher of Gloucestershire's Virtual School, I am delighted to introduce our 17th Annual Report outlining how we have been supporting our Children in Care to achieve their best learning outcomes. We are a dedicated education team committed to supporting the Children's workforce and to champion the education of Gloucestershire's Children in Care and previously in care as a shared, strategic priority.

In February 2022 Gloucestershire County Council were inspected by OFSTED. The outcome of the Inspection has deemed that Children's Services are now Requires Improvement.

We are on an improvement journey to support our children in care with their educational progress. The Virtual School was referenced in the report:

Children make good educational progress in care with support from the virtual school. Children's personal education plans (PEPs) provide a strong sense of children's voices, and this helps to shape appropriate action that is making a positive difference for children. However, the quality of PEPs remains mixed and many are weak. Although the format has improved, and quality assurance is established, the head teacher at the virtual school is clear that there is still areas to improve to bring all plans up to the standard of the best.

Team stability has been a key factor for our Virtual School. The team is a group of education professionals who are determined to support and champion the education of our vulnerable learners, who have experienced many changes in their lives. We are an 'all through' Virtual school. Education advisors are extensively trained, so that tutor groups can consist of children from early years through to Post 16.

We are extremely proud of the progress our children have made, both in their social and emotional development and educational achievements. There are many positive stories about how our young people overcame adversity and have made gains in personal achievements in education. We have continued to collaborate closely with our ambassadors to ensure that our schools and education settings embrace using Language that Cares in the writing of reports and EPEPS and this has been a significant drive this last academic year.

The ambassadors provided the VSMB with a presentation about the difference that significant adults have with their educational success last year and we continue to learn from their lived experience in planning for our Virtual School plans. We are developing our PEP plans in the next academic year to include improved formats for Post 16 and to further embed 'Every Story Matters'.

We know our schools well and strive to create plans collaboratively that are supportive and enabling for our young people to provide the best learning environments. The academic year we focused on improving the quality of the Personal Education Plans and returning the PEPS that did not meet standard to the schools to be rewritten. We accepted PEPS that were ambitious for our children to improve their educational outcomes.

We have delivered an extensive training and development programme via Designated Teacher/ DSL days. We have also seen an increase in demand for the Trauma training we offer for whole school or MAT training. We continued to offer designated teacher training, with a hybrid approach using face to face and a virtual environment throughout last year for Designated Teachers to support Children in care and previously looked after children. We trained more than 3000 professionals last academic year, without including the funding we released to schools for whole school training.

We have continued to work to ensure that the education of Children in Care is a high priority across the local authority and that all professionals understand the potential difficulties Children in Care may face. We collaborate with our colleagues in social care on our improvement journey and our role is to make sure we offer high quality support in education matters and appropriate challenges where needed. This acknowledges that education is a significant protective factor. Education for young people will provide a pathway out of poverty, increase social mobility and life chances. As good 'Corporate Parents' we will always strive to ensure that Children in Care have the best educational opportunities available.

We are not complacent and recognise that further improvements with our work are needed and to remain ambitious for our children is critical. We are aware that we will continue to support and challenge with school attendance this year, as for children in care this dropped 0.3% in comparison with the previous year and in comparison with all students in Gloucestershire there is a 3.5% difference for school attendance; the difference for students identified as children in need to all students in Gloucestershire is 5.9% and for those on child protection it is 13.5%

We need to work in closer partnership with our educational settings and social care colleagues, this is essential to improve the planning of children's education. We have identified the need to prevent school moves. We have used a protocol for all school moves outside of the normal transition times. This should help to prevent the number of Children missing education and prevent disrupting children's learning. We work closely with the IRO team to ensure the school move protocol is being used consistently. Audit have investigated our use of the protocol, and we have improved our processes for 2024-25.

Improving the quality of the Personal Education planning is also critical if we are to continue to improve educational outcomes in the future. We have recognised and identified that there is a considerable number of Children in care who are persistently absent.


Jane Featherstone. Virtual School Head Teacher, September 2024

2.0 Executive Summary

2.1 The Executive Summary provides details of the key performance headlines for over time. There was no statutory reporting in either 2020 or 2021 due to the impact of Covid-19 leading to tests and examinations being cancelled. A comprehensive performance dashboard for the Virtual School is attached.

2.2 For reporting purposes, both to the Department for Education (DFE) and internally, the progress and performance of Children in Care of Gloucestershire County Council is based on those who have been Looked After continuously for a minimum period of 12 months on the 31st of March.

Early Years Eligible Cohort (In Care for at least one year by March 31st, 2024)

Exam Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Number of students achieving expected levels	4	7	10	No statutory reported outcomes due to Covid	No statutory reported outcomes due to Covid	7	12	9
Percentage of cohort achieving expected levels	24	29	56	No statutory reported outcomes due to Covid	No statutory reported outcomes due to Covid	35	36.4	50 

Key Stage 1 Eligible Cohort (In Care for at least one year by March 31st, 2024) *Key Stage 2 SATS no longer a statutory assessment from September 2023.*

Exam Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Number of students working at expected levels	3	2 (From NCER data)	1	No statutory reported outcomes due to Covid	No statutory reported outcomes due to Covid	1	6	6
Number of students working at expected levels	23	25% (From NCER data)	12.5	No statutory reported outcomes due to Covid	No statutory reported outcomes due to Covid	4.5%	33.3	33.3

Key Stage 1 SATS are no longer a statutory measure. This cohort have been impacted by disrupted early years education due to the pandemic.

Key Stage 2 Eligible Cohort (In Care for at least one year by March 31st, 2024) SATs not held for students in Welsh education placements. (1 student in eligible cohort 2024)

Exam Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Number of students achieving 100 Scaled Score in all areas	5	11	7	No statutory reported outcomes due to Covid	No statutory reported outcomes due to Covid	10	8	10
Percentage of cohort achieving 100 Scaled Score in all areas	21.7	30.6	23.3	No statutory reported outcomes due to Covid	No statutory reported outcomes due to Covid	35.7	33.3	35.7 
Number of Students making good or better progress	7	19	16	No statutory reported outcomes due to Covid	No statutory reported outcomes due to Covid	16	10	18 
Percentage of Students making good or better progress	30.4	53	53.3	No statutory reported outcomes due to Covid	No statutory reported outcomes due to Covid	57.1	41.7	64.3 

18 children achieved good progress which is 64.3%. There is no specific area that student have to focus improvement interventions upon as the majority of students came into care after Year 2, we do not have their KS1 SATs results on our records and are reliant on school predictions. We had 3 students from the eligible cohort who did not sit the SATs as they were working below the level of the test and one student working at above expected levels who did not sit SATs as they attended a school in Wales where the SATs are not statutory assessments. This reinforces the significance of the need for robust and accurate PEP recording, so that bespoke offers are available for Children in care.

The progress of children in writing and mathematics was constantly kept under review and interventions reviewed accordingly. We introduced 'Maths Whizz' in 2022 and are now also using the literacy intervention programme 'Stepsweb' for relevant children. We have offered this intervention to year 1- year 6. We have approximately 80 children actively engaged with this intervention. Schools continue use Pupil Premium Plus for the numeracy and literacy as a priority need.

Key Stage 4 Eligible Cohort (In Care for at least one year by March 31st, 2024) reporting cohort
(Unvalidated outcomes for 2024 pending data release in October to schools and April for the Virtual School Cohort)

This data is based on the eligible cohort and includes students who did not sit GCSES in year 11. This is a consistent longitudinal methodology The Virtual School has used for years. It gathers the data from the start of year 10 using teacher assessment and /or when they came into care.

Exam Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Number of students achieving Grade 4+	2	2	6	7	18	4	13	15
Percentage of cohort achieving Grade 4+in English and Maths	6	4	12.8	12	28.6	8	17.1	23.04↑
Number of Students making expected or better progress	23	18	19	15	25	13	13	39↑
Percentage of Students making expected or better progress	70	33.3	40	26	39.7	41	17.1	60↑

Attendance for the Reception to Year 11 cohort

2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
90%	93%	93%	92.6% until the 20 th March 2020	86.5% from the 8 th March 2021	92.1%	89.7%	89.4%

We monitored children's attendance during Covid-19 and the pandemic. The percentages of children in care engaging with education was high, but could not be recorded as school attendance across the cohort.

School Attendance for the Children in care cohort in 2024 continues to be a concern as a considerable number of Children in care were persistently absent for a variety of reasons: illness, school moves, suspensions, disrupted attendance on entry to care.

The data for last academic year 2023-4 and correlation to placement moves has been investigated once more by audit. Audit have recommended a series of actions that Social Care and Virtual School are undertaking to reduce school moves. There were 83 children who had a school move, 15.7% of the cohort.

We now track as much as we are able Children known to Social Care for attendance. The children's school attendance is lower than children in care's and we have a significant focus on this. We use the vulnerable children's data base, but there are gaps in the collated data.

School Attendance Data for cohorts:

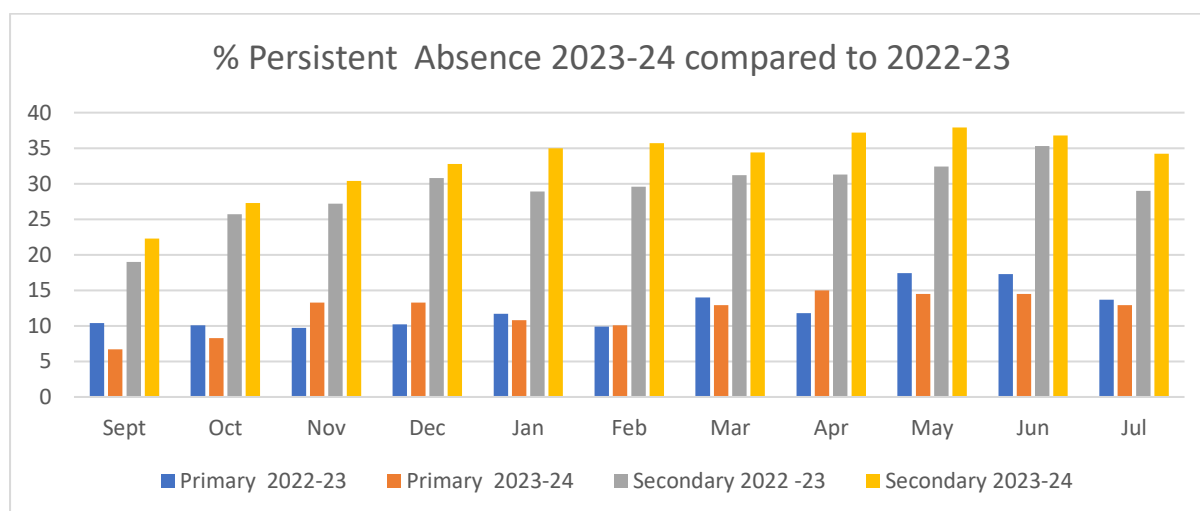
Children in Need 89.58% (WITH MISSING DATA 89.44%)

LY 87.3% (WITH MISSING DATA 79.89%)

Children on a Plan 89.25% (WITH MISSING DATA 89.42%)

LY 87.2% (WITH MISSING DATA 76.382%) +

Children in care with Persistent absence is a focus for us as this also needs to improve.

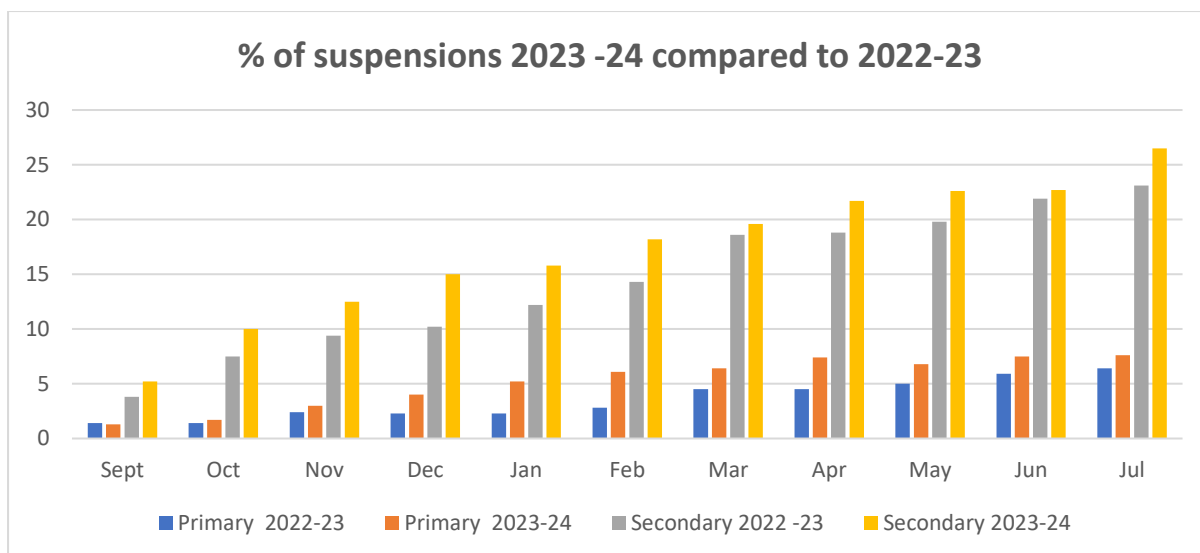


Percentage of Students in the Reception to Year 11 cohort who have experienced a suspension

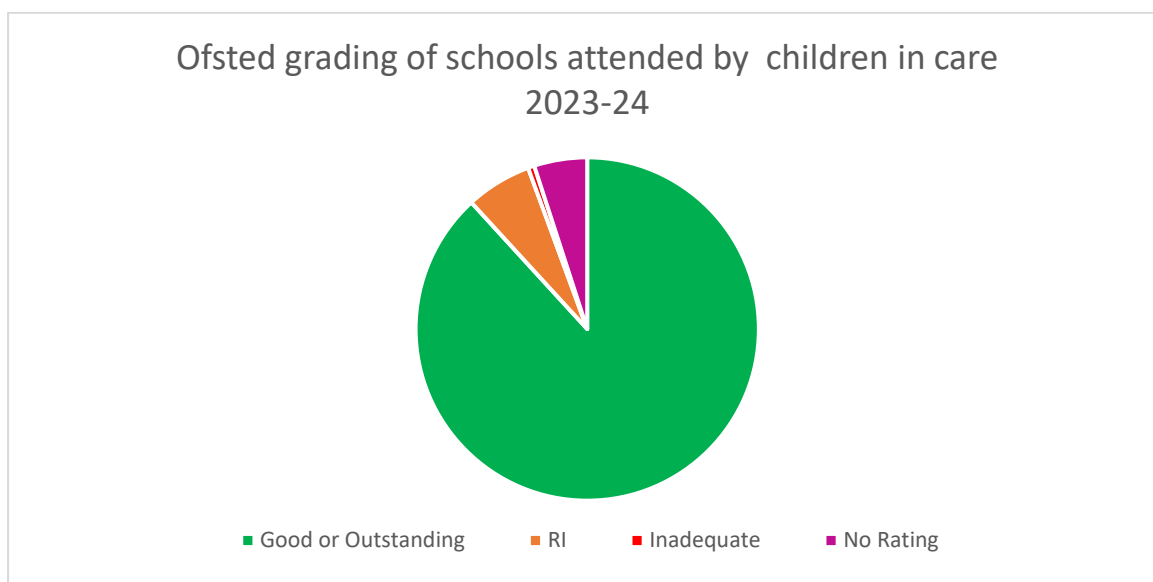
2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
16%	13.5%	16%	12.1%	14.9%	14.9%	14.9%	16.4%

Suspensions and exclusion % have increased by 1.5% from the previous year and remains too high. This % breaks down into 87 students with suspensions.

The Child in Care Protocol to rescind a permanent exclusion was used ten times last academic year. We are seeing an increase in the use of the protocol given the size of the cohort and we managed to use it with out of county schools last academic year, which was a positive measure to prevent a Permanent exclusion. This means that since the Virtual School began in 2007, no Gloucestershire child in Care has experienced a permanent exclusion. The graph below illustrates the trends over the last two years and evidence that the highest numbers of suspensions are at secondary age.



Percentage of students in schools within each Ofsted Category



	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Good or Outstanding	85	80.4	71	73.6	72.7	80.4	82.1	88.2
RI	10	12.4	14.8	16.2	12.8	4	5.5	6.2
Inadequate	2.5	7	3.7	2.8	1.3	3.1	1.3	0.6
No Rating (New Academy)	2.5	0.3	10.5	7.4	13.2	12.5	11.1	5

It is the practice of the Virtual School to place children in a good or better setting whenever possible. Exceptions might include where a child is attending a good school and making good progress, but it

dips in a subsequent inspection. Attainment and progress are reviewed by all professionals at PEP meetings.

Numbers of Children attending Alternative Provision Schools.

All Children are expected to be in full time education unless there is an extremely specific reason for a short-term variation. This discussed at the PEP, so that all agree.

Return to mainstream is always discussed at the PEP meeting unless the child is in Year 11 and to move during Key Stage 4 would be disruptive to the child's educational progress.

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Number of students	35	24	15	13	21	19	32	20
Percentage of cohort	7.8%	5.1%	3%	2.9%	4%	3.6%	4.9%	3.9%

Number of children who have had the Children in Care (CIC) protocol used to prevent a Permanent Exclusion

The CIC protocol is used to rescind a permanent exclusion if the Head teacher and Governor of the school agree along with the social worker and the parent. The Virtual School Inclusion Lead attends the meeting and if all agree the Exclusion is fair and lawful, it is rescinded, and the LA takes on the responsibility of sourcing education. We have seen an increase in protocols in the last academic year, and this is reflective of the increase in suspensions and permanent exclusions in schools locally and nationally.

Year	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Number of CIC Protocols	16	4	10	7	6	5	10

Numbers of Care Leavers at University

The Virtual School works in partnership with The Peter Lang Children's Trust to celebrate new University Starters. Young people receive a bursary from the Trust to support them with university.

