



Promoting the Education and Attainment of Children in Care

What is my role as a foster carer?

Cheshire West and Chester Virtual School
August 2020

What do we know?

Education can change lives. Together with good quality foster care it can transform fostered children's life chances by unlocking their potential.

Why should we promote the education of children in care?



We know that looked after children have significantly lower educational attainment than their peers, but with the right care and support they can realise their full potential.

Why might children in care not do as well compared to their peers?





- **Experience many moves: their lives are characterised by instability**
- **Have to cope with profound changes in their living environment**
- **Have missed education or had poor attendance**
- **Experience loss and separation, having to move away from their family, community, and friends**
- **Suffer symptoms of early childhood trauma and associated attachment difficulties which impacts on learning**
- **Have gaps in their learning or developmental difficulties or additional special educational needs**
- **May have to travel long distances to their education setting**
- **Have to manage the physical and emotional context of contact**
- **Low expectations of children in care**



What do I need to know?

1. What is the Virtual School?

The Virtual School in Cheshire West and Chester works alongside education settings and social workers to ensure the best possible outcomes. The Virtual School team seeks to support and challenge through a multi professional approach to enable the education gap between Children in Care and their peers to be closed.



What do we do?



The aims of the Virtual School are:

- to provide high quality education including pre-school learning experiences
- to support high aspirations
- to improve educational outcomes
- to increase opportunities to access further and higher education
- to encourage wider participation in the Personal Education Plans



To achieve our aims we will provide:

- support to ensure that every child and young person in care, from birth to 25, has an up to date termly Personal Education Plan
- guidance and support to ensure the best possible use of Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) and Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP)
- advice and guidance in securing appropriate education provision for children in care in Cheshire West and Chester
- training opportunities for designated teachers and school support staff, early years settings, foster carers, social workers and other appropriate professionals
- advice on education issues and sign post to other relevant education teams
- advice on education transitions of children and young people
- up to date information on the educational assessment and progress of children and young people in care of Cheshire West and Chester Council
- Headteacher of the Virtual School
Debbie Murphy
- Operations lead
Chris Vohora
- Business Support
Claire Maclaren
- Engagement Mentor
Kelly Jackson
- Person-Centred Therapist
Anke Jones
- PEP co-ordinators:
Niki White: Ellesmere Port and Chester
Nikki Duffel: Northwich and Winsford
- Education Adviser SEND for children in care
Jen James
- Education Advisers for children in care
Lorraine Evans
Helen Hilditch
Chris Vohora
- Education Adviser for Previously Looked After Children
Alison Ismail

2. What is a Person Education Plan?

- Local authorities have a duty to promote the educational achievement of Children in Care and must ensure they have an up-to-date Personal Education Plan (PEP)
- The PEP is a record of what needs to happen for a Child in Care to enable them to achieve good educational outcomes. The PEP should reflect the importance of a personalised approach to learning which meets the educational needs of the child, stretches aspirations and builds life chances
- The PEP must be completed on a termly basis (3 times a year)
- In Cheshire West and Chester all our young people in care, from birth to age 18, require a PEP. The young person, however, can request one up till the age of 25
- Due to COVID-19, the Summer term 2020 PEP was amended to reflect the education offer during lockdown
- As children return to school in September the VS has drafted a 'Recovery PEP' to take into account of the DfE guidelines for the curriculum for the Autumn term

3. Who do I go to for help in an education setting?

Every school has a designated teacher (DT) for children in care who

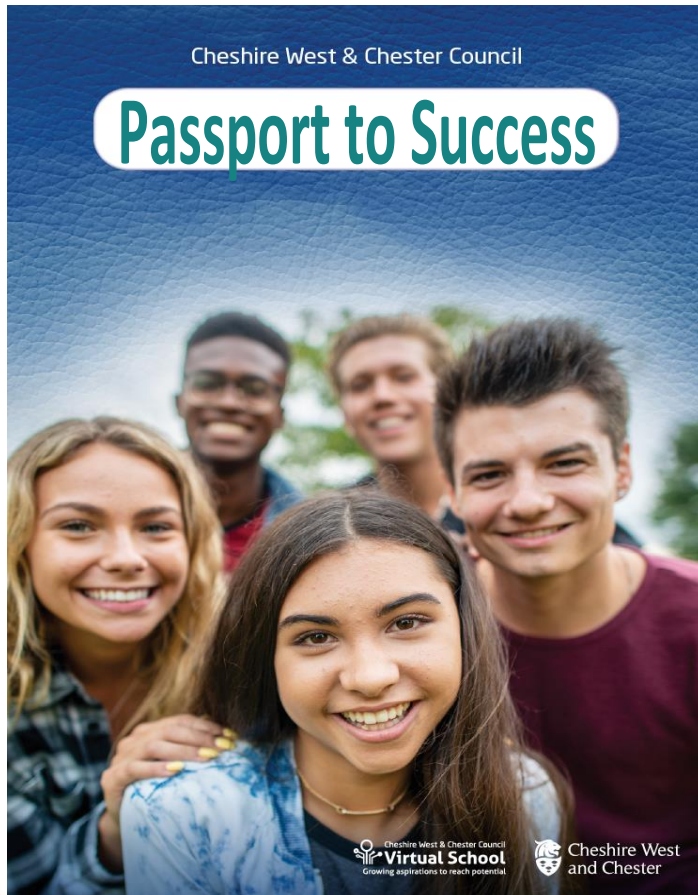
- acts as the central point of contact within their school for all links with Children in Care and Previously Looked After Children
 - ensures the child or young person's voice is represented during decision making about them
 - helps and encourages staff to understand the needs of Children in Care and Previously Looked After Children
 - help carers to promote a positive learning environment at home
 - take the lead in implementing Personal Education Plans (PEPs) within their setting
- There is also a designated practitioner in an early years setting and a designated person in college who has the same role
 - You should know who this person is in school, an early years setting or college and have their contact details
 - Each child in care should also have a 'key person' who knows them well and who knows you well too. This person should be someone your children relates to, likes and is named on the PEP. It is the person your child links to on a day to day basis and can seek them out if needing some support or a chat

