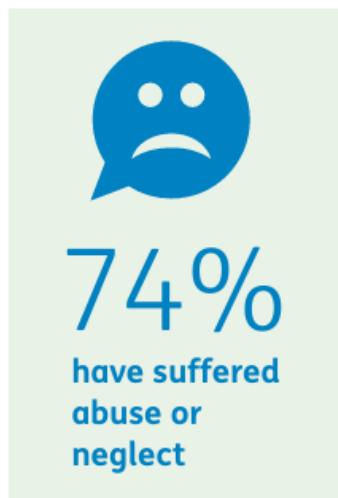




# Regional Guide: Supporting Previously Looked-After Children (PLAC) A Booklet for Schools

This document has been written for schools within the area 5 network, specifically to summarise key guidance for schools in relation to previously looked after children. This booklet has been created with the aim of providing practical support to staff in schools to working with children and young people who are adopted or, with Kinship families or under special guardianship.

Schools can have a vital role to play in helping young people and children who are permanently placed through providing specific support, raising attainment and addressing their wider needs. However, for many complex reasons, school life also has the potential to create anxiety and stress for permanently placed children and their families.



## Definition of Previously Looked-After Children (PLAC):

*A previously looked-after child is no longer looked after by a local authority because they are the subject of an adoption order, a special guardianship order (SGO), or a child arrangements order – including those adopted from state care outside England and Wales (from April 2023). [DfE statutory guidance, 2018].*

### Kinship care and Special Guardianship at a glance

Kinship care describes children being raised by relatives, friends or connected carers when they cannot live with birth parents. New statutory guidance (October 2024) asks every local authority to publish a “kinship local offer” and emphasises support based on a child’s needs rather than only legal status.

### Special Guardianship Orders (SGO)

appoint one or more adults (not the birth parents) as the child’s special guardian until 18; SGs hold enhanced parental responsibility and usually make day-to-day decisions. (Children Act 1989, ss.14A-G; DfE Special Guardianship guidance).

### Children with a Social Worker (CWSW)



Since September 2021, Virtual School Heads (VSHs) have a strategic leadership role for children who have a social worker (including Child in Need and Child Protection) and those who previously had one. This role is about partnership, advice and system leadership – not case management.

## The children and Young People

All adopted children have experienced significant loss and the majority of children and young people adopted today are likely to experience some impact of attachment difficulties and/or trauma. Most became 'looked after children' before being placed for adoption and continue to have the same or similar needs as they had when they were 'in care'. The impact of early experiences is not erased when children are placed in loving and supportive families, and the contrast between the two experiences may even exacerbate difficulties

## Aspects of Support

Thankfully, there is greater awareness than ever before about the potential needs and difficulties faced by adopted children or those under special guardianship and their families.

- Adoptive parents have often had considerable training and preparation related to nurturing attachments and meeting the emotional and relational needs of children placed for adoption.
- Adopted and special guardianship children now have priority school admissions and are eligible for an enhanced pupil premium grant, the Pupil Premium Plus.
- Since May 2015, the Adoption Support Fund has been accessible in order to provide funding to address adoptive families' unmet therapeutic needs.
- Special Guardians are also able to access the Adoption Support Fund.

**Role of Virtual School:** Provide advice, guidance, and training to schools and parents; support Designated Teachers; promote educational achievement; advise on PP+ spending.

## The five regional areas:

### Wigan

Pupil Premium Plus (PP+): £2,570 annually for PLAC pupils (Reception to Year 11), paid directly to schools via October census. Funding must be used to support eligible pupils and evidence impact.

Local Contact: [Andrea.Hurst@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:Andrea.Hurst@wigan.gov.uk)



**Wigan**  
Council

### Cheshire West & Chester

Pupil Premium Plus (PP+): £2,570 annually for PLAC pupils (Reception to Year 11), paid directly to schools via October census. Funding must be used to support eligible pupils and evidence impact.



**Cheshire West  
and Chester**

Local Contact: [Alison.Ismail@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](mailto:Alison.Ismail@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)



### St Helens

Pupil Premium Plus (PP+): £2,570 annually for PLAC pupils (Reception to Year 11), paid directly to schools via October census. Funding must be used to support eligible pupils and evidence impact.