2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
33	29	24	17	24	27	34	27

Personal Education Plans

Personal Education Plan meeting rates were high in 2023-24, with a notable improvement with the completion and return rates of the plans from education settings.

Summative figures of Reception and school age children's PEP returns since 2017.

2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
94%	95%	98%	97%	99%	83%	95.7%	96.89%

Y2023-2024 Number of CME CIC who are not attending education.

The number of children in care who are without a school place has been recorded below as a monthly figure and a percentage of the cohort. The Virtual School holds a CME and EHCP meeting to secure a school place. As a result of successful working, there were no directions made last academic year.

Month	Sept 2023	Oct 2023	Nov 2023	Dec 2023	Jan 2024	Feb 2024	Mar 2024	Apr 2024	May 2024	Jun 2024	Jul 2024
Number of students	7	16	16	15	9	10	13	9	12	14	13
Percentage of cohort	1.4	3.1	3.1	2.9	1.7	1.9	2.5	1.7	2.2	2.6	2.9

The financial year 2023-24 saw the continuation of Pupil Premium Plus allocation which is driven by the needs of the young people. We have seen a significant rise in requests for social and emotional and mental Health spends since the pandemic in the last three years.

		Learning	SEMH	Attendance
2016- 2017	Total Spend	£739,087.00	£130,886.30	£7,200.00
	% Spend	84.3	14.9	0.8
2017-2018	Total Spend	£908,400.00	£90,500.00	£14,700.00
	% Spend	89.6	8.9	1.5
2018-2019	Total Spend	£774,436.03	£412,927.19	£21,617.50
	% Spend	64.1	34.2	1.8
2019-2020	Total Spend	£809,879.48	£437,332.55	£10,830.00
	% Spend	64.4	34.8	0.9
2020-2021	Total Spend	£955,478.77	£381,474.79	£20,722.50
	% Spend	70.3	28.1	1.5
2021-2022	Total Spend	£768,994.31	£622,069.37	£19,697.76
	% Spend	54.5	44.1	1.4
2022-2023	Total Spend	£826,831.95	£577,958.42	£40,501.08
	% Spend	56.9%	39.8%	2.8%
2023-2024	Total Spend	£820,064.32	£653,855.37	£56,122.20
	% Spend	52.4%	41.8%	3.6%

A small 2.2% of Pupil Premium Plus has been utilised to employ a member of staff in the Virtual school as the PEP support officer. The impact of this role was reported in last year's Virtual School annual report 2022-23. The work is now integral to the continuing journey to improve PEP quality.

Our Pupil Premium Plus supports identified needs that are recorded in the PEP. We have a Pupil Premium Policy which explains how it is used which is on the Virtual School website.

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/vschool/personal-education-plan-pep-and-pupil-premium-plus/pupil-premium-plus/>

3.0 Outline of Gloucestershire's Virtual School

3.1 The Team

The Virtual School is an experienced and dedicated specialist team, all of whom have an educational background. The retention concerns that have arisen over the last year were due to having fixed term contracts. The majority of the team are now permanent but there is a need to recognise that some posts are reliant upon Department for Education grants which provides a challenge with longer term planning. There is succession planning underway as next academic year will bring changes to the team due to retirement needs.

3.2 Virtual School Extended Duties

In 2018 the Virtual School duties were extended to support children who are adopted, who are subject to a Special Guardianship Orders or a Child Arrangement Order with education matters. This has led to the extension for a further year for a Virtual School Education Adviser who supports children who have experienced care. This post is fixed term until Summer 2025. This has involved different types of support:

- Supporting families of children previously in care; support services such as adoption agencies and fostering agencies; schools and increasingly from other professionals
- Reactive support including around funding, SEMH needs, SEND and admission requirements.
- Producing a termly newsletter which is shared with GCC schools and other professionals.
- Updating the Virtual School website so it is up to date.
- Meeting with the regional representatives from the other 5 Local Authorities who fall within Adoption west geographical area.
- Follow up with families and be a source at the other end of the phone/email.
- Caseloads are increasing from 16 cases in 2019, an additional 58 in 2020, 30 new cases for 2021 and currently 36 new cases for 2022. Last year the previous post holder supported 50 young people and their families.
- We are seeing an increase in the number of requests asking for the support of this post holder each year. During 23/24, there was an additional 46 new cases asking for advice, guidance and support from our new postholder.

Kinship Care

From September 2024 the Virtual School has a new responsibility to support children and young people in 'kinship' care. We are developing resources to support this cohort and we as a team will provide advice and guidance when requested.

The Virtual School has statutory responsibilities to every Gloucestershire Child in Care and previously looked after children whatever their age. This includes eligible post-16 children (who remain 'Children in Care'), and giving advice, information and guidance for relevant or former relevant young people (who are 'care leavers'). The Virtual School will, like any school, take an interest in, and support those responsible for the transition of children into education, employment, or training, beyond Post 16.

Gloucestershire's Virtual School Supports Children in Care falling into the following categories and the definitions are as follows:

'Children looked after' - a child is looked after by a local authority if they have been provided with accommodation for a continuous period of more than 24 hours, in the circumstances set out in sections 20 and 21 of the Children Act 1989 or is placed in the care of a local authority by virtue of an order made under part IV of the Act.

Previously looked after children (previously-LAC): are those children who are no longer in the care of a local authority in England and Wales because they became subject to: an adoption order; a special guardianship order (SGO); or a child arrangements order (CAO). For children adopted outside England and Wales, the child must have been looked after by a public authority, a religious organisation, or other provider of care whose sole purpose is to benefit society. Where parents are

unable to provide straightforward evidence of their child's status, designated teachers will need to use their discretion (or could discuss eligibility with the VSH).

Care Leaver: A person who has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14, and who was in care on their 16th birthday. A young person's status as a care leaver can be divided into the following:

- **Eligible Child:** a young person who is 16 or 17 and who has been looked after by the local authority for at least a period of 13 weeks since the age of 14, and who is still looked after.
- **Relevant Child:** a young person who is 16 or 17 who has left care after their 16th birthday and before leaving care was an eligible child.
- **Former Relevant Child:** a young person who is aged between 18 and 21 (or beyond if being helped with education or training) who, before turning 18 was either an eligible or a relevant child, or both.

Note: Children and Young People in Gloucestershire have requested that they are referred to as 'Children in Care', the acronym LAC is not liked or appreciated by our young people, and we respect their views.

The Virtual School's role has been extended to support all children in Gloucestershire with a social worker. This role follows the recommendation from the 2019 CIN review. The Virtual School Head role will now include enhancing partnerships between agencies and the local Authority to support children with a social worker to engage in education and to narrow the attainment gap.

3.2 Extended Remit Children with a Social Worker

This remit, which supports children with a social worker, offers advice, support and guidance to schools and social worker linked to the educational needs of these young people.

We have utilised this funding in a variety of ways. We have funded laptops for all young people in Year 9 and 10 on CP plans.

We have also conducted 2 projects. One was to look at ways to improve school attendance in primary aged pupils. Due to small cohort sizes, the impact data was difficult to judge, but favourable improvements were made when offering therapeutic support. Therefore, a project is running in 2024/25 for several schools to offer drawing and talking training to see if this will show a significant impact.

The other was to focus on developing storytelling skills for our younger CWSW through offering Talk for Writing training. Over the course of the year, this was monitored. In all cases, the children's ability to oralise their own stories increased significantly with large improvements in the use of connectives, similes and adjectives and storybook phrases.

We funded all schools with children in care full access to ARC and extended this to all Gloucestershire schools who had CWSW on role. Due to time constraints and workload pressures, this had limited impact and will not be repeated next academic year.

However, we feel the most impact came from the training offer we delivered (which is mentioned in more detail within this report.)

4.0 2023/24 Virtual School Roll

4.1 The charts below provide an overview of the number of Children in Care supported by the VS during 2023/24.

Number of Pupils on Roll by Year (Reception to Year 11)

Reception	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Total
34	40	32	35	39	47	37	44	47	83	71	93	602

By Gender

Male	Female	Other
330	271	1

Year 11

Male	Female	Other
55	37	1

Year 6

Male	Female	Other
21	16	0

Number of learners with SEN support

K	EHCP	None
151	158	293

Year 11

K	EHCP	None
16	28	49

Year 6

K	EHCP	None
11	9	17

Number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children by year group

Year Group	Number
7	1
9	2
10	8
11	12
Total	23

Number of pupils forming the cohort of having been looked after for 12 months on 31st March

- 409 children who are eligible (Reception – Year 11.)

Numbers of Pupils educated out of Authority (Data from June 2024)

- 145 children. (28.2%%)

5.0 Performance

5.1 Context

Children in Care can be amongst the most vulnerable of learners. Many have had a disrupted education before coming into care, poor attendance, school moves, multiple exclusions, and elective home education.

Children coming into care late in their secondary school journey may have significant learning gaps. Many will have suffered trauma and have attachment difficulties. Attachment difficulties and trauma impact neurological development. This in turn has an impact on many of the skills needed for good learning.

Children in Care will inevitably suffer from a sense of loss whether this is due to being removed from birth family or bereavement, or they may feel quite different to their peer group due to their circumstances. This often leads to low self-esteem, which again can impact on confidence and the willingness to try new experiences and challenges. A key part of our work is to ensure that the education provided to Children in Care takes appropriate account of these factors in providing a bespoke approach suited to their needs.

Children in Care also experience changes in foster, residential and care placements which can affect their schooling. This has been evidenced as a factor that impacts on outcomes by the research undertaken by the Rees Research Centre *(The Educational Progress of Looked After Children in England: Linking Care and Educational Data 2016).

5.2 Analysis of Year 11 outcomes

The Key Stage 3 Data indicated that within our Year 11 eligible cohort, with optimal conditions including school and placement stability, 15.4% could achieve Grade 4+ in English and Math's.

Our eligible cohort achieved 23% this year.

The numbers in care are small and this increase of 7.6% represents five children in care.

Applying the Rees Formula, from Oxford University: the formula builds in the mitigation factors that being in care can have upon attainment.

Of the unvalidated pupil data obtained in 2024, fifteen children in the eligible cohort achieved Grade 4+ in English and Maths, which equates to 23% of the cohort. Of the 15 children, all had stable school placements during secondary school.

25.6% Year 11 students were moved home placements to out of county homes. The Virtual School has supported social workers sourcing mainstream schools for those without EHCPs and worked closely with SEND casework teams from other LAs for those with EHCPs.

87.8% of Year 11 of had either a placement or school change during their secondary education, which caused disruption in learning.

13 Year 11 students have been placed in independent or supported living during Year 11. (15.9% of the cohort) were accommodated in this way. This is an 8.6% decrease in percentage from the previous year.

The number of social workers involved with Personal Education Planning for each child is a concern, the average number of social workers per child during Key Stage 4 is 2.2, however this has improved from 2.7 the previous year. This change in social workers undoubtedly has a detrimental impact on learning; if the social worker does not know the child's needs well, he/she is unable to contribute accurately to the education plan and the outcome for a child.

Where there is more stability in planning for entry to care, stability in placement, and stability with the social worker and school, Children in Care make significant educational progress. We are working on a joint protocol with Social Care colleagues to ensure that care planning takes full account of educational needs and that disruption to education is minimised. In our eligible cohort we had 15.4% (10) of our children who had stability in their school and placement during secondary school, this is an improvement of 2.2% compared to last year.

We are incredibly pleased with the results of our young people who made expected or better progress (60%) We have 3 young people in our eligible cohort who just missed gaining a grade 4 in English and Maths.

We have continued to have high aspirations for our children and young people. We have refined all protocols to help reduce factors that are impacting such as the disruption a school move can create. Our School Improvement Plan identifies the interventions and the steps we are taking to address any barriers our children may face in their education.

Year 11 Destinations – the cohort from the Summer 2024

In the summer term, the CIC PEP discusses Education, Training and Employment plan for Year 12. Pupil Premium Plus is used to source relevant resources in readiness for the next steps.

Education, Training and employment	82
Re-engaging with Education	16
NEET	10
Working	3

5.3 Post 16

Previously from April 2019 the Virtual School had a dedicated post to support and oversee the Personal Education Plans of Children in Care in education for Post 16. This academic year we moved

to an all through Virtual school and this has made a significant difference in ensuring that those young people in Education Post 16 have a Personal Education Plan meeting. 96.63% of the Post 16 PEP meetings took place last academic year and PEPS were returned from the schools as completed and held on their file.

Summative Post 16 PEP figures since 2018

(No data before September 2018, as there wasn't a post holder.)

PEP compliance at Post 16

Feb 2019	3.9%
July 2019	96%
July 2020	99%
July 2021	99%
July 2022	75%
July 2023	94.08%
July 2024	95.39%

The Virtual School has moved to an all through tutor group system from September 2023, so all the team have training that focuses in supporting young people in care with Education, Training, and Employment pathways. We work closely with the Post 16 lead in the county. College and schools, alternative providers, the providers, the Care Leavers NEET Leads to ensure that we are offering support, advice and guidance and are supporting education pathways. We are using Pupil Premium Plus Grant to support young people transition back to education to reduce NEET, which we introduced as part of initial pilot we were involved with.

5.4 University

- There are 5 care leavers due to start university in September 2024.
- We currently have 27 care leavers at university

6.0 Overview of Virtual School Activity (2023-24)

6.1 Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

This year has been successful in terms of quality of PEPS and the quantity of PEPS returned. We have designed our own in- house quality assurance tool for this year which neatly matches our EEP format.

6.2 Bespoke training

We offer a variety of training sessions for the workforce who support children in care or children with a social worker. This has significantly increased in the last academic year. The details are in the additional information below. It is a priority on our Virtual School Improvement plan.

6.3 Training Plan summary.

In the document 'Promoting the Education of Children with a Social Worker June 2022', the DFE clearly states that the role of the VSH should be:

- making visible the disadvantages that children with a social worker can experience, enhancing partnerships between education settings and local authorities, including with children's social care, to help all agencies hold high aspirations for these children.
- promoting practice that supports children's engagement in education, recognising that attending an education setting can be a crucial factor in helping to keep children safe from harm.
- levelling up children's outcomes and narrowing the attainment gap so every child can reach their potential. This will include helping to ensure that children with a social worker benefit from support to recover educationally from the impact of the pandemic.

One of the ways we at the Virtual School have decided to approach this and make visible the disadvantages that all vulnerable children, including those in care or previously in care, those with a social worker or those with SEND needs have, is to develop a high quality and cohesive training plan to support schools who support these young people. This vision allows us to support our schools effectively both now and, in the future, through the following actions.

Training Plan

We have produced a training plan with a mix of face-to-face and online training sessions. <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/2125225/aut-23-sum-24-virtual-school-training-flyer.pdf> The online sessions, run by a select range of training providers, take place directly after school and are used by many schools as part of their annual staff meeting and CPD programme.

The need to support all young people with SEMH SEND needs has been a key feature running through our 23/24 training plan and the topics covered are linked to delegate feedback. The impact on children of parental mental health, self-harming behaviours, a multi-agency training day about living in the modern world and meeting unmet attachment issues have seen a huge sign up from our Gloucestershire settings.

All online sessions are recorded, and settings can request access to these films as we work to develop this training resource. Details of this can be found on our website. <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/vschool/training-toolkit/>

A significant amount of investment has been used to deliver face to face training as well and we are now recording these sessions to continue to develop a toolkit of training resources and appreciate the geographical and financial barriers that many of our settings face in attending face to face training.

In 23/24, 3538 delegates from across the county accessed our training and we already have nearly 600 signed up for the 24/25 available courses.

We also noticed that some professionals in schools who support vulnerable and often dysregulated young people are support staff and do not have as much access to training as their teaching colleagues. We have delivered a variety of face-to-face training sessions to these staff on subjects such as emotion coaching, building resilience, trauma and attachment and understanding ACES. We have also invested in the creation of a series of short 10-minute bitesize training videos for all professionals, but the size of these films means they become more accessible for all staff, including our invaluable support colleagues.

The following bitesize training clips are available:

- 6 videos on emotional based school non-attendance
- 4 videos on the impact of trauma
- 2 videos of Post 16 pathways
- 1 video on Post 16 PEP guidance
- 2 videos for previous children in care aimed at parents and schools/social workers.
- 1 video on the changes to kinship care
- 1 video on mid-year school admissions
- 1 video on supporting ESOL/UASC students.
- 1 video on solutions circles
- 1 video on identifying and supporting children to mitigate the impact of parental imprisonment.
- 4 videos to support mental health.

The series of videos on the emotional impact of school attendance, trauma, Post 16 pathways, school admissions and supporting UASC students have embraced our multi agency partnership and ethos to deliver the SEN Code of Practice mantra of 'Tell Me Once.'

All of the films are available through the toolkit

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/vschool/training/training-toolkit/>

7.0 Support for Specific Groups

7.1

The Virtual School aspires to ensure that all our CIC and young people have an educational plan that is bespoke to them and meets their needs. Within our cohort of learners there are students who have additional learning vulnerabilities, and we have cohorts which may receive offers of support which are pertinent to their needs. These categories are the types of interventions we frequently see on the EPEP.

Tuition
Educational Resources
ICT resources
Extra-curricular support and wider outcomes such as school trips, visits and clubs
In class support

Counsellor / Mentor
Vocational and extended learning
Therapy, Nurture and social skills
Rewards and Incentives
Transition
Small Group Intervention
Educational Psychologist assessment
Preventing exclusion and promoting inclusion

7.2 Promoting Literacy and related projects.

The Virtual School runs a range of programmes to improve literacy.

- Imagination Library** - We have continued to engage with the scheme called 'Imagination Library'. This programme aims to encourage and nurture a love for reading. We send out books to children in care each month up until the age of five. There are currently 381 active children on the programme. We have 635 children that have graduated. (Graduated children are the children who have reached the age of 5 years old. They will have only received the books from the time they came into care.)
 We have extended Imagination Library to children with a social worker last year and are pleased that 108 children have also been in receipt of the programme. It is slightly more complex as we must work differently to deliver this service, but it is crucial that we are encouraging children known to social care at this early age to engage with and develop a love of reading. As a team, we send monthly mailshots to all relevant social workers to promote sign up to The Imagination Library. This includes an information poster containing a QR code for easy access. This sign up has been slow with a small flurry of requests after each mail shot but those accessing this free service is less than 30% of all children who are eligible for this scheme. We also email relevant schools and nurseries with the same poster every term to encourage sign up directly with the parents/carers.
- Letterbox** - We also run the Letterbox scheme, which we have been running since the Virtual School started in 2007. This is for years 1, 3, 5 and 7. This is a 6-month project where a parcel of books and learning materials is sent through the post to the child's home to support their learning. This averaged as 153 each month as numbers fluctuate. The cost is £149.36 for each child, and this promotes learning at home.
- Praise strategy** - The Virtual School saw continued and increased use of praise for progress, we actively encourage schools at the EPEP to add in incentives for young people to encourage progress whether it is for attendance, educational targets or another area that needs to be celebrated. The Peter Lang Trust continued to send a bursary to care-leavers starting at university.
- Promoting Play**- The Virtual school has continued to work with Play Gloucestershire this year. The Designated Teacher Day in the summer promoted the value of 'Play' and its holistic benefits. The Virtual School held a 'Play Day' on the national celebration of Play in August 2024.

7.3 Partnership working:

The Virtual school has been working with GROWS, a collaborative network of six Gloucestershire based universities and colleges. GROWS aims to raise aspirations and awareness of Higher Education options.

Overall, the Virtual School's work with GROWS is a fantastic way to help and support looked after young people who aspire to pursue higher education.

Gloucestershire University hosted The Virtual School's 'Star Awards' in January 2024. The students also had an introduction talk to pathways for Higher Education. The Star Awards celebrated all students who achieved qualifications in Year 11 and those young people who have started at university. The event is financially sponsored by The Sedbury Trust. Students who began at university received support from The Peter Lang Trust and received a £500 Peter Lang Trust bursary.

There has been continuation (Year 2) of The 'Wheels in Motion' project. Following a successful bid from the Virtual School to The Sedbury Trust for funding, 96 Post 16 learners have received a bike. A bid was made successfully for post 16 in education who are in need of a Bike to travel to school or for recreational purposes. The young person discussed this in their PEPS 2023-24 and chose the bike that they wanted. Virtual school, Raleigh and The Sedbury Trust have worked in partnership to issue a Bike, helmet, and lock to the young person.

Fostering Support

The Virtual School works closely in partnership with Fostering. The Virtual School regularly contributes to the fostering magazine and is in regular communication with the fostering team. This academic year the Virtual school has recommissioned the EPEP to incorporate 'Every Story Matters' so that it now captures Life story work. We have been pleased with the progress in this area.

Unaccompanied Asylum seeking Children (UASC)

Prospects training services.

As part of a DfE Project which started November 2018 to improve educational outcomes for UASC/YP Prospects Training Services set up a roll on roll off ESOL accredited course. This legacy work is the result of the DfE UASC pilot work which ran until the Summer of 2020. It has increased ESOL provision for UASC in Gloucestershire. As a direct result of the UASC pilot work, the Virtual School now has a permanent UASC transitional Learning Mentor Post to support UASC when they start education and with their schooling.

The demand for ESOL courses for UASC is in high demand and the Virtual school is collaborating closely with partners to facilitate the need which continues to grow.

Bridge Training developed and ran a successful UASC course for the first time from February 2024. This has been popular and has a waiting list for places.

Post 16 Pupil Premium Plus has allowed the Virtual School to offer more resources and provision for such partners including training for the whole service and learning resources for young people.

Development of the video toolkit resource has also seen us collaborating with colleagues from various agencies including NHS, EPS, Prospects, Admissions, CAMHS and Ambassadors.

8.0 Key Priorities for 2023/24

The School Improvement Plan with five priorities for Gloucestershire's Virtual School is identified at the beginning of this report with the 5 priority Strands. We also report to the VS management board which is multiagency to ensure that we are addressing the needs of our learners.

8.1 Governance

VS management Board was established in 2020. This strategic group meets three times a year to discuss relevant themes and key performance indicators.

The improvement priorities and themes for the Virtual school management board are to ensure the following:

- The Personal Education Plans are completed and returned & Personal Education Plans are good quality.
- Pupil Premium Plus is used to support disadvantaged children in care to make educational progress
- The Management Board will act as a support and challenge mechanism for the schools that children in care attend and the Virtual School. It will communicate key messages to schools with Children in Care as an outcome of its meetings.

8.2 Working with Social Care

An admission to care panel has been established by Gloucestershire County Council. The Virtual school attends the meeting and receives weekly minutes about the meeting and are given notification of children who are due to come into care.

Conclusion

The Virtual School team work closely with partners to ensure that the educational progress of this vulnerable cohort is a key focus in decision making. We are committed to ensuring we champion to allow the children to thrive in their learning. Our decision-making processes remain child centred and we continue to be ambitious for our children and young people.

Additional context to the Annual Virtual School Report.

The Role of the Virtual School Head (VSH)

The Children and Families Act 2014 requires local authorities in England to appoint at least one person for the purpose of discharging the local authority's duty to promote the educational achievement of its Children in Care (CiC). The Virtual School Head (VSH) - must be an officer employed by the local authority or, where local authorities agree to collaborate or share the role, another local authority in England.

The VSH is the lead responsible officer for ensuring that arrangements are in place to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of the authority's Children in Care, including those placed outside the home authority's boundaries.

Gloucestershire employed their first VSH in 2007, before the role was statutory. It was recognised that the concept of a 'Virtual School' would be beneficial and allow tracking and monitoring of CiC outcomes.

Since its inception the VS in Gloucestershire has developed to include other vulnerable learners beyond CiC. For 9 years we have had Education Advisors who support 'Previously Looked After Children' (PLAC). Since September 2018 we have been supporting PLAC and Post 16 in education is part of the extended duties of the VSH. From 2021 the Virtual school has been supporting all children with a social worker.

Our Virtual School is set up to mirror a school. Our caseloads are called tutor groups. We try to support schools through a dedicated Education Advisor (EA), where possible. Equally we take the child's needs into account, and it may be that sometimes the EA knows the child very well and may stay with the child during a school transition before handing over to another EA who supports the school.

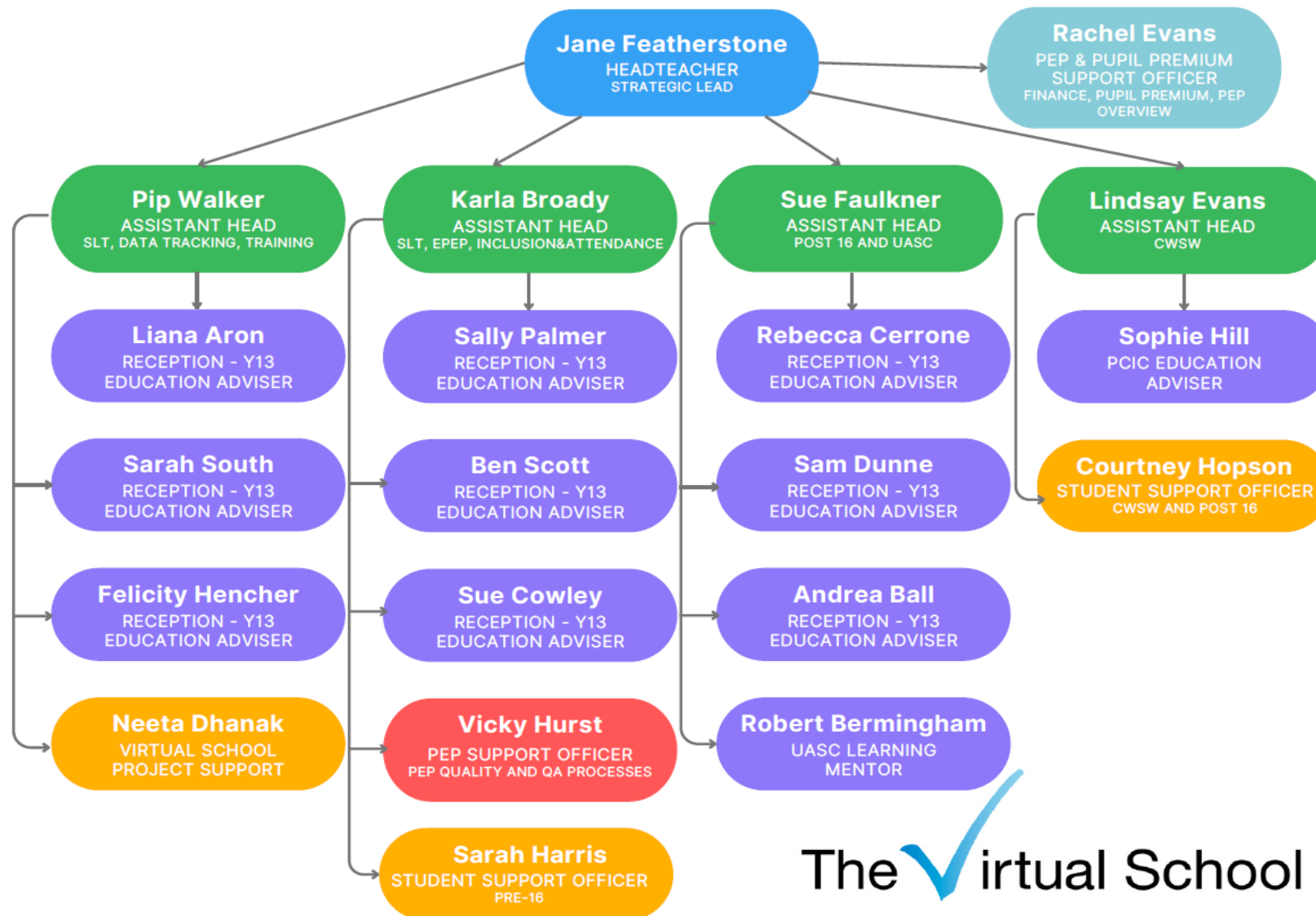
Our Priorities for 2024-25 are clearly set out in our school improvement pages. There are 5 strands that we are addressing this year and the data within the report will illustrate why these are the chosen strands.

Virtual School Priorities 2024-25

OBJECTIVES FOR 2024- 25	
Achievement gap issues	The Virtual School needs support in the schools and settings to improve the progress of children in care and children with a social worker. These vulnerable learners who have suffered adverse childhood experiences need quality first teaching and schools that are trauma informed to ensure that the educational gap with peers is narrowed.
Objective 1	Improving the educational progress of all Children in care and levelling up the progress of children with a social worker.
Objective 2	Improving the quality and consistency of all Personal Education Plans (PEP) and distributing of Pupil Premium Plus in a timely manner. To ensure that the transition plans for children in care are high quality.
Objective 3	Reducing the percentage of children who have attendance under 90% and those who are persistently absent. To collaborate with partners to mitigate school attendance concerns that may have been caused by school moves by ensuring there are robust attendance plans.
Objective 4	Improving inclusion of all Children in care and children with a social worker. To reducing suspensions and to continue the use of the CIC protocol.
Objective 5	To provide high quality training for schools and education settings to ensure the workforce are skilled in developing good quality Personal educational plans and are trauma informed.

This report will evidence some of the activity in the previous academic year which the Virtual school team have been leading / been involved with.

Jane Featherstone.
September 2024



Virtual SCHOOL'S SIP 2024-5

Priority 1- Progress.

Problem (why?)	Intervention Description (what?)	Implementation Activities (how?)	Implementation Outcomes (how well?)	Final Outcomes (and so?)
<p>To improve progress of Children in care.</p> <p>Children in care at all key stages need better educational outcomes.</p> <p>In some previous years except 2021 and 2023 Gloucestershire's CIC attainment outcomes have been below their statistical neighbours.</p>	<p>What are the essential 'active ingredients' of the intervention?</p> <p>Children in care receive quality first teaching from the schools they attend. The Personal Education Plan for all Children will discuss their progress and needs for core skills and tutoring for core subjects will be prioritised.</p> <p>Children in care are expected to have applications for OFSTED graded 'good' or 'outstanding' schools to support them reach their full potential and make good or better progress. The Virtual School OFSTED criteria protocol prevents applications to Requires improvement schools without full consultation and agreement with all partners.</p> <p>What activities and behaviours will you see when it is working?</p> <p>All Personal Education Plans will focus on their quality and will have a clear focus on academic data and a plan to improve progress.</p> <p>All UASC have a PEP within 20 working days of PNL</p> <p>All UASC with an agreed age assessment are swiftly placed on roll of a school, college, or training provider. (Where this is not immediate possible because a range of interventions are offered – informal tuition session with V UASC Learning Mentor, GARAS opination sessions, VS online learning offer (linked to school age PP+ funded laptops)</p>	<p>How will it be done?</p> <p>Schools will be actively encouraged at the PEP meetings to request PP+ funding for tuition.</p> <p>Monitoring and focus from the Virtual School regarding students' progress. Quality assurance audits of EPEP's will focus on attainment data. (Manuel exercise currently.)</p> <p>Pooled PPPG that remains will focus on the area of need for primary schools based on the data from last academic year.</p> <p>Schools that continue to provide good, completed PEP documents which have progress data will receive the VS annual award logo and letter from the VS. Those schools who have shown good use of co-creation of PEPS and evidence 'Remarkable Me' from children and young people will receive the Virtual School pin.</p> <p>The VS will develop their own QA online tool this year.</p> <p>What blend of activities are required?</p> <p>Virtual School team meetings to focus on supporting children in cares progress.</p> <p>EPEP meetings to discuss progress</p> <p>PPP spends to continue to focus tuition and core subjects spends.</p> <p>Support and challenge will be activated where children are not making adequate progress. (See Priority 5 – Training.)</p> <p>VS UASC Learning Mentor attends all new to care PEPs and works alongside social workers and education provider to ensure swift transition to education and training.</p>	<p>How will you know that it is working?</p> <p>Improved quality of the PEP process and the recorded EPEP with a clear focus on progress.</p> <p>Increased completion in detail of the academic data in the EPEP.</p> <p>More PPP requests for learning as a % spend.</p> <p>PEP QA reports.</p> <p>Short term</p> <p>QA of the PEPS each term will show Tutoring & Learning requests.</p> <p>Statutory School age UASC – 95% on roll of schools</p> <p>POST 16 UASC – 90% on roll of education provision.</p> <p>Medium Term</p> <p>Indications of progress for individual children and progress will be evidenced in termly provision maps.</p> <p>Statutory School age UASC – 100% on roll of schools</p> <p>POST 16 UASC – 95% on roll of education provision.</p> <p>Long Term</p> <p>Reduction in numbers of NEET careleavers reduce and education attainment increases in line / or above our statistical neighbours.</p> <p>(55% ETE care- leavers)</p>	<p>How will pupils, Designated teachers and the school benefit?</p> <p>Increased outcomes will be beneficial for all Children in care and will improve life chances.</p> <p>Increased training and strategies for Schools will increase their overall results.</p> <p>The VS will be in line with its statistical neighbours.</p>

Priority 2- Improving PEPS.