4. What is Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) and Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) for children in care?



- This is a DfE grant to local authorities for children in care
- Children in care are eligible in early year settings for EYPP from the term after their third birthday and for PP+ in school from reception to Y11
- The VS headteacher is responsible for how the money is spent and in normal circumstances both EYPP and PP+ is requested via the PEP and is used to close a gap in learning in the core subjects and for pastoral support
- For the Autumn term 2020 schools and early years settings will be allocated a 'Recovery grant' for our CW&C children in care on their roll. How settings are using this grant will be recorded on the PEP

5. What is the Passport to Success?



- Passport to Success is a development programme to support our young people in secondary education with their career and education options
- By working through this programme, the Virtual School and the young person's own school will support young people in putting together the Passport 2 Success folder, which will help young people when applying for college, apprenticeships and employment opportunities

The programme includes:

- Post 16 options including colleges, sixth forms, basic apprenticeship info
- Apprenticeships
- CVs - What they are and how to produce one
- Interview techniques
- Life skills

6. What is the Activity Passport?



Cheshire West & Chester Council
Virtual School
 Growing aspirations to reach potential

My Activity Passport

Name:

Start date: End date:

Email: virtual.school@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk
 Visit: www.cheshirewestvirtual.school



Cheshire West and Chester

- My Activity Passport has been designed by the Virtual School for every Child in Care from Early Years to Year 6. The document was shared with Foster Carers at the Education Conference and will be implemented from September. All children have received a copy in the post over the summer
- There are twenty yearly challenges for you to complete with the children in placement, some of which may be done at home, some in school, individually or as a family. They are designed to make learning fun, to introduce children to activities they may not have tried before and to encourage them to spend more time outdoors
- The document will be discussed at PEP meetings, looking at how well the child has achieved their current targets and then deciding on new ones. The Passport is very visual and designed for the child to be involved in the choosing of the activities and to help tick them off when they are completed. Many families have spent time during Lockdown learning new skills, spending time outdoors and doing traditional crafts, these activities can be discussed at the Autumn term PEP meeting and will start the child's Passport journey

8. What do I do if my child has Special Educational Needs?

- Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) is a legal term. It describes the needs of a child or young person who has a difficulty or disability which makes learning harder for them than for other children their age
- If you have concerns talk to their teacher or pre-school practitioner. Ask to speak to the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENDCo), who organises extra help for children with SEND
- A detailed description of special educational needs can be found in the [SEND Code of Practice](#) (SEN on page 15 and disability on page 16). Or you can [read the easy-read version of the SEND Code of Practice](#) from Mencap
- Both resources and lots of other information can be found on CW&C Live Well site www.livewell.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk
- If the SENDCo and your child's teacher agree that your child may have additional learning needs, their will take a 'step-by-step' approach to identify what support is required. This is known as SEND support
- Whatever the school decides to do, you have the right to be informed and for your views, and your child's views, to be taken into account. Your child's teacher and the SENDCo will follow guidance set out in the [SEN Code of Practice](#)
- Talk to the teacher or SENDCo about:
 - why you think your child may have special educational needs
 - whether your child learns at the same rate as other children their age
 - what the school can do to help
 - what you can do to help
- Use [the Council for Disabled Children's jargon busters](#) page to help you understand some of the terms people might use when talking about SEND

9. What about school admissions?

- Children in care are prioritised for school places when applying to start school in reception and on transfer to secondary school in Y7. This also applies for children in care if they move between schools . This is called an in-year application.
- The child's social worker and the Virtual School work together to identify the school that best meets the needs of children in care
- Wherever possible children in care should attend schools , early years settings, colleges or other providers that are rated as good or better by Ofsted
- The child's social worker completes the school application form
- Where possible children remain in the school they know as it is a safe base for them and can provide stability when everything else is changing around them

10. How can I help my child?

- Support and encourage
- Advocate and participate
- Provide a positive home learning environment
- Access education resources and activities beyond the school day
- Work closely with the education setting and the designated teacher or my child's key person

- Promote high quality early learning and pre-school experience
- Know how to support your young person in further education, training and employment
- Actively work as part of a team around your child including attending meetings
- Support good attendance
- Have up to date information about progress and a copy of your child's PEP

11. Where can I find advice or resources to support me?

- <https://cheshirewestvirtual.school>
- [Livewell.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](https://livewell.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)
- CW&C Information Advice and Support Service helps parents and carers, children and young people who have difficulties with learning, and or a disability from birth to 25 years
Telephone number 0300 1237001
- <https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk>