

Virtual School Kent

Introduction to Virtual School Kent and the work that they do for Kent children.



What is a Virtual School?

The Virtual School acts as a local authority champion to promote the progress and educational attainment of children and young people who are, or who have been in care, those whose families are supported by a social worker and those who live with a kinship carer.

The school does not exist in real terms, or as a building. Children do not attend it - they remain the responsibility of the school at which they are enrolled. VSK is simply an organisation which has been created for the effective co-ordination of educational services at a strategic and operational level.



Kent Children in Care

When a child is no longer able to live with their birth parents and a court decides it is in their best interests to be placed into the care of the local authority, VSK has a duty to ensure that they receive the very best education and support to bridge any gaps in educational progress they may have.

They do this in conjunction with the education setting, social care and foster carers. The plan is known as a Personal Education Plan (PEP) which is a statutory requirement for all Children in Care.



What is a PEP?

The PEP is an electronic tool which enables all professionals involved with the child to create a detailed record of learning and development in order to promote a shared understanding of children's educational needs and strengths.

It is an evolving record of what needs to happen for the child to enable them to make expected progress and fulfil their potential. Reviews take place three times a year.

The PEP provides an opportunity for the child to contribute and their voice to be heard.



VSK Advisory Team

The VSK Advisory Team champions the needs of three of the Virtual School cohorts. These are:

- Previously Looked After Children
- Children with a Social Worker
- Children living in Kinship Care arrangements

It is important to remember that all of these children have experienced some form of adverse childhood experience, which may impact on their educational achievement and engagement.



VSK Advisory Team Cohorts

Previously looked after children

Children who have left the local authority care under an Adoption, Child Arrangements or Special Guardianship Order

Children living in Kinship Care

Children who are living in formal kinship arrangements (Special Guardianship or Child Arrangements Order)

Children with a Social Worker

Children whose families are being supported by a social worker for safeguarding reasons. (Child in Need or Child Protection Plans)

Quick Reference guide to VSK Advisory Team service

	Previously Looked After Children – those who have left care of a local authority under an Adoption, Special Guardianship or Child Arrangements Order	Children with a Social Worker – those children who have (or have had in the last 6 years) a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan.	Children living in Formal Kinship Care Arrangements - under a Special Guardianship or Child Arrangement Order who have NOT previously been in the care of a local authority	Children in Informal Kinship Care Arrangements - Informal Kinship carer, private fostering. * Unless the child has been supported under a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan in the last 6 years.
Parent/carer phone consultations to discuss educational needs	✓	✗	✓	✗
Social Worker phone consultations to discuss educational needs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Education Setting/ other professionals phone consultations to discuss educational needs (with parental/carer consent)	✓	✓	✓	✗ *
Education Setting consultations to discuss general issues around cohorts	✓	✓	✓	✓
VSKAT attend Education Setting meetings if appropriate	✓	✗	✗	✗
Education Setting training if required	✓	✓	✓	✓
Education Setting based consultations with Kent Educational Psychologist Service and VSKAT (with parental/carer consent)	✓	✓	✓	✗ *
Eligible for Pupil Premium for Previously Looked After Children	✓	✗ (Unless PLAC)	✗	✗
General advice on use of Pupil Premium (for PLAC or FSM)	Parent/School		Social Worker/ Education provision if applicable	
Provide funding for individual or groups of children.	✗	✗	✗	✗
Work with individual children – or providing academic or other interventions.	✗	✗	✗	✗
Tracking and monitoring educational progress of individual children	✗	✗	✗	✗
Priority on over subscription criteria for school admissions.	✓	✗	✗	✗
Eligible under the Fair Access Protocol – where a child (without an EHCP) is having difficulty in securing a school place in-year, and it can be demonstrated that reasonable measures have been taken to secure a place through the in-year admissions process. School admissions code 2021 (publishing.service.gov.uk)	For Adopted children this only applies if the local authority has been unable to promptly secure a school place.	Only applies to children currently on a plan, or who have been within 12 months of being referred to the protocol.	✓	✗

Previously Looked After Children

Children who have families through adoption, special guardianship or child arrangement orders have positive futures ahead of them. However, it is important to remember that this does not eliminate their past experiences, which can have a lasting impact, particularly in school. Education settings have a pivotal role in supporting the academic, social and emotional needs of Previously Looked After Children (PLAC).



What is an EPPLAC?

Education Plans for Previously Looked After Children are a continuation of the good practices seen within the Personal Education Plans (PEP) reviews for Children in Care. The purposes of the meeting will be to:

- encourage positive collaboration and communication between home and education provision.
- raise awareness of the needs and issues faced by children and their parents.
- review the support, interventions, and progress of the child
- identify unmet needs of the child
- discuss EYPP, in relation to the child's needs.

[Education Plan for Previously Looked After Children | Virtual School Kent](#)



Children living in Kinship Care

Children who live in kinship care have better outcomes than children who grow up in other types of non-parental care. However, their outcomes fall behind those children with no social worker involvement. The exceptional circumstances that lead to children not living with their birth parents are often known as adverse childhood experiences.

Although these children now live in safe, loving homes, it is important to remember that this does not eliminate their past experiences, which can have a lasting impact, particularly at school. Education settings have a pivotal role in supporting the academic social and emotional needs of children living in kinship care arrangements.



What is an EPKC?

Education Plans for children living in Kinship Care (EPKC) are a continuation of the good practices seen within the EPPLAC for previously looked after children. The purposes of the meeting will be to:

- encourage positive collaboration and communication between home and education provision.
- raise awareness of the needs and issues faced by children and their families.
- review the support, interventions, and progress of the child
- identify unmet needs of the child

[Education Plan for Kinship Care | Virtual School Kent](#)



Children with a Social Worker

For children with a social worker, attending an education provision allows them to improve their wellbeing, social and emotional skills within a safe, protective space.

Education settings play an important role in supporting the work that the social worker and family are doing to improve the lives of the children within the home.



How you best meet the child's needs?



Establish a quality key person relationship with the child.



Build relationships with the parent/carer and social worker to share information and support for the child's learning and development



Become involved in meetings with other professionals (PEP, EPPLAC, EPKC, CIN or CP meetings)



Discuss with parents and carers the benefits of holding an EPPLAC/EPKC meeting for those living in Kinship care arrangements or who are previously looked after children.



Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP)

All settings with a child who is either in care, or who has been previously in the care of a local authority in England or Wales are entitled to the full amount of EYPP per child.

To access the funding, please contact:

CiC - Contact: VSKEarlyYears@kent.gov.uk

PLAC - Contact: miearlyyears@kent.gov.uk



VSK Contact Details

Kent Children in Care

VSKEarlyYears@kent.gov.uk

VSK Advisory Team
(Previously Looked After Children,
Children with a social worker, Children
living in Kinship Care arrangements.)

VSKAdvisoryTeam@kent.gov.uk

[Initial Contact Form](#)

Visit our website for more information and resources:

[Home | Virtual School Kent](#)