Problem (why?)	Intervention Description (what?)	Implementation Activities (how?)	Implementation Outcomes (how well?)	Final Outcomes (and so?)
<p>To improve the quality of all PEPS for Gloucestershire CIC. OFSTED identified in February 2022 that some of the PEPS were weak and there is a need for greater consistency.</p> <p>The Virtual School reports back every month to the GCC improvement plan regarding data for compliance of new to care and this is also an area that needs improving, to hold a PEP within 20 days of entering care. We have devised our own Quality assurance this academic year and will be running various moderation and quality assurance exercises throughout the year to ensure PEP quality is good or better.</p>	<p>What are the essential 'active ingredients' of the intervention?</p> <p>The Personal Education Plan for all Children will discuss their progress and needs, and attainment is tracked, and improvement plans can be made accordingly.</p> <p>The VS has commissioned in and now holds a contract for an EPEP which was implemented April 25th, 2022, to support the improvement and to drive out inconsistency in PEPS. The EPEP will have annual revisions to improve its quality.</p> <p>2023-4 saw the introduction of 'Every story matters' opportunities which adds evidence that will support children with life story books.</p> <p>Attendance Plans and Transition plans within the PEP are scrutinised through regular QA sessions to ensure cohorts needs are understood and planned for effectively.</p> <p>The re-commissioning of an EPEP is due this academic year and will need to contain all the elements that have supported the improvements seen with Gloucestershire's PEP system.</p> <p>What activities and behaviours will you see when it is working?</p> <p>All Personal Education Plans will improve in their quality and will have a clear focus on academic data and a plan to improve progress. EPEPs will be returned within time frames and there will be an increase in Quality of PEPS and returned and completed PEPS that meet the standard. The PEP will further develop to be a lived experience document with evidence of celebration and progress evidence for Every Story matters (ESM) moments. (Remarkable Me)</p>	<p>How will it be done?</p> <p>Quality assurance audits of EPEP's will focus on attainment data.</p> <p>Quality Assurance audits will continue, and the ESM will be audited in the summer term 2025. (Remarkable Me)</p> <p>Schools that continue to provide good, completed PEP documents which have progress data will receive the VS annual award logo and letter from the VS. A pin badge will be awarded to DT's who have supported Remarkable Me throughout PEPS.</p> <p>The Post 16 PPP will be further developed and adapted for this academic year.</p> <p>What blend of activities are required?</p> <p>Virtual School will provide on-going EPEP training to all partners to increase familiarisation.</p> <p>EPEPs that do not meet the standard will be returned to schools with information about how to improve them.</p> <p>The Virtual School management board will be provided with a list of schools who have not returned PEPS on a regular basis even after this has been escalated.</p> <p>The quality assurance of PEPS will invite partners in Summer 2025 to be involved in the quality assurance exercise using our new audit tool.</p>	<p>How will you know that it is working?</p> <p>Improved quality of PEPS with a clear focus on progress.</p> <p>Increased completion in detail of the academic data in the EPEP.</p> <p>Increased number of PEPS use the ESM section of the EPEP.</p> <p>Increase of the number of PEPS that are accepted as meeting standard and filed. (July 2024 = 96.89%)</p> <p>Short term</p> <p>QA of the PEPS each term will show improvement. Numbers that meet standard will increase. 96%</p> <p>Designated Teachers are returning PEPS within 2 weeks of the meeting and fewer PEPS are returned for non-compliance.</p> <p>Return in 2 weeks to increase, rather than an end of term influx.</p> <p>QA of the PEPS each term will show improvement. Numbers that meet standard will increase. 96%</p> <p>There will be no inconsistent weak PEPS from any education setting. Narrative will use Language that cares in PEPS and academic data will be present.</p> <p>QA of the PEPS each term will show improvement. Numbers that meet standard will increase. 96%</p>	<p>How will pupils, Designated teachers and the school benefit?</p> <p>Increased quality of PEPS and more compliance with new to care compliance for PEPS. (Sept 23-July 24): 83.13%</p> <p>All PEPS have used Every Story Matters, and the lived experience of children will be captured via the PEP.</p> <p>Higher % of PEP returns. Sept 23-July 24 96.83%</p>

Priority 3- Improving Attendance

Problem (why?)	Intervention Description (what?)	Implementation Activities (how?)	Implementation Outcomes (how well?)	Final Outcomes (and so?)
<p>To improve the Attendance in education for all children in care and CWSW.</p> <p>July 2024 CIC 89.4%</p> <p>CiN 87.3%</p> <p>CP 87.2%</p> <p>The Virtual School reports back every month to the GCC Partners regarding data for attendance for all CIC and records data for cohorts at risk eg CME, Key stage 4 who have had school moves, new to care and others with risk factors. For CWSW the Virtual school has developed a monthly tracker that compares cohorts at risk with trends over time so that this can be signposted. For CWSW the VS is working closely with the inclusion team and participates in the GCC attendance network for schools. CIC data is collected through a contracted Eportal and data extractor. Data for CIN/ CP is more problematic given the volume of children and the fluidity of cohort. There are a variety of partners that the VS works alongside with to ensure CIN/ CP children attend school, MASH/ MACE inclusion team as an example.</p> <p>There is a significant cohort of children in care who are persistently absent from school (24.2%) There are a multitude of reasons which have been shared and analysed as part of a deep dive with the IRO managers & VS and the data team in the summer 2024. Children who have been re-unified home have been a significant cohort Some of the impacting factors are children having EHCP's and moving out of county which impacts the sourcing and funding of a school place, school moves, school refusal, re-unification and children who are new to care. There has been an audit this year which examined the practice in GCC of school moves for Children in care.</p> <p>30</p>	<p>What are the essential 'active ingredients' of the intervention?</p> <p>The Personal Education Plan for all Children will discuss their school attendance and needs and attainment is tracked and attendance improvement plans can be made at the PEP for all children with less than 90% attendance as part of the PEP.</p> <p>The VS adjusted the new EPEP in September 2022 to include attendance improvement plans. The levels of intervention to promote attendance & support schools and partners promote attendance.</p> <p>There is also a protocol for school moves during the academic year which has been in place since September 2022. This needs to be used by social care more consistently as audit evidenced. The expectation will be enforced that supporting school attendance is everyone's responsibility.</p> <p>The CIC data sheet includes a category of those children who are severely persistently absent, so that all partners can act to remedy and address the attendance issues. The CWSW will also record the % of CIN/ CP children who fall into this category.</p> <p>What activities and behaviours will you see when it is working?</p> <p>Attendance will improve.</p> <p>More PEPS will have detailed attendance plans.</p> <p>The School move protocol will be used for all moves.</p> <p>Persistent absence will decrease.</p> <p>Less or no children in care will be CME.</p> <p>The new improved school move protocol will always be used. PNL's will be received for all children who move placements asap.</p> <p>Transition plans in the PEPS are completed.</p>	<p>How will it be done?</p> <p>Quality assurance audits of EPEP's will focus on attendance data.</p> <p>IRIS data for attendance will be monitored and key data will continue to be shared with partners.</p> <p>Pupil Premium Plus and robust attendance plans will be implemented for CIC with poor or severely persistent absence.</p> <p>PEPS will be used to offer incentive plans for CIC where attendance needs to improve.</p> <p>GCC attendance networks and closer working with the inclusion team to promote good attendance for CWSW.</p> <p>The VS has monthly meetings with GCC SEND to discuss the CIC who have an EHCP and are CME to ensure that there is a plan, and an educational package is in place whilst a school is secured.</p> <p>The VS will continue to have training available for schools for CIC and CWSW to support school attendance.</p> <p>What blend of activities are required?</p> <p>Virtual School will provide on-going EPEP training to all partners to increase familiarisation.</p> <p>EPEPs that do not meet the standard will be returned to schools with information about how to improve them.</p> <p>The Virtual School management board will be provided with a list of schools who have not returned PEPS on a regular basis even after this has been escalated.</p>	<p>How will you know that it is working?</p> <p>Improved quality of PEPS with a clear focus on an attendance improvement plan for those CIC with less than 90% attendance. Increased completion in detail of the attendance barriers in the EPEP.</p> <p>Attendance improves for CIC.</p> <p>CME numbers decrease.</p> <p>School move protocols are in use. There are more transition PEPS used when CIC have to move placements and schools.</p> <p>Persistent absence decreases.</p> <p>Short term</p> <p>Attendance increases for all CWSW.</p> <p>Medium term</p> <p>CME numbers start to decline.</p> <p>Long term</p> <p>The monthly data sheets show significant % of improvement for all cohorts with a sw who are at risk of poor attendance.</p>	<p>How will pupils, Designated teachers and the school benefit?</p> <p>Increased attendance will promote and should increase better progress and attainment.</p> <p>It could also support better placement stability.</p> <p>It could also promote children's well-being and socialisation.</p> <p>This could impact on future preparation for adult hood for care- leavers and support improving ETE %</p>

Priority 4 - Improving Inclusion

Problem (why?)	Intervention Description (what?)	Implementation Activities (how?)	Implementation Outcomes (how well?)	Final Outcomes (and so?)
<p>The VS needs to improve the inclusion in education for all children in care and CWSW and to prevent suspensions and permanent exclusions.</p> <p>The Virtual School reports back every month to the GCC Partners regarding data for suspensions for all CIC. IRIS attendance system records data live for all CIC cohorts when the schools use the data extractor. This enables the VS to act immediately and contact schools regarding any suspensions. However, suspensions are still high in Gloucestershire, and this still needs to improve.</p> <p>There has not been a permanent exclusion for a child in care since 2007. We will need to continue to work closely with Headteachers / designated teachers and school settings to ensure that CIC are not permanently excluded. The added difficulty is when children are placed out of county and the LA where they are educated doesn't have a similar protocol or arrangement. To date we have managed to use our protocol in other LA's.</p> <p>Permanent exclusions for CWSW remain high, the VS will work closely with the inclusion team and data team to monitor this trend:</p> <p>CIN 34/643 5.28%</p> <p>CP 23/464 4.96%</p>	<p>What are the essential 'active ingredients' of the intervention?</p> <p>The Personal Education Plan for all Children will discuss any SEMH needs that may put a CIC at risk of suspension. The levels of intervention have been written to support schools/ VS and SW so that all are clear about the role they can play to support the cic. The IRIS 'Looked after call' system will actively flag those CIC who have had suspensions and the education advisor from the VS will contact the school to ensure that there is adequate support and interventions when a child is suspended, and a PEP will be triggered if the need is accelerating. There have been alterations to the process for the protocol for CIC for PEX to ensure absolute clarity that this is a rescinded PEX. The role of the governors and a clear agenda and record has been developed to help all involved with the process.</p> <p>What activities and behaviours will you see when it is working?</p> <p>Attendance will improve.</p> <p>Suspensions will decrease.</p> <p>Less children in care will need to use the protocol for PEX.</p>	<p>How will it be done?</p> <p>Quality assurance audits of EPEP's will focus on suspension data. IRIS data for suspensions will be monitored and key data will continue to be shared with partners. PEPS will be used to offer support & incentive plans for CIC where there are SEMH needs are accelerating, and inclusion strategies need to deepen. The EPEP has detailed inclusion structures and a need to record intervention plans. GCC attendance networks and closer working with the inclusion team to promote good inclusion for CWSW. Ongoing offers made to schools for whole school training to support Trauma informed strategies, particularly focussing on those with high numbers of CIC, those at risk of PEX protocol and those with high numbers of CWSW. EP service has been commissioned in to provide solution Circles and other services to prevent suspensions.</p> <p>What blend of activities are required?</p> <p>Virtual School will monitor suspensions and quality of intervention available to CIC through the PEPS. Continued scrutiny of PEPS for the cohorts at risk. Monthly meetings with IRO managers to look at trends of children at risk of suspensions to ensure there is an understanding of any trends from social care perspective. EPEPs that do not meet the standard will be returned to schools with information about how to improve them for children who need more inclusion interventions. High quality training about Trauma informed strategies to be available for schools.</p>	<p>How will you know that it is working?</p> <p>High quality of PEPS with a clear focus on inclusion strategies for CIC.</p> <p>Increased completion in detail of the trauma triggers and strategies using PPP in the EPEP are evidenced.</p> <p>Inclusion improves for CIC.</p> <p>Suspension numbers & % decrease.</p> <p>School PEX CIC protocol is in use, the demand for them reduces.</p> <p>More schools participate with Trauma training with a particular focus on DSL's and schools who have high numbers of CWSW.</p> <p>Short term</p> <p>Suspensions decrease for all CWSW.</p> <p>Medium Term</p> <p>PEX and CIC protocols numbers start to decline.</p> <p>Long Term</p> <p>The monthly data sheets show significant % of improvement for all cohorts with a sw who are at risk suspension / PEX.</p>	<p>How will pupils, Designated teachers and the school benefit?</p> <p>Increased inclusion will promote and should increase better progress and attainment. It could also support better placement stability for CIC. There will be less disruption in all CWSW lives if they do not experience suspensions and PEX.</p>

Priority 5 – Providing high quality training

Problem (why?)	Intervention Description (what?)	Implementation Activities (how?)	Implementation Outcomes (how well?)	Final Outcomes (and so?)
<p>The VS needs to support all educational settings for all children in care and CWSW and to adopt Trauma informed strategies.</p> <p>The impact from the Alex Timpson Research and the schools that have been involved with Trauma informed training is leading to a more relational approach and a differentiated behaviour stance when supported as a whole school approach. This will lead to more inclusive practise and improved attendance in schools.</p>	<p>What are the essential 'active ingredients' of the intervention?</p> <p>High quality training packages which are bespoke to the schools and setting and have a blended approach of commissioned packages and VS training. Published Training plan in advance for schools. Develop the on-line training toolkit. Further develop the Lego Hub model through schools having DT networks in county.</p> <p>What activities and behaviours will you see when it is working?</p> <p>More schools will engage with Trauma informed training. More schools adopt relational policy approaches to behaviour management. Attendance will improve. Suspensions will decrease. Less or no children in care will need to use the protocol for PEX.</p>	<p>How will it be done?</p> <p>Offers of training packages to schools with high numbers of CIC to have a bespoke offer of whole school trauma training. This may be an offer to a MAT or group of smaller schools or to large Academies / Schools. Virtual school twilight sessions which introduce Trauma and attachment training to be offered to smaller schools and those with smaller numbers of CIC. Ongoing offers made to schools for whole school training to support Trauma informed strategies, particularly focussing on those with high numbers of CIC, those at risk of PEX protocol and those with high numbers of CWSW.</p> <p>What blend of activities are required?</p> <p>Virtual School training through twi-lights. High quality training about Trauma informed strategies to be available for schools to commission in with advice support and quality assurance from the Virtual school. Speaking/ Art therapeutic training for selected primary schools who have higher numbers of CWSW planned for 2024-5, to improve attendance.</p>	<p>How will you know that it is working?</p> <p>Increased completion in detail of the trauma triggers and strategies using PPP in the EPEP are evidenced. Inclusion improves for CIC. Suspension numbers & % decrease. More schools participate with Trauma training with a particular focus on DSL's and schools who have high numbers of CWSW.</p> <p>Short term</p> <p>Suspensions decrease for all CWSW.</p> <p>Medium Term</p> <p>PEX and CIC protocols numbers start to decline.</p> <p>Long Term</p> <p>The monthly data sheets show significant % of improvement for all cohorts with a sw who are at risk suspension / PEX.</p>	<p>How will pupils, Designated teachers and the school benefit?</p> <p>Schools and staff are supported with a better understanding of how to promote good mental health and to understand how to deal with secondary trauma.</p> <p>Increased inclusion and improved SEMH strategies will promote and should increase better progress and attainment.</p>

PEP Report Summary-Academic Year 2023/24

September 2023-July 2024

“Children make good educational progress in care with support from the virtual school. Children’s personal education plans (PEPs) provide a strong sense of children’s voices, and this helps to shape appropriate action that is making a positive difference for children. However, the quality of PEPs remains mixed, and many are weak. Although the format has improved and quality assurance is established, the headteacher of the virtual school is clear that there are still areas to improve to bring all plans up to the standard of the best.”

Inspection of Gloucestershire local authority children’s services 7 February 2022 to 18 February 2022

PEP Developments This Term		Planned Next Steps
	End of Term 1-November 2023	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IRIS data cleansing took place over the summer holiday to ensure that records were up to date in September. New PEP templates are active and include new ‘Remarkable Me-Life Story’ section. Selected schools have been invited to take part in PEP audits but have not taken up this offer. Autumn PEP returns and PEP QA data were collected at half term. Autumn PEP data reports produced by PEP lead at half term in line with OFSTED improvement plan. Bespoke EPEP online training has taken place and video recordings have been added to VS website. Life Story within ePEP guide and resources has been shared with schools. 	<p>IMPACT: Systems up to date and ready for EAs, DTs, SWs and IROs to access and use from the start of the new academic year.</p> <p>IMPACT: All DTs, SWs, IROs offered ePEP training. Video training available to all new staff throughout the year leading to greater confidence and competence using the system.</p> <p>IMPACT: Life Story resources available for schools leading to greater confidence in completing this section of the PEP.</p> <p>IMPACT: Life story project has led to improved discussion with young people about their strengths and achievements. Resources available to share with other schools.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PEP audit tool, Invision 360, to be developed and embedded further. Changes to include platinum PEP category. Fifth PEP audit to take place using Invision 360 focusing on attendance, pupil voice and Every Story Matters. Information from fifth PEP audit to inform PEP actions for the coming term. Autumn PEP returns and PEP QA data to be collected at end of term. Autumn PEP data reports to be produced by PEP lead at end of term in line with OFSTED improvement plan. Further IRIS data cleansing to take place. Monitoring of ‘Remarkable Me-Life Story’ section to take place. Attendance officer and CiC Nurse information to be added to PEP template.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot project for life story PEP section in collaboration with Kelly Green (Learn Happy) is in progress in two schools. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gloucestershire VS to work with Invision 360 to write case study of Gloucestershire PEP QA journey since using Invision 360 PEP QA tool.
	End of Term 2-December 2023	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bespoke EPEP walk through training sessions for early years designated teachers, KS1-4 designated teachers, post-16 designated teachers and social workers and IROs took place. The recordings are available on the Virtual School website. IRIS data cleansing session took place in December 2023. PEP Support Officer role made permanent. Fifth PEP audit took place using Invision 360 focusing on Year 11 students with an EHCP. Information from fifth PEP audit to inform PEP actions for the coming term. Autumn PEP returns and PEP QA data collected at end of term. Autumn PEP data report produced by PEP lead at end of term in line with OFSTED improvement plan. First term completed using Every Story Matters section of the ePEP. Life Story within ePEP guide and resources has been shared with schools. Pilot project for life story PEP section in collaboration with Kelly Green (Learn 	<p>IMPACT: All DTs, SWs, IROs offered ePEP training. Video training available to all new staff throughout the year leading to greater confidence and competence using the system.</p> <p>IMPACT: PEP Support Officer role has led to more timely returns of PEP documents. 96.83% completed PEPs on file this academic year.</p> <p>IMPACT: PEP QA report from completed audits has enabled strategic planning of PEP developments and further QA for the following terms. PEP audit led to VS understanding that to increase quality of PEPS that young people living with parents needs more focus and detail for CIC.</p> <p>IMPACT: Every Story Matters/Remarkable Me section of the PEP has brought the PEPs to life and facilitated gathering meaningful pupil voice.</p> <p>IMPACT: Adding School Attendance Officer contact details to the PEP has enabled timely</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IRIS data cleansing session to take place in the spring term. Sixth PEP audit to take place using Invision 360. Information from fifth PEP audit to inform PEP actions for the coming term. Spring PEP returns and PEP QA data to be collected at half term and end of term. Spring PEP data reports to be produced by PEP lead at half term and end of term in line with OFSTED improvement plan. Monitoring of Every Story Matters section of the ePEP to take place and feedback with Morven Nelson. Further work with Kelly Green (Learn Happy). Plans for DT Day Autumn 2024 to be confirmed.

<p>Happy) complete in one school and in progress in one school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance officer and CiC Nurse information added to PEP template. • Gloucestershire VS worked with Invision 360 to write case study of Gloucestershire PEP QA journey since using Invision 360 PEP QA tool. Case study available here: https://www.invision360.com/post/gloucestershire-virtual-school-and-invision360-pep-qatool • Every Story Matters DT Day date agreed for Autumn 2024. 	<p>follow up of attendance concerns including checking N-codes. Adding CiC Nurse information has enabled partnership working between education and health when there are attendance concerns.</p>	
	End of Term 3-February 2024	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information from fifth PEP audit informed PEP actions for the coming term. • Sixth PEP audit took place using Invision 360. Focus: Students living with parents-Reunification • Spring PEP returns and PEP QA data were collected at half term. • Spring PEP data reports produced by PEP lead at half term in line with OFSTED improvement plan. • Monitoring of Every Story Matters section of the ePEP took place and feedback completed with Morven Nelson. 	<p>IMPACT: Schools becoming more confident with Remarkable Me section of the ePEP. VS developing a bank a Remarkable Me moments evidencing the impact of PP+.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seventh PEP audit to take place using Invision 360 focus TBC. • Information from sixth PEP audit to inform PEP actions for the coming term. • Spring PEP returns and PEP QA data to be collected at end of term. • Spring PEP data reports to be produced by PEP lead at end of term in line with OFSTED improvement plan. • Further IRIS data cleansing to take place. • Monitoring of 'Remarkable Me-Life Story' section to take place and further feedback to Morven Nelson.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PEP lead joined Invision 360 Focus Group and attended first meeting with LA representatives from 6 other authorities. • Plans for DT Day Autumn 2024 confirmed. • CiC Nurse information and School Attendance Officer information now recorded in ePEP. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remarkable Me-Life Story feedback to be shown to Corporate Parent group in March 2024.
	End of Term 4-April 2024	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information from sixth PEP audit informed PEP actions for the coming term. • Spring PEP returns and PEP QA data collected at half term and end of term. • Spring PEP data reports produced by PEP lead at end of half term and end of term in line with OFSTED improvement plan. • Dates for Autumn 2024 ePEP training confirmed. 	<p>IMPACT: Listening to feedback from partners and children to ensure we support their educational progress and meet their needs is building on the strengths of the EPEP. Language that cares is being incorporated throughout. Ownership of the EPEP is developing across the teams around the children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IRIS data cleansing session to take place in the summer term. • Seventh and Eighth PEP audit to take place using Invision 360 (Y6 and Y11 transition plans). • Information from these PEP audits to inform PEP actions for the coming term. • Summer PEP returns and PEP QA data to be collected at half term and end of term. • Summer PEP data reports to be produced by PEP lead at half term and end of term in line with OFSTED improvement plan. • Monitoring of Every Story Matters section of the ePEP to take place and feedback with Morven Nelson. • Every Story Matters-Remarkable Me feedback to be shared at Corporate Parent Group-June 2024 • Further work with Kelly Green (Learn Happy).

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans for DT training day Autumn 2024 to be confirmed. Schools to be invited to take part in PEP QA. PEP template changes for 2024.25 to be agreed with IRIS. Commissioning of EPEP to be undertaken and options paper to be written in the summer term.
	End of Term 6-July 2024	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IRIS data cleansing session took place in the summer break. Seventh and Eighth PEP audit took place using Invision 360 (Y6 and Y11 transition plans). Summer PEP returns and PEP QA data collected at the end of the summer term. Summer and annual PEP data reports produced by PEP lead at the end of the summer term. Monitoring of Every Story Matters section of the ePEP took place and feedback given to Morven Nelson. Every Story Matters-Remarkable Me feedback shared at Corporate Parent Group-June 2024 Further Remarkable Me project work with Kelly Green (Learn Happy)-The Salty Sea positive touch book printed ready for distribution to schools. 	<p>IMPACT-VS continuing to support SC colleagues with Every Story Matters leading to educational moments being added to life story work.</p> <p>IMPACT: 89% of YP have a Remarkable Me moment included in their Spring PEP.</p> <p>IMPACT: Our KS1 CiC will have a resource to promote literacy and positive relationships.</p> <p>IMPACT: Listening to feedback from partners and children to ensure we support their educational progress and meet their needs is building on the strengths of the EPEP. Language that cares is being incorporated throughout. Ownership of the EPEP is developing across the teams around the children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IRIS data cleansing session to take place in the autumn term. Bespoke PEP training sessions for DTs, SWs and IROs to take place. PEP lead and VS PEP support officer to train EAs on new bespoke VS PEP QA form. Trial PEP QA audit using new form to take place. Information from PEP audit to inform PEP actions for the coming term. Autumn PEP returns and PEP QA data to be collected at end of term. Autumn PEP data report to be produced by PEP lead at end of term. Monitoring of Every Story Matters section of the ePEP to take place and feedback with Morven Nelson. Remarkable Me DT training day to take place. Commissioning of EPEP to be completed.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans for DT training day Autumn 2024 confirmed. PEP template changes for 2024-25 agreed with IRIS. Post-16 ePEP template developed to be consistent with pre-16 templates and include transition section. PEP lead and VS PEP support officer have developed bespoke Virtual School PEP QA form to replace Invision 360 tool. Commissioning of EPEP undertaken. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total number of PEPs Quality assured using Invision 360 (Sept 23-July 2024) 164 	<p>IMPACT: Developing our own PEP QA form to reduce costs and change the way we QA as a team bespoke to our needs.</p>	
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The Virtual School

Annual PEP Report for Academic Year 2023/24

Annual average percentage of New to Care PEP's taking place within 20 days (Sept 23-July 24): 83.13%

Annual average PEP meetings taking place across all Key Stages: 2022/2039, 99.17%

Annual average PEP document completion across all Key Stages: 1958/2022, 96.83%

Annual average completed EPEPs meeting the required standard across all key stages: 1900/1961, 96.89%

Cohort	Annual average PEP meeting taken place/booked to take place before end of term		Annual average completed PEP on file		Annual average completed EPEPs meeting the required standard	
Early Years	107/110	97.27%	102/107	95.33%	96/102	94.12%
YR-Y11	1571/1573	99.87%	1525/1571	97.07%	1488/1525	97.57
Post-16	344/356	96.63%	331/347	95.39%	316/334	94.61
Total	2022/2039	99.17%	1958/2022	96.83%	1900/1961	96.89%

Reasons for PEP meetings not taking place by end of term:

- Education Advisor waiting for confirmation of date from DT or SW.
- Pupils awaiting school/nursery placement.
- PEP cancelled by school or SW and new date not confirmed.
- NTC or school move and booked to take place within statutory timescales.

Reasons for PEP not being complete:

- PEP meeting taking place late in term so document still in progress.
- Missing data/information being followed up by EA.

Autumn/Spring/Summer Comparison of PEPs meeting standard (of PEPs submitted within timescale):

% of PEPs Meeting the Required Standard							
December 2023 Virtual School PEP Scrutiny of Autumn ePEPs		April 2024 Virtual School PEP Scrutiny of Summer ePEPs		July 2024 Virtual School PEP Scrutiny of Summer ePEPs		Total	
646/668	96.7%	611/622	98.2%	643/671	95.83%	1900/1961	96.89%

Virtual School target 2023-2024 for MEETS REQUIRED STANDARD PEP QA is 90%

Reasons for PEP not meeting standard:

- Significant areas of the PEP are incomplete e.g. attainment or attendance data/ SEND information/ meeting notes are brief and lack details
- Targets are not SMART.
- Pupil voice missing
- PEP is non-compliant (School or SW did not attend PEP)

Main Areas of PEP Development This Year

- PEP Support Officer role made permanent.
- Every Story Matters/Remarkable Me section of ePEP implemented and evaluated over three terms.
- Post-16 ePEP template developed to be consistent with pre-16 templates and include transition section.
- Pilot project for life story PEP section, in collaboration with Kelly Green (Learn Happy), completed in two schools.
- VS Quality mark for schools to encourage high quality PEPs and timely PEP return.
- Attendance officer and CiC Nurse information added to PEP template.
- Gloucestershire VS worked with Invision 360 to write case study of Gloucestershire PEP QA journey since using Invision 360 PEP QA tool. Case study available here: <https://www.invision360.com/post/gloucestershire-virtual-school-and-invision360-pep-qatool>
- PEP lead and VS PEP support officer have developed bespoke Virtual School PEP QA form to replace Invision 360 tool.
- Commissioning of EPEP undertaken.
- Total number of PEPs Quality assured using Invision 360 (Sept 23-July 2024) **164**

Main Areas of PEP Development Planned for Next Year

- Further implementation of ePEP templates-Post-16.
- Further ePEP training for all users.
- Development and implementation of bespoke PEP QA form.
- Further projects for life story PEP section, in collaboration with Kelly Green (Learn Happy), to take place.
- VS Quality mark and pin badge for schools to encourage high quality PEPs (including life story section) and timely PEP return.
- Remarkable Me DT training day to take place.

Training.

6.2.1 The delivery of training to increase the quality of the educational offer to Children in Care is a key part of the Virtual School work. Evidence of impact can be seen in the improvement of the quality of PEPs and in schools understanding and development of trauma informed approaches.

All schools with Gloucestershire Children in Care are offered a comprehensive training programme. We have a comprehensive offer of E-learning for Attachment Aware Schools: Gloucestershire Virtual School have commissioned a package of e-learning from Knowledge Change Action (KCA) to be available as a learning resource for schools who have a Gloucestershire Child in care on their roll. The Virtual School is aiming to raise the awareness and increase the understanding, along with the confidence and skills of staff across the whole school community in relation to the impact of unmet attachment needs and traumatic life experience in children's education.

Training has included trauma informed training from the Virtual school staff and our Gloucestershire Educational Psychologists who supported the professional development of Designated Teachers (See Educational Psychologist Service report below for the summary of training VS commissioned .) We believe this will increase better quality PEPS as schools understanding of trauma triggered behaviour will lead to relational interventions to support children with their social and emotional needs. The training offer in 2023-4 expanded to include key staff members from Schools as the Virtual Schools new responsibilities developed into a wider cohort of all children with a social worker.

The Virtual School Head Teacher and the Virtual School team recognised that the Virtual School service needed to re-shape and streamline our approaches, in order to respond to the growing needs of Children in Care and the extended remit to support children who were previously in care. There was a change in the way in which we offered Pupil Premium Plus to schools and all of our internal processes have been reviewed by a range of external consultants. The foundation for this work began in 2017; the programmes and work undertaken during the year will be the drivers for the near future.

6.2.2 Virtual School personalised training offer

Experience has indicated that many schools, particularly secondary settings, wished to have bespoke training. In response, the Virtual School offers a consultancy style approach to many schools and a menu of training options for schools that have several Children in Care on their roll. Some schools have decided to work together in small clusters or have trained together as part of a MAT and have had a blend of face to face and e-learning. Having a range of training has led to a high engagement and a diverse range of training being offered to schools who may have previously been reluctant to engage with non-bespoke packages. This is in addition to the free twilight training we offer to any school through our in-house training offer.

6.2.3 New Head Teacher training

The Virtual School trains new Head Teachers and provides information about the statutory processes and how Pupil Premium Plus supports learners. Feedback has been positive and acknowledges the training is useful. We have trained 131 new Headteachers since 2017. The schools will all benefit from this training, regardless of whether they have a child in care on their roll at the time. Children may come into care in any school, and it is useful that the Headteachers understand that the Designated Teachers role is statutory and so are the PEPS.

6.2.4 Virtual School – Training Plan summary

The document 'Promoting the Education of Children with a Social Worker June 2022', the DFE clearly states that the role of the VSH should be:

- making visible the disadvantages that children with a social worker can experience, enhancing partnerships between education settings and local authorities, including with children's social care, to help all agencies hold high aspirations for these children.
- promoting practice that supports children's engagement in education, recognising that attending an education setting can be a key factor in helping to keep children safe from harm.
- levelling up children's outcomes and narrowing the attainment gap so every child can reach their potential. This will include helping to ensure that children with a social worker benefit from support to recover educationally from the impact of the pandemic.

One of the ways we at the Virtual School have decided to approach this and make visible the disadvantages that all vulnerable children, including those in care or previously in care, those with a social worker or those with SEND needs have, is to develop a high quality and cohesive training plan to support schools who support these young people.

We have produced a training plan with a mix of face to face and online training sessions. <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/2125225/aut-23-sum-24-virtual-school-training-flyer.pdf> The online sessions, run by a select range of training providers, take place directly after school and have been used by many as part of their annual staff meeting and CPD programme. The need to support all young people with SEMH SEND needs has been a key feature running through our 24/25 training plan and topics covered are linked to delegate feedback. The impact of children of parental mental health, self-harming behaviours, a multi-agency training day about living in the modern world and meeting unmet attachment issues have seen a huge sign up from our Gloucestershire settings. Last academic year 2023-4 we had record numbers of professional trained through the Virtual school offer: 3538.

All online sessions are recorded, and settings can request access to these films as we work to develop this training resource. Details of this can be found on our website.

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/vschool/training-toolkit/>

A significant amount of investment has been used to deliver face to face training as well and we are now recording these sessions to continue to develop a toolkit of training resources and appreciate

the geographical and financial barriers that many of our settings face in attending face to face training.

In 22/23, over 2000 delegates from across the county accessed our training. We saw this grow to 3538 in 2023/ 24 and we already have nearly 600 signed up for the 24/25 available courses.

We also noticed that many adults in school who support vulnerable and often dysregulated young people are support staff and do not have as much access to training as their teaching colleagues. We have delivered a variety of face-to-face training sessions to these settings on subjects such as emotion coaching, building resilience, trauma and attachment and understanding ACES. We have also invested in the creation of a series of short 10-minute bitesize training videos for all professionals, but the size of these films mean they become more accessible for all staff, including our invaluable support colleagues.

The following bitesize training clips are available:

- 6 videos on emotional based school non-attendance
- 4 videos on the impact of trauma
- 2 videos of Post 16 pathways
- 1 video on Post 16 PEP guidance
- 2 videos for previous children in care aimed at parents and schools/social workers.
- 1 video on the changes to kinship care
- 1 video on mid-year school admissions
- 1 video on supporting ESOL/UASC students.
- 1 video on solutions circles
- 1 video on identifying and supporting children to mitigate the impact of parental imprisonment.
- 4 videos to support mental health.

The series of videos on the emotional impact of school attendance, trauma, Post 16 pathways, school admissions and supporting UASC students have embraced our multi agency partnership and ethos to deliver the SEN Code of practice mantra of 'Tell Me Once.'

All of the films are available through the toolkit

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/vschool/training/training-toolkit/>

We feel the direction we have taken is one way to effectively support our vulnerable young people by supporting our schools to develop their understanding and approach.

[Training Information | Virtual School \(gloucestershire.gov.uk\)](#)

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/seib5pi3/aut-23-sum-24-virtual-school-training-flyer.pdf>

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/fadjlawy/aut-24-sum-25-virtual-school-training-flyer-v2.pdf>

Autumn 24 - Summer 2025 Virtual School Training

The Virtual School is pleased to share with you our training plan for Sept 24-July 25. These sessions are all FREE. Many of our sessions are online and after school, so why not book sessions to feed into your CPD commitment and staff meeting agendas throughout the school year?

Click the title for further information on each training session. Contact courtney.hopson@gloucestershire.gov.uk to discuss your needs or make a booking.

Term 1 – 2 nd September – 25 th October 2024			
EPEP training (Early Years)	Thursday 19 th Sept 2024	3.30-4.30pm	TEAMS
Bereavement and Loss – How to support CYP who have experienced loss in its many forms - AC Education	Tuesday 24 th Sept 2024	3.30-5pm	TEAMS
EPEP training (KS1-4)	Thursday 26 th Sept 2024	3.30-4.30pm	TEAMS
Exploring and supporting children and young people with their attendance - EP service	Wednesday 23 rd Oct 2024	3.40- 5.10pm	TEAMS
EPEP training (Post 16)	Thursday 3 rd Oct 2024	4-5pm	TEAMS
Virtual School Training Day (formerly DT Day)- Remarkable Me - KCA and Multi Agency The Pavilion, Cheltenham	Thursday 10 th Oct 2024	9.30-3pm	FACE TO FACE
EPEP training (SW/IRO)	Thursday 17 th Oct 2024	10-10.45am	TEAMS
Term 2 – 4 th November – 20 th December 2024			
Children's society – Spotting the signs of child exploitation -The Children's Society	Thursday 7 th Nov 2024	3.40-5.10pm	TEAMS
Managing the unmanageable – a toolkit to support dysregulated and impulsive behaviour – AC Education	Thursday 21 st Nov 2024	3.30-5pm	TEAMS
Term 3 – 6 th January – 14 th February 2025			
Virtual School Training Day (formerly DT Day) – A sense of belonging for vulnerable children (at school, at home and in the community) - KCA	Thursday 23 rd Jan 2025	9.30-3pm	FACE TO FACE
Adoption, Post Permanency, and the role of the education setting – AC Education	Thursday 13 th Feb 2025	3.30-5pm	TEAMS
Term 4 – 24 th February – 11 th April 2025			
Child or Troublemaker – getting the best out of children within the youth justice system	Thursday 13 th March 2025	9-2pm (inc lunch)	FACE TO FACE
Supporting CYP who reside outside of the family home but not in foster care -EP service	Thurs 20 th March 2025	3.40- 5.10pm	TEAMS
PCIC Day – Holistic approaches for all vulnerable young people: through attendance, trauma informed behaviour strategies and support when leaving care Downtys Sports and Social Club	Tuesday 8 th April 2025	9.15am-12pm	FACE TO FACE
Term 5 – 28 th April – 23 rd May 2025			
Transitions in education for vulnerable young people –KS2 to KS3 – AC Education	Thursday 1 st May 2025	3.30-5pm	TEAMS
Transitions in education for vulnerable young people –Yr11 to Post 16 – AC Education	Thursday 8 th May 2025	3.30-5pm	TEAMS
Supporting CYP who self-harm – Attention Seekers (Attention Seekers -Satveer Nijjar)	Tuesday 20 th May 2025	3.30-5.30pm (2 hrs)	TEAMS
Term 6 – 2 nd June – 18 th July 2025			
Supporting children and young people within adoption, kinship and SGO arrangements - EP service	Tuesday 17 th June 2025	3.40- 5.10pm	TEAMS
Virtual School Training Day (formerly DT Day)- AATRIbutes - a practical guide to helping to support development of pro-social behaviour in a trauma informed way – KCA Downtys Sports and Social Club	Thursday 10 th July 2025	9.30-3pm	FACE TO FACE

We are also able to offer the following training for whole school staff and for DSL/DTs. Contact us for further information.
If you are looking for training which isn't listed, contact us to see if we can help.

- Understanding Attachment and Recovery from Trauma
- Becoming a Trauma informed provision – an introduction
- Supporting CYP with Trauma
- Emotion coaching – an introduction
- Building resilience- an introduction
- Thinking about behaviour and the environment – an overview
- The impact of ACES (Adverse Childhood Experiences)
- An overview of FASD
- Attachment based mentoring
- The Role of the Designated Teacher
- EPEP Writing Training for DT's
- EPEP training
- DT Training on Trauma from KCA
- DT Training on secondary trauma
- PCIC Training
- UASC Training

Non-attendance or less than **3 full working days'** notice of cancellation for online courses or **5 full working days** for face-to-face courses will incur a cost of £100 per delegate. Contact courtney.hopson@gloucestershire.gov.uk to cancel. If you would like to attend but are unable, please contact us to discuss. We might be able to help.



Background information for commissioned work 2023-24

A range of work was commissioned by The Virtual School from Gloucestershire Educational Psychology Service (EPS) to support positive outcomes for children and young people and their parents/carers, and a range of professionals, during the academic year 2023-24. Some of the professionals supported included: Virtual School Education Advisors and Senior Leadership Team (SLT), School Staff with responsibility for Designated Teacher or Designated Safeguarding Lead, and Social Workers, through a combination of approaches for extending professional skills and practice and enhancing support for children and young people under the care of The Virtual School.

The identified strands of commissioned work during 2022-24 were:

Strand A: Workforce training

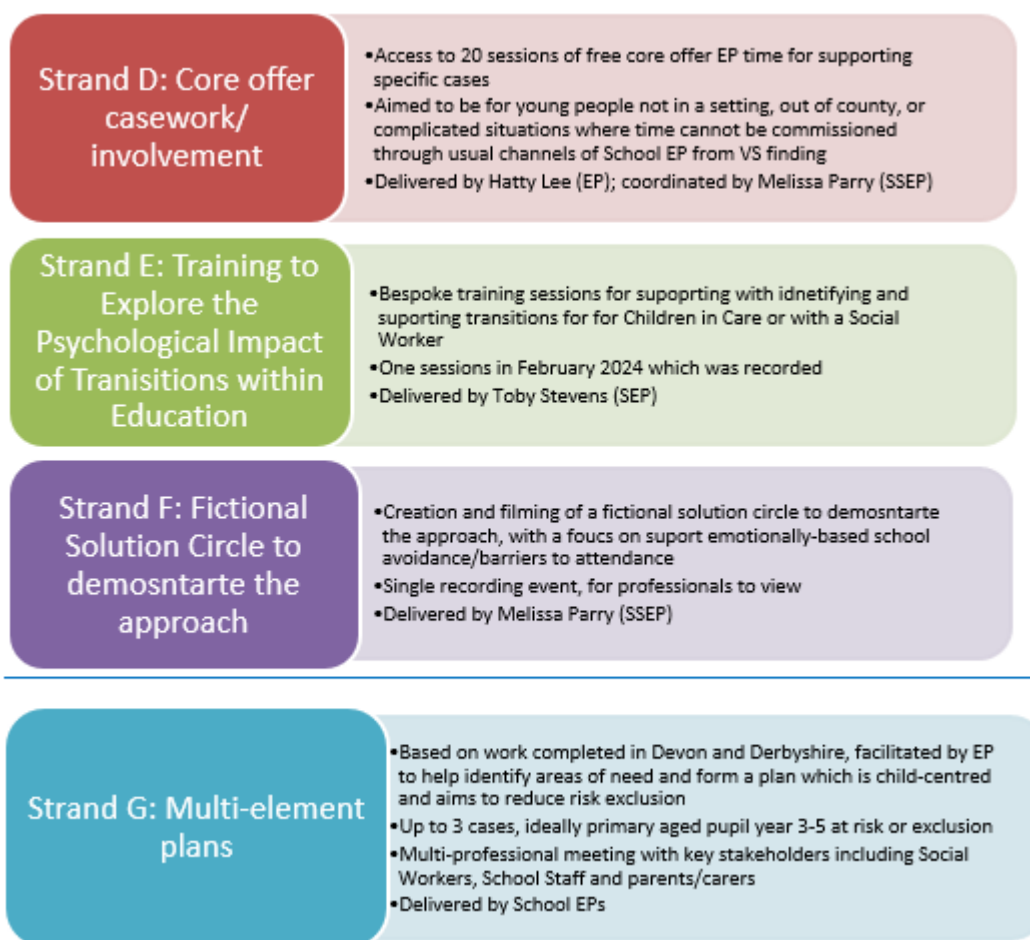
- Training delivered between October 2023 and May 2024
- Delivered to Social Workers, School staff; designated teachers and safeguard leads, education and LA professionals
- 3 sessions: Supporting unaccompanied asylum seekers/refugees – challenges in identifying need (delivered by Dr Melissa Parry - SSEP); Managing anxiety and exam stress (delivered by Simon Worker - PEP); & Reducing exclusion through developing belonging for CIC (delivered by Greg Cotton - SEP)
- Designed to share key information to support these CYP and promote positive outcomes

Strand B: Solution Circle approach with Virtual School Staff

- Approach for supporting The Virtual School team with exploring cases which would benefit from some additional time to reflect and consider possible ways to support the situation using this framework
- 6 held over the year, after team meetings
- Requires other team members to support with solutions as part of the process
- Delivered by Melissa Parry (SSEP)

Strand C: Solution Circle approach with Edge of Care Team

- Approach for supporting Edge of Care SW team with exploring cases which would benefit from some additional time to reflect and consider possible ways to support the situation using this framework
- 6 held over the year, after team meetings
- Requires other team members to support with solutions as part of the process
- Delivered by Emily France (EP); Coordinated by Melissa Parry (SSEP)



Feedback from Strand A: Bespoke Training Sessions based on identified themes of need for Children in Care/with a Social Worker

The three training sessions created and provided for supporting Children with a Social Worker and Children in Care were delivered across the academic year and were online, with a recording to allow staff to access this at a later date.

The training sessions were:

- Supporting unaccompanied asylum seekers/refugees: 21st November 2023
- How to help children and young people build resilience and coping skills to manage stress during exams: 19th February 2024
- Reducing exclusion through exploring young people's identity and supporting feelings of belonging for children in care and children and young people with a social worker: 29th April 2024

For the initial session, an evaluation for both services (The Virtual School and Educational Psychology Service) were requested, however as this required additional work for attendees, it was agreed that attendees would complete a combined link for an online form.

Summary of feedback from the training for supporting Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker/Refugee Children and Young People

The session was well attended with over 80 attendees online, however, there has been limited feedback from attendees. Those who did respond were from a range of roles, including Safeguarding Lead, Senior Practitioner, Education Advisors, Team Manager Social Worker, Early Years Advisor and Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Information from the feedback indicated that 58% found the session extremely or somewhat useful to their practice.



Feedback data indicated that their confidence in the subject area prior to the training session was: 29% not at all confident, 43% a little confident, and 29% confident.



Following the training session, attendees indicated that their confidence had increased, reporting ratings of 14% confident, 29% confident, 43% a little confident, and 14% not at all confident.



Attendees were asked to indicate what they would do differently in their practice following the training session, with the following aspects identified:

- Help to remember about the potential impact of trauma
- Know about the tools we can use to support UASC/Refugee children and young people
- Consider all aspects of the CYP during assessments
- To use a more trauma-informed approach
- Challenge assumptions about UASC/Refugee CYP
- Make sure to take time for myself

Information relating to improvements for the training in the future were:

- More use of quiz or feedback
- Ways to seek contacts for UASC/Refugee CYP who speak their home language for supporting communication and support
- More signposting for resources for the classroom teaching (these were in the references section so may have been missed)
- Having more time for the training (maybe 2 sessions or a longer one) as it felt rushed and delivered fast

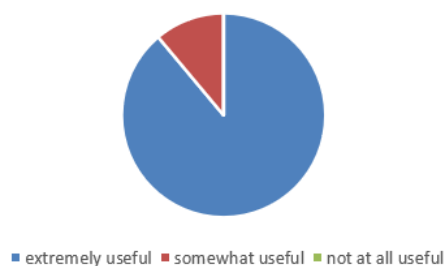
Other comments shared were:

- Very knowledgeable trainer
- Covered lots of areas in the session
- Good understanding of the CYP

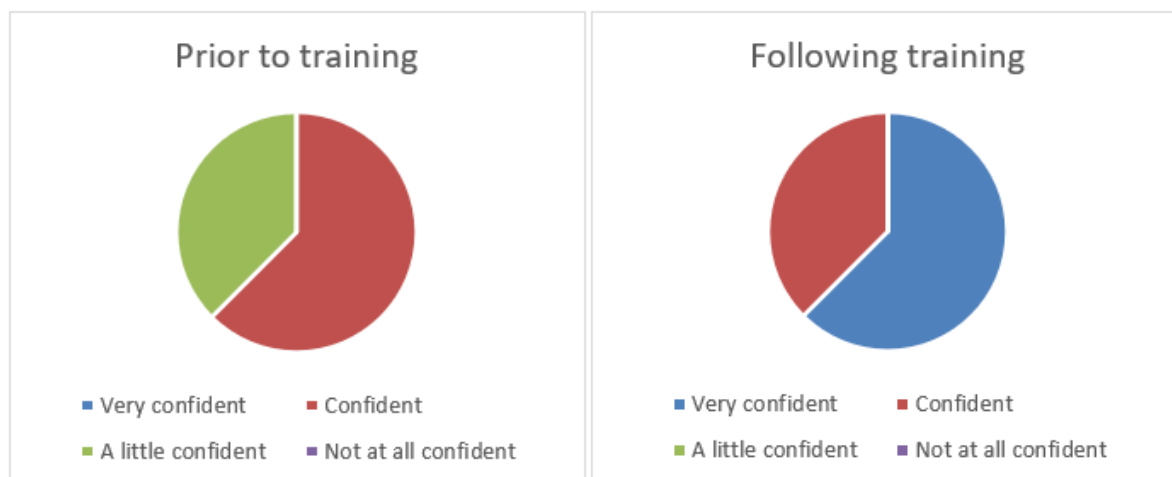
Summary of feedback from the training for how to help children and young people build resilience and coping skills to manage stress during exams

The session was attended by a range of professionals including Education Advisors, Designated Safeguarding Lead/Designated teachers, and school staff. The session was held online and unfortunately there had been limited feedback forms submitted for following the training.

85% of attendees reported that felt the session was extremely useful:



Prior to the session, attendees rated, as 66% confident and 33% a little confident, while all attendees rated themselves as confident following training:



Attendees were asked to indicate what they would do differently in their practice following the training session, with the following aspects identified:

- Get the book/resources referred to in the session
- Run some sessions myself for children to support exam stress
- Provide the appropriate strategies to the children and young people to help prepare them for exams
- Give the children the opportunity to work out their own solutions instead of providing them
- Share resources and promote EP ideas in PEP meetings
- Some mind maps with students and flow diagrams to help identify stressors

Information relating to improvements for the training in the future were:

- Delivering the training to parents/carers
- More opportunities to discuss case studies
- More interaction with attendees
- More discussion around the topic
- Being able to see the other attendees
- A 'take away pack' would have been useful

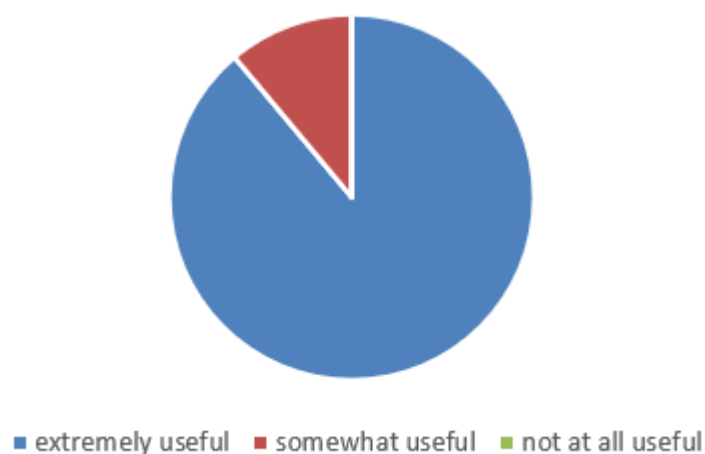
Other comments shared were:

- Very clear
- Very informative

Summary of feedback from the training for reducing exclusion through exploring young people's identity and supporting feelings of belonging for children in care and children and young people with a social worker

The session was delivered online and was attended by a range of professionals including Education Advisors, Designated Safeguarding Lead/Designated teachers, and school staff, however, there was limited feedback from attendees.

Those who responded to the feedback form, indicated that 88% felt the session was extremely useful:



Prior to the session, attendees rated, as 66% confident and 33% a little confident, while all attendees rated themselves as confident following training:



Attendees were asked to indicate what they would do differently in their practice following the training session, with the following aspects identified:

- Highlighted the importance of relationships and ensuring that building positive working relationships are the foundation
- Think carefully in PEPs about the young person's sense of belonging at school and how this can be strengthened
- Advise others on the importance of fostering belonging and the impact it can have
- Cascade to staff/share with other staff
- Share information/best practices with my schools and colleagues
- Share the presentation with staff members who are not always sympathetic to the emotional needs of Looked After Children; this is not due to their unkindness but lack of knowledge and understanding about the effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences and attachment
- Booked further training for the school
- Revisit behaviour policy with the school Governors

Information relating to improvements for the training in the future were:

- Longer session
- Ideally face-to-face session
- Including some case studies

Other comments shared were:

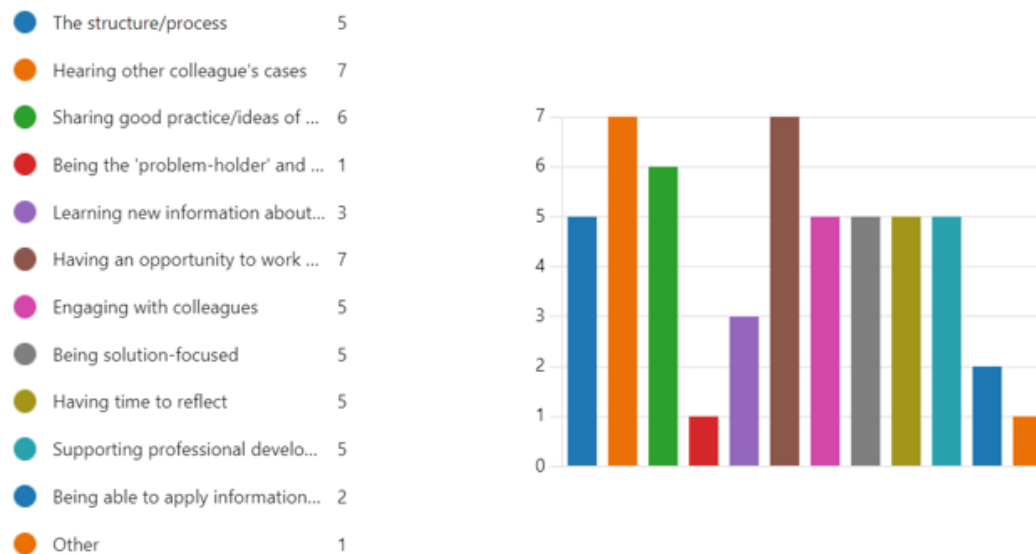
- The training was excellent
- It was great, thank you!

Feedback from Strand B: Solution Circles for developing VS staff practice

Six sessions of 'Solution Circles' were arranged over the academic year, however unfortunately on several occasions, the sessions had to be cancelled due to workload pressures and limited attendance at the sessions. Attendance in sessions was variable due to other pressures and commitments however a reduced number have been arranged for 2024-25 and these will be included within The Virtual School team meetings to ensure attendance.

The feedback from last academic year (2023-23) indicated that the approach was highly valued by attendees and managers, with the process supporting a number of positives for individual development, team cohesiveness, effective way to share good practice and share skills, promoting solution-focused thinking, and was time efficient.

Respondents who participated during 2023-24 Solution Circles, shared the following feedback related to the process overall:

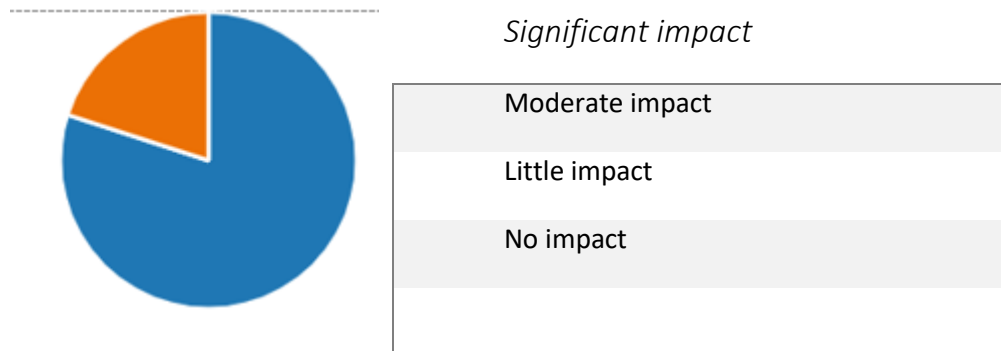


Virtual School staff indicated that they felt their practice has been improved were:

- Upskilling practice
- Allowing the team to reflect
- Can influence how to tackle stubborn issues
- Used some of the ideas in own cases
- Make sure the 'problem' remains the focus in the meetings and side issues don't intervene
- Allowing for possible targeted solutions to be discussed and moved forwards
- Actioned solutions gained more quickly
- Furthered knowledge of a range of possible services

In addition, in 2023-24 Senior Leadership reported during reflections with the EPS, that they felt there has been a positive impact for supporting the team as a whole, in relation to staff confidence, team relationships, professional practice, attitude, and sharing of good practice. It was agreed that it would be useful to obtain formal feedback from team managers and leads to gather thorough data relating to the impact of the Solution Circle approach following input during 2023-24 academic year.

Of the responders to the evaluation, 80% of the respondents felt the Solution Circle approach made 'significant impact' to their team and 20% indicated 'moderate impact':



Feedback from team leads and senior managers indicated there had been a range of ways that the 'solution circle' approach has supported their team, including:

- It has supported a collective approach to problem-solving when colleagues are stuck with a situation
- It has given us time and space to discuss and plan work and be more solution-focused
- The structure has helped us with discussions
- By attending team meetings to discuss 'stuck' cases, particularly around education
- Talking through a problem
- Feeling heard
- Using collaborative problem-solving
- Applying solution-focused approaches

The opportunity to bring a child where a member of the team needs to gain different opportunities to support a child. to ask other team members to help form a supportive thinking structure that is non-biased and can lead to greater clarity and/or thoughts

Senior Leadership and Team Managers have identified that they feel the approach supports their staff's professional practice, citing:

- Listening to the thoughts, ideas and experiences of others to deepen their own knowledge
- It provides development opportunities for staff
- It has validated staff in their thinking in some cases especially when resistance from other professionals involved with the young person
- It has provided alternative solutions in which staff can try It has provided peer on peer support where it was suggested another member of the team can check in with the staff member with the stuck case
- Sharing of good practice, signposting to services
- Through sharing expertise
-

It was noted by Education Advisors and other Virtual School staff during 2022-23 evaluation that they felt staff well-being had been supported by the process, and therefore team managers and leaders were asked in what ways they feel the process has supported this. Respondents reported:

- Protected time away from busy schedules to talk through work situations and come up with plans/actions for cases
- In sharing frustrations and working solutions collaboratively, helps to bring staff together
- Sharing knowledge and overall learning is increased which supports well-being
- Sharing together, helps with feeling heard and supported by the team
- The 'check in' follow up helps to feel they are being 'kept in mind'.
- The team know that they have this mechanism to support them if they feel that they are 'stuck'

Leadership and management were asked to reflect on how they feel staff have applied their learning from the solution circles in their practice, with the following noted:

- To help move YP on who are 'stuck' and shared this with schools
- To learn different strategies and techniques picked up from colleagues
- They have been able to implement agreed actions
- They have used solutions suggested from solution circle which they had not already thought of
- We are a busy team, and it is an opportunity to bring the team together and discuss cases which is always an opportunity for learning and peer support
- Staff have followed up on the ideas put forward by the team
- Staff have been able to share and learn from one another in a very neutral and creative way

The managers and leadership were asked to comment on what changes they feel have occurred as a result of implementation of the 'solution circle' approach, with managers reporting:

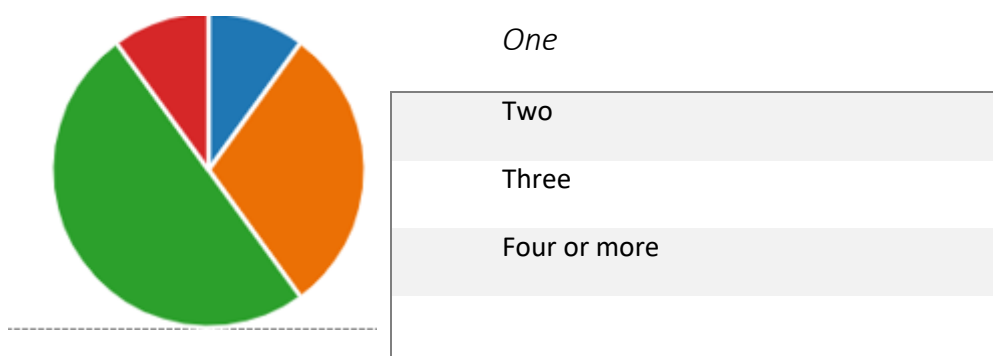
- Continue to develop a supportive team within the Virtual School
- Children have benefited from school solutions that may not have been thought about
- Staff feeling more confident in having a plan- often with uncertainty lies frustration and this is somewhat reduced having a plan discussed within a solution circle
- Some of the structure of the solution circle has been taken forward into other professional conversations
- One manager felt that it was difficult to assess the changes due to the approach

All staff reported that they would recommend this approach to other services or teams.

Feedback from Strand C: Solution Circles for support the Edge of Care Social Work Team

During the academic year 2023-24, six solution circles were arranged to be led by Dr Emily France (EP) as part of the Edge of Care team meetings, however unfortunately several of these were cancelled due to external factors and commitments for the Edge of Care team.

Of the responders to the evaluation, 1 person attended four or more sessions; 5 people attended three solution circles; 3 people attended two sessions; 1 person attended 1 solution circle:



Data indicated that 40% of people were not familiar with the process prior to this academic year, while 60% were familiar:



Feedback from those who completed the evaluation, all rated the process as extremely useful, and stated that their experiences of the process included:

- Quite useful to hear all the levels of support that are available for young people
- Very useful
- Very informative, felt like the old days when we could benefit from each other's knowledge
- it well ran and enjoyed the conversation and information sharing
- very positive
- helpful to have a set way to discuss a problem and have time to talk without interruptions from others
- They are okay

- support us with any families that we 'stuck' with and are not sure how to support them best
- good to discuss clients to get a holistic approach, to support our families
- It's something we as a team did some years ago, which was very helpful back then too
- Staff, who are struggling to come up with a way of helping a family can get a fresh ideas and resources from the wider staff group
- It can also be seen as almost as a group supervision and for staff members to realize they are not on their own, as there is a wider support group with staff who may also be struggling

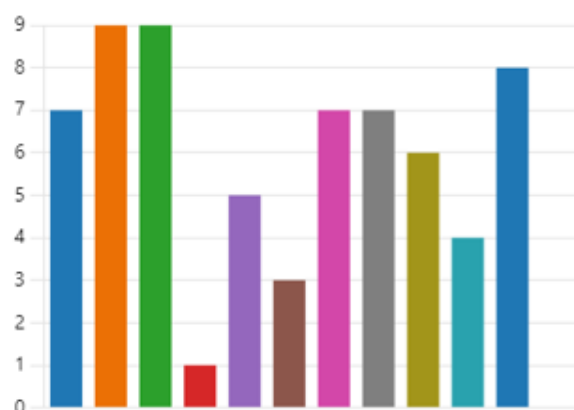
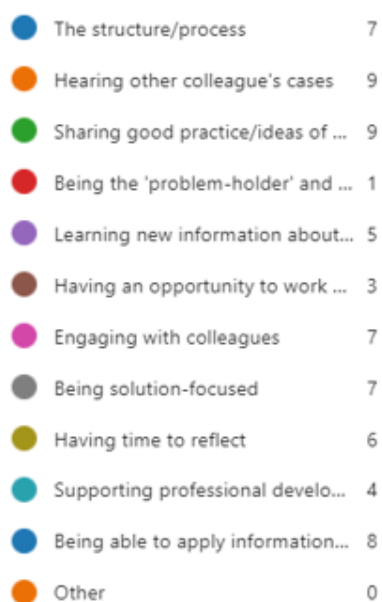
Several Edge of Care staff were the presenter of the 'problem' at a solution circle, they recorded that their experience of the process was that it was

- Shared knowledge and skills to help move things forward
- Helpful to have different ways or new ways to try and support the child/children
- helpful to have something writing it down so you can refer to it again

For the staff who were the 'problem presenter', all rated the process as making a difference to the situation: 3 rated a big difference and 1 recorded a small difference to the situation, while for 4 it did not apply to them.



Respondents recorded the following feedback related to the process overall:



Edge of Care staff indicated that they felt their practice has been improved by:

- Enhancing team relationships and shared discussion: 'talk more with my team' and 'Reaching out to colleagues'
- Developing confidence: 'I have been more confident when some schools are too rigid to suggest alternatives'
- Furthered knowledge of a range of possible services: 'made me more aware of other services that can be accessed' and 'staff have been made aware from the wider group within the solution circle of different ways of working a case, or they are made aware of different support available, for a family'
- Time to reflect and discuss cases: 'It has given the team time to get together to discuss clients they may be struggling with'
- Widened possibilities: 'Had new ways of thinking to access support within education, and looked at different approaches'
- Positive outcomes: 'staff were supported by this approach, when they followed the advice which was given'

Attendees felt that the following would be helpful to complement the process:

- Continued access to the approach
- Continuing to make use of the experience in our team
- A number of participants rated that they would recommend to other colleagues (60%)

Feedback from Strand D: Core Offer casework/EP involvement for CYP Out of County/Out of Education/unable to access Gloucestershire EPS

There have been a number of cases which have been brought to a monthly planning meeting to discuss for consultation and advice from Dr Hatty Lee (EP) and Dr Melissa Parry (SSEP), which may then have been identified as being a suitable case for EP involvement. This process has been beneficial for those who have attended these meetings, although some staff have noted that they cannot always attend the allocated planning meeting slot. These have been arranged prior to the new academic year for Education Advisors to place in their diaries a head of time. These have been very positive and effective; therefore, time will be commissions to continue these during 2024-25.

Hatty has been involved with supporting children and young people in range of different ways: from advice or signposting to multi-professional meetings, to direct work. Feedback from professionals who have been involved in these cases has been positive and they have valued the discussion, advice or casework delivered by Hatty, and has led to positive outcomes for CYP.

Each case has been proceeded with a shared discussion between EP and VS to identify if involvement is appropriate, which can be an intervention itself in terms of supporting the VS to support the CYP, and if involvement is agreed, there is a planned discussion about what is supportive. During 2024-25, The Virtual School will continue to access EP support through the Core Offer, making these free to access, with these sessions available for the cases where children are out of county, unable to access Gloucestershire EPS support such as post-16, or for CYP out of education, based on specific cases.

Feedback from Strand E: Creation and filming of a fictional 'Solution Circle' to demonstrate the approach & 10-minute film about Impact of Trauma on Learning

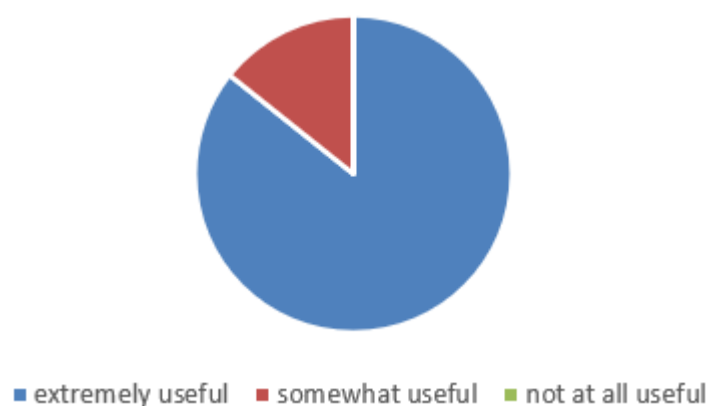
As part of creating a package of easily accessible video clips to introduce new ideas, enhance practitioner knowledge, and offer some 'top tips' on a range of topics and resources, The Virtual School commissioned time for providing a demonstration of the 'solution circle' approach with information about the process and the steps, as well as being focused on Barriers to Attendance, to demonstrate how the process can be supportive for complex case discussions. The previous 10-minute film based on Emotionally-Based School Non-Attendance created in 2023 has been reported to have been viewed over 80 times by education professionals.

In addition, some time accrued due to reduced number of 'solution circle' sessions delivered to The Virtual School staff provided additional time to construct and film a 10-minute recording about the psychological impact of trauma on learning.

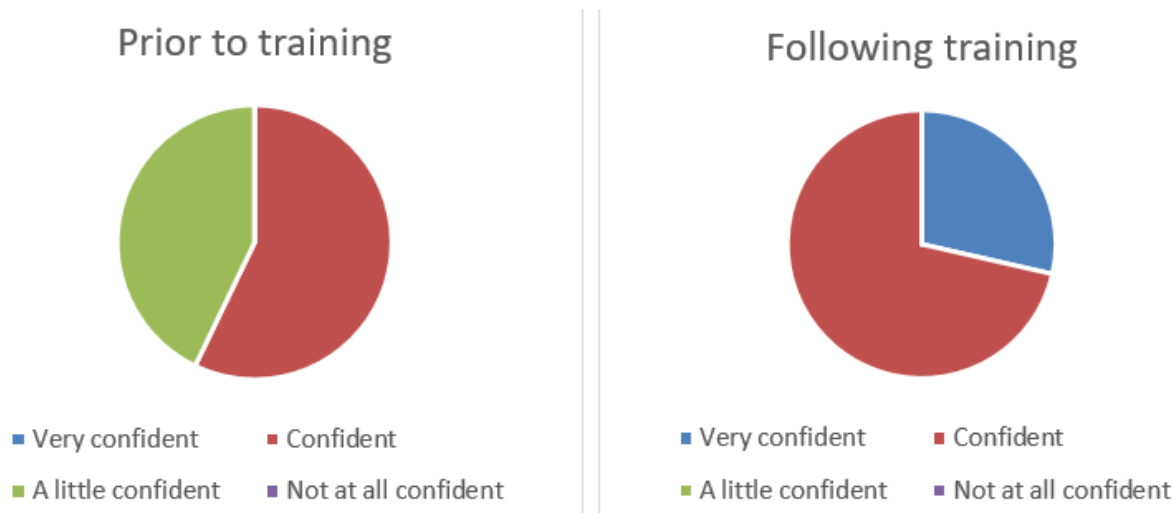
Feedback from Strand F: Bespoke training session to explore the psychological impact of transitions for children in care or children with a social worker

The session was completed online, however there has been limited feedback from attendees. Those who did respond were from a range of roles, including Safeguarding Lead, Senior Practitioner, Education Advisors, Social Workers, and Designated Safeguarding Leads/Designated Teachers.

Information from the feedback indicated that all respondents found the session extremely or somewhat useful to their practice.



Prior to the session, attendees rated, as 57% confident and 43% a little confident, while all attendees rated themselves as either confident (71%) or extremely confident (29%) following training:



Attendees were asked to indicate what they would do differently in their practice following the training session, with the following aspects identified:

- Pass on useful strategies to schools and staff
- Share ideas and resources with the school
- Continue to support other professionals to raise awareness of the challenges young people face when faced with transition and the impact on wellbeing and learning for them
- Earlier preparation for transitions
- Support schools by sharing best practice and strategies shared with the session to support CYP
- Ensure good transitions as these are important
- Work with one student closely to build a relationship in order to support her

Other comments shared were:

- Thank you for providing a wide variety of topics to support CYP
- Thank you, very informative
- It was great

Feedback from Strand G: Gloucestershire Multi-Aspect Support Plan (GMASP)

Following the success of the GMASP pilot delivered during 2022-23, where three GMASPs were completed at Coney Hill Primary School, Upton St Lenard's Primary School and Tewksbury C of E Primary School, it was agreed that up to three cases would be commissioned for 2023-24. Previous respondents indicated that the process was valued and there had been positive outcomes for participants and for the outcomes for the children and young people at the centre of the plans. Feedback noted the benefit for clear information sharing and collaborative problem-solving, to generate clear and achievable actions with a timescale to support the process.

There was a delay in identifying possible cases which may be appropriate for GMASP support during the 2023-24 academic year, leading to the three possible cases identified being chosen quickly and with less preparation than during the previous academic year and being suggested for pupils in Key Stage 3 and 4, instead of cases in Key Stage 2 where the GMASP is aimed.

Of the cases identified, one pupil was due to meet with the school EP however between setting the date for the EP visit for a multi-agency meeting to discuss the possibility of using GMASP, and the planned meeting date, the pupil was permanently excluded and attends another setting, which the school EP had no information for.

Another possible case identified, the school EP liaised on several occasions with school staff and Education Advisor, as well as the pupil being raised in the no-named monthly planning meeting between EPS and Virtual School, it was deemed that other support needed to be in place prior to GMASP, such as having access to a mentor or equivalent to support the pupil and act as an advocate for them, to be able to effectively inform and contribute to the process.

The final potential case has had an initial meeting between the EP and all stakeholders, although it is unlikely to be able to be reviewed within this academic year and may need to be recorded within the 2024-25 evaluation.

Planned work for 2024-25:

Based on the review meeting held in May 2024 with key feedback from the 2023-24 work and discussions about service priorities and identified themes for supporting CYP in Care or with a social worker and their extended remit to support Kinship Care, including Special Guardianship Order (SGO) and informal foster carers, the following aspects were suggested as being areas which would support:

Strand A: series of 3 training sessions for social workers and/or foster carers, which are repeated for school staff on topics identified by VS as being pertinent: Exploring and supporting CYP with their attendance; Ways to support CYP who reside outside of the family home and not in foster care; Supporting CYP within adoption, kinship and SGO arrangements

Strand C: regular planning meetings between VS staff and EPS (EP & SSEP); approximately 10 across the academic year, dates to be set

Strand D: problem-solving support for Edge of Care SW team and/or Kinship Care team using solution circles; 6 sessions across the academic year which may be split between teams

Strand E: children missing education – 20 sessions of support as part of core offer, delivered by HL (*free to access*)

Strand F: bespoke checklist of best practice for supporting CIC/CYP with a SW, for supporting best practice when supporting transitions for these CYP, which is evidence-based and practice-based

Strand G: recording a 10-minute informative video based on an identified theme relating to meeting the needs of CYP supported by the Virtual School

Strand H: continuing to offer 3 (may be up to 5) Gloucestershire Multi-Aspect Support plans to CIC/CYP with a SW, to be delivered by school EP

Dr Melissa Parry

Educational Psychologist

Date: 11.07.2024

BSc (Hons), MSc., DEdPsych

Educational Psychology Service, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Team, 1st Floor, Edinburgh House,
Coronation Square, Cheltenham, GL51 7SA. Tel: 01452 328771

Case studies from Virtual School.

How we have supported and shown Impact through support and additional funding.



What this case study is about

Brief summary of what this is about.

Attendance.

Reception year, placed out of county. EHCP in process.

YP only attending 1.5 hours a day-after lunch. Missing phonics and other learning opportunities which are held in the morning.

School concerned with managing need, lack of staffing and no funding to cover interim 1-1 support necessary (as per outcomes of the EHCP).

Need for consistent 1-1-trusting relationships that allows YP to feel safe and supported and able to engage with learning.

What we did

How did we help, how did we set out to solve what ever the problem was?

Use of PP+ and additional transition funding to cover the cost of interim 1-1 support to allow increase in attendance.

Supported school to make applications for SEN specialist 1-1 support and identify appropriate support.

The team around the child met regularly to support the school staff with their understanding of the YP needs and to implement trauma informed practices to support the YP through transition and into full time education.

What we achieved

Articulate improved outcomes

The YP began to build a relationship with 1-1 support, being met each morning by their allocated learning mentor-funded through PP+.

The YP was then able to attend morning phonics sessions with the option to leave the group, accompanied by the 1-1 at times of dysregulation, reducing the incidents of escalated behaviours.

YP started to build relationships within class setting, being invited to a birthday party and taking part in sports day.

YP is now in full time education, EHCP in place and transition for year 1 has begun.

What others said about it

Quotes from child, school, social worker, parents or carers

SENDco- The time that XXX remains in the phonics group each morning is increasing. XXX has built a trusting relationship with their 1-1. The use of the strategies identified in the TAC meetings and the use of PP+ means we have all been able to work collectively, giving the same message to XXX that they are safe and supported.

Social worker- XXX has come so far in such a short period of time, without the PP+ the increase in attendance would not have been possible.

What this case study is about

Brief summary of what this is about

This year 9 young person was struggling to make progress in maths and was losing confidence in their abilities in the subject.

What we did

How did we help, how did we set out to solve what ever the problem was?

With the agreement of the young person and Carer's and school at the PEP meeting in the Spring we allocated PP+ funding to pay for maths tuition once a week.

The maths tutor has been liaising with the young persons maths teacher at school to share information regarding how to best plug gaps in the young persons learning.

What we achieved

Articulate improved outcomes

The young person is now making improvements with their maths learning progress and is beginning to feel more confident in the subject. They have made enough progress to stop the tutoring at the end of the academic year, with the understanding that if it is needed to support learning in the future we can look to using PP+ funding for maths tutoring moving into year 10.

What others said about it

Quotes from child, school, social worker, parents or carers

Teacher's comments: -

Maths – "xxx is coming across more and more confident with their number as well as algebra work."

"Maths- perfect homework completion for Sparx since February half term."

Young person's comments: -

"I also find Maths hard. I am trying to listen and focus more in Maths which is helping. I have recently had a postcard home and I did better this time in my assessment."

What this case study is about

Brief summary of what this is about

This young person in Year 10 has worked with the 'Team Around the Child' to communicate their barriers to learning.

They were being suspended on a weekly basis and the team around the young person worked alongside them to turn this around.

The Pupil Premium + grant has been used to provide them with tutoring, therapy and an altered timetable which has supported them with some of the difficulties they were experiencing.

What we did

How did we help, how did we set out to solve whatever the problem was?

VS attended reintegration meetings following a number of suspensions and advocated for clear communication between all parties to listen to the young person.

There were certain lessons which were triggering for the young person so tutoring and an amended timetable (including therapy) were put in place.

VS also advocated for an Educational Psychologist using PP+ funding, for the young person to be included on the SEN register and a pupil passport written to enable staff to support in the best way possible.

What we achieved

Articulate improved outcomes

- Huge reduction in suspensions – going from one a week last term to almost none this term.
- Big change in teacher comments and feedback – much more positive.
- Attendance in lessons has increased massively.
- Relationships between all parties have been strengthened by the collaborative approach.

What others said about it

Quotes from child, school, social worker, parents or carers

School:

"We are really happy with improvements all around."

Young person:

"Therapy is 10 out of 10."

Carer:

"We are really proud of X. X has really stepped up."

Social worker:

"I totally agree. X has come a long way in the last few months and is giving everything a try."

What this case study is about

Brief summary of what this is about

The school used PP+ funding to support access for the therapy farm for many of the YP who attend an SEMH school in my tutor group

What we did

How did we help, how did we set out to solve what ever the problem was?

The farm uses this facility to support the YP SEMH needs and facilitates opportunity for therapeutic support for each YP attending.

This includes developing resilience to engage in lessons, successful interactions with staff, Post 16 aspirations and working towards the Duke of Edinburgh bronze award

What we achieved

Articulate improved outcomes

For every young person who has accessed this facility, the PEPs have fed back that this has supported their SEMH needs. One young person's Post 16 aspiration is to be an army vet nurse and they are using this experience as part of her army application.

No child has been excluded or suspended whilst accessing the farm as part of their PEP.

What others said about it

Quotes from child, school, social worker, parents or carers

PUPIL VOICE LM

'I enjoy the following subjects – enrichment, art , food tech and numeracy

What this case study is about

Brief summary of what this is about

This is not specifically about PP+ but funding for a CWSW.

Through the attendance project, this funding was specifically for 1 family who has a terminally ill sibling.

What we did

How did we help, how did we set out to solve what ever the problem was?

The funding supported the children accessing before and after school care when required linked to the sibling's illness and additional tuition linked to previous missed learning.

What we achieved

Articulate improved outcomes

There was a 15% increase in attendance across the school year for this young person as the school was able to offer support accessing additional before and after school care. In addition, the school reported that the impact of the tuition has supported the child in closing the learning gap with their peers

What others said about it

Quotes from child, school, social worker, parents or carers

SCHOOL
This has had a massive impact for both the child and the family as a whole.

The school reported that the parent found this invaluable as it took the pressure off the family due to these difficult circumstances linked to hospital appointments and school pick up times.

What this case study is about

Brief summary of what this is about

Student who found attending school difficult and was offered little educational aspiration within their birth family.

CIC but living with Birth Mum for the last 2 years.

School attendance was 0% and school staff hadn't seen this young person. Despite best efforts, social worker nor school could persuade the young person to return to education in any form.

What we did

How did we help, how did we set out to solve what ever the problem was?

Worked with social care to commission TMS Mentoring to provide 1x weekly support for 2hrs for re-engagement work. Funded by PPP.

This led to the young person requesting some schoolwork from their school and completing some with Mentor and independently outside their sessions.

VS worked in collaboration with School and SW to ensure education opportunities were offered.

Hours of mentoring were increased.

Frequency of mentoring was increased.

GCSE exams were booked

What we achieved

Articulate improved outcomes

The young person's confidence increased along with their level of engagement and their aspiration for the future.

All language exams were attended and completed in school despite the young person having not attended for 2years+

Conversations around career options and further qualifications followed.

Self confidence and self-belief increased along with an ability to be self-led and study independently.

What others said about it

Quotes from child, school, social worker, parents or carers School:

After such a long period with no engagement we are very proud the young person requested some work be provided and then followed through and completed their language exams.

Social worker:

In many ways it could be perceived as a small step but in reality, it's a massive change and a big step forwards.

Feel very pleased with the outcome achieved.

TMS Mentor:

So proud of how far they've come in the last 6months. Don't think this would have been achieved without PPP funding.

What this case study is about

Brief summary of what this is about

The use of Pupil Premium Plus to help this young person achieve their full academic potential and be at an age appropriate/near age appropriate level to their peers. This young person is currently in Year 6.

What we did

How did we help, how did we set out to solve what ever the problem was?

Pupil premium funding was used specifically for Precision Teaching for phonics, composition of writing, grammar and punctuation and reading. This young person also had 1:1 weekly tutoring for 1 hour per week in both English and Maths. These interventions were put into place Summer Term 2022 – 2023.

Subsequent PEP's through this year focused on consolidating the learning with the class teacher focussing mainly on writing and reading but also on SEMH.

What we achieved

Articulate improved outcomes

At the summer PEP 2022 – 2023 this young person was at the end of Year 5. They were achieving overall at just below Year 3 level. At the end of this academic year 2023 – 2024 they are achieving at Year 6 level. xxx has made amazing progress and consolidated their learning across all subjects.

This young person did suffer anxiety for the SATs and sadly they did not pass the tests but it does not take away from the amazing progress that they have made/maintained over the course of this academic year.

What others said about it

Quotes from child, school, social worker, parents or carers
Young person

'My reading has improved a lot, my maths has really improved' The lessons I like best are *'Maths now that I feel more confident'* The best things I have done or achieved at school are: *'Improving my maths and spellings, getting through SATs'* The lessons or learning I would like to get better at: *'English'*

School *'Love and drive of reading, activity pursuit of learning spellings using their phonic skills'*

Carer *'Attitude to learning, confidence has blossomed, positive about High School.'*

SW *'Positive about everything about home and school. Very smiley and confident.'*

What this case study is about

Brief summary of what this is about

A primary school student entered care from EHE with Literacy and numeracy skills 5 years behind peers.

Student is involved in a complex court case.

Social worker organised a school place at a local primary school with excellent pastoral support capabilities.

Student had no prior experience of formal education and home education provision had not covered phonics or development of reading and writing skills.

What we did

How did we help, how did we set out to solve what ever the problem was?

Spring PEP 2024 (first PEP following start at school)

PP+ provided for daily phonics sessions in school with a dedicated member of staff who was able to direct the learning at the speed the young person needed in order to maximise progress.

Summer PEP 2024

PP+ funding continued for the remainder of the academic year for the daily phonics intervention.

What we achieved

Articulate improved outcomes

Student has made over a years progress within phonics at school in 6 months.

The phonics teacher has stated they are making significant progress and there has been a huge increase in the fluidity of reading observed both in school and at home.

With the building blocks of phonics now in place, school are confident that progress will be even quicker over the next academic year and the student is hoped to be able to catch up to their peers in both reading and writing by the end of primary school

What others said about it

Quotes from child, school, social worker, parents or carers

Quotes from school
“They have made huge progress and is seeing reading as being really purposeful now” “xxx took part in an art research project with their group in class which meant they had to read information and was proud about being able to help with providing details for the project.”

Quotes from carers
“there has been a huge shift recently and they are very enthusiastic about reading their school books. xxx is really excited to tell XX how they has progressed in reading and phonics, they are now volunteering to do reading and spellings”

What this case study is about

Brief summary of what this is about

Year 5 CIC on the SEN register; the primary need is SEMH and they also needs some support with aspects of learning. Also, there are suspected autistic traits and difficulty staying focused on task. An EHCP has been applied for.

The student has difficulty expressing their emotions in a positive manner and making friends. This has had a massive impact on them over the years.

What we did

How did we help, how did we set out to solve what ever the problem was?

The student's difficulty with expressing emotions has been noted in previous PEP meetings, so the school has put in place drama therapy to help address this. This is funded through the Pupil Premium Plus. It was hoped this would also help with building friendships in school. This is the second year the student has been having drama therapy and we are beginning to see the positive outcomes.

What we achieved

Articulate improved outcomes

The target set at the PEP in March 2024 in relation with drama therapy was:

'By June, I will feel supported in unpicking how I feel and given strategies to help regulate and manage my emotions. I will begin to be able to say something positive about me.'

What others said about it

Quotes from child, school, social worker, parents or carers

'My drama therapy is going very well. My closest friend is A, she is very kind.'
(student, June 2024)

'Achieved some things I wanted to do in life: I have friends and they told me they always wanted to be my friend. I have achieved talking to people, I feel ok about talking now.'
(student, June 2024)

'xxx loves drama therapy and is very open to S (drama therapist)' (DT, June 2024)

What this case study is about

Brief summary of what this is about

A child in year 5 struggling with English, in particular writing.

Lack of confidence in this area of need.

BEP, accessing at Y4-level.

What we did

How did we help, how did we set out to solve what ever the problem was?

Using PP+ we put into place 1-1 English tuition.

What we achieved

Articulate improved outcomes

The tutoring sessions had a good impact on their handwriting – They are much more confident with their writing and will now write in lessons.

Work started to have an impact on confidence to be a writer but more sessions needed

What others said about it

Quotes from child, school, social worker, parents or carers.

Adoptive parent:

Is pleased their handwriting is improving and they are no longer ashamed of their handwriting and is writing more at home eg/ in a diary.

What this case study is about

Brief summary of what this is about

Year 11 YP- Protocol. Joined a new school in the summer term of year 10.

This YP struggled throughout year 11, having several placement moves, several suspensions and episodes of school refusal. There was also some SEMH needs that resulted in hospitalisation

What we did

How did we help, how did we set out to solve what ever the problem was?

Ensured all three PEP meetings were held and well attended. Responded to the needs as they presented and gave additional pupil premium to the school to implement a bespoke package of education that our YP would be able to access and engage with as well as preventing another permanent exclusion in KS4

What we achieved

Articulate improved outcomes

Improved attendance during the run up to GCSE exams.

Better engagement in 1:1 tuition sessions

Attendance to all GCSE exams the YP was entered for and leavers prom.

Identification of Post-16 College course and application submitted

What others said about it

Quotes from child, school, social worker, parents or carers

School – “xxx has done their biology exam !!!I have really praised them. They were in on time, answered all but 2 questions. I am so thrilled with that they did it.”

“HOY met YP and they seemed in good spirits going into the exam room”

“Attended three for three so far, – Biology, Maths and Chemistry”

“xxx has attended all of their exams (albeit in their pyjamas at some points!)”

EA – “I’m just so pleased they managed to attend all exams, thanks so much for getting them to this point, had you not supported them in the way you did they may not had taken

What this case study is about

Brief summary of what this is about

This case study is about a Year 10 young person who has historically struggled to attend and engage with school.

Due to moving to a new home, the year 10 young person had started a new school setting and was demonstrating very challenging behaviours that resulted in multiple suspensions and put him at risk of PEX in the future.

A joined-up, multi-agency approach was required for this young person's social, emotional and mental health needs to be fully understood and met due to the number of services involved outside of the school setting.

What we did

How did we help, how did we set out to solve what ever the problem was?

An initial PEP meeting with the virtual school, social worker and designated teacher was used to create a picture of the YP's past experiences and current situation.

Further, multi-agency meetings were attended by the VS and school – in collaboration an appropriate support pathway was identified and through educational planning meetings adapted in response the outcomes.

Additional PPP funding was used to provide weekly adventure sports mentoring for two terms.

What we achieved

Articulate improved outcomes

The YP has built trusting relationships with key staff at the school knowing they understand his needs and that they will listen to their voice.

The YP has excelled during the adventure sports mentoring. The mentor's input during PEP meetings has given the YP increased self-confidence and a sense of pride in his achievements.

The YP's attendance has doubled since the start of term and they show a commitment to being in school daily.

There are positive comments from the YP's teachers of their efforts to engage in lessons.

What others said about it

Quotes from child, school, social worker, parents or carers.

'It has been great to work closely together as a team to support our YP. The joined-up approach has resulted in many positive outcomes. Stepping out of the routine meetings and having more catch ups have allowed us to really understand his educational needs and wants' Social Worker.

'The Virtual School have been extremely proactive in supporting me in my role as DT. There has been clear communication and we have worked together to commission alternative provision through PPP funding that has motivated our YP. Their attendance and engagement in wider learning opportunities have really improved as a result'.

What this case study is about

Brief summary of what this is about

Collaborate working to support a Yr13 YP with complex SEMH needs-NEET.

The YP is at risk of significant self-harm/suicide. Support from CAMHS, Eating Disorder Clinic and YST.

Came into care during Yr. 12 in June 2023 and had attended a collage for one month in early autumn 2022 but the college withdrew them because of poor attendance.

We had no data in regard to GCSE's obtained in year 11 and what SEN if any had been previously investigated/confirmed.

What we did

How did we help, how did we set out to solve what ever the problem was?

From January 2023, using a new systematic approach, their NEET status was monitored by Virtual School via 6 weekly NEET mailshot to social care.

In June 2024, social worker made direct contact with Virtual School to request a PEP meeting, as the YP had been studying a distance learning course. The subject is related to studies in mental health as the YP wants to work within caring professions.

The PEP was held, and the focus was on English and Math's tuition which YST Tutor was due to start that week. All parties stated that did not think the YP had any formal qualifications from school as they had moved between various schools.

Virtual School made direct contact with Archway School to query GCSEs gained. They responded with the data, and they had gained 6 GCSE's.

What we achieved

Articulate improved outcomes

At the end of the meeting Virtual School researched Liquid Logic (LL) notes. This showed which school they had attended. And that in KS4 a Dyslexia Assessment had been completed.

The YP had previously been on a My Plan Plus and both documents were available. .

Based on this Virtual School made direct contact with the previous school and were able to gain the qualifications that they YP had sat and passed.

The PEP document was completed and copies of Dyslexia Assessment, My Pan Plus Review and GCSE results uploaded. This was sent to social worker for circulation.

What others said about it

Quotes from child, school, social worker, parents or carers.

Joint working between a variety of agencies, including the school they left nearly 2 years previously, enabled a clear picture of the education history, achievements and potential to be circulated within the wider team around the child. This will enable YST Tutor to tailor the curriculum appropriately, help regain self-esteem as a learner and enable Leaving Care PA and social worker to support them to apply for appropriate courses.