Local Contact: [Lesley Moon](mailto:LesleyMoon@sthelens.gov.uk) - [LesleyMoon@sthelens.gov.uk](mailto:LesleyMoon@sthelens.gov.uk)

### Halton

Pupil Premium Plus (PP+): £2,570 annually for PLAC pupils (Reception to Year 11), paid directly to schools via October census. Funding must be used to support eligible pupils and evidence impact.



Local Contact: [David Bradshaw](mailto:David.Bradshaw@halton.gov.uk) - [David.Bradshaw@halton.gov.uk](mailto:David.Bradshaw@halton.gov.uk)

### Warrington

Pupil Premium Plus (PP+): £2,570 annually for PLAC pupils (Reception to Year 11), paid directly to schools via October census. Funding must be used to support eligible pupils and evidence impact.



Local Contact: [Liz McEntee](mailto:Liz.McEntee@warrington.gov.uk) - [emcentee@warrington.gov.uk](mailto:Liz.McEntee@warrington.gov.uk)

Local Authority	PLAC Lead	Website	Contact Email
Wigan	Andrea Hurst		<a href="mailto:Andrea.Hurst@wigan.gov.uk">Andrea.Hurst@wigan.gov.uk</a>
Cheshire West & Chester	Alison Ismail	 Cheshire West & Chester Council Virtual School Growing aspirations to reach potential	<a href="mailto:Alison.Ismail@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk">Alison.Ismail@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk</a>
St Helens	Les Moon	 St Helens Virtual School	<a href="mailto:LesleyMoon@sthelens.gov.uk">LesleyMoon@sthelens.gov.uk</a>
Halton	David Bradshaw	 HALTON VIRTUAL SCHOOL	<a href="mailto:David.Bradshaw@halton.gov.uk">David.Bradshaw@halton.gov.uk</a>
Warrington	Liz McEntee	 WARRINGTON Borough Council	<a href="mailto:emcentee@warrington.gov.uk">emcentee@warrington.gov.uk</a>



## What schools should offer: a minimum entitlement

- **Leadership:** A trained Designated Teacher (DT) with leadership clout to champion looked-after and previously looked-after pupils, working closely with the DSL.
- **Staff development:** Adoption- and trauma aware practice across staff; careful use of behaviour policies to avoid escalation and exclusion.
- **Planning:** For looked-after children, high quality, termly Personal Education Plans (PEPs). For PLAC, a school led education plan (often called a PLAC PEP) with parental consent.
- **SEND:** Assess early; use the graduated approach; align with EHCPs where relevant.
- **Teaching & inclusion:** Predictable classrooms; relational, attachment- and trauma informed strategies; strong attendance support, especially for EBSA.
- **Partnership with carers:** Proactive communication with adoptive parents, special guardians and kinship carers; agree information sharing and contact arrangements.

### The role of the Designated Teacher (for PLAC)

- Promote the educational achievement of looked after and previously looked after children; influence whole school culture;
- track progress; advise staff;
- meet parents/guardians;
- ensure appropriate use of Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) for PLAC;
- train colleagues;
- report to governors.



### Social workers:

For PLAC there is no allocated social worker by default; where a child has a social worker (CIN/CP) the DSL and DT should coordinate with the social worker and the VSH advisory offer for CWSW.

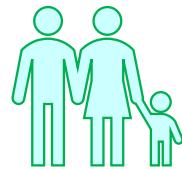
## Virtual School: what support you can expect

### For looked after children:

QA of PEPs; allocation of PP+ linked to PEP targets; training and advisory support; escalation routes; postn16 PP+ pilots where applicable.

### For previously looked after children:

- strategic advice to DTs
- resources, training, and model PLAC education plans;
- signposting to Adoption Support Fund and RAAs;
- support with admissions, transition and inclusion.



### For children with a social worker:

strategic leadership to enhance education-social care partnerships, data informed targeting, and advice to settings on reducing barriers.



## Pupil Premium and PP+: allocation and use

Rates (2025–26): PLAC £2,630 per pupil paid direct to schools (October census). Looked after PP+ (around £2,570) managed by the Virtual School via PEPs. Postn16 PP+ pilot funding for LAC/care leavers in some areas (2024–25).

PP+ for PLAC is not ring fenced to individuals but must benefit eligible pupils and align to the DfE menu of approaches. Evidence impact and consult parents/guardians, education advice, information sharing, and signposting for families.

## Checklist for supporting PLAC in your school

- **Leadership & culture:** senior DT; governor oversight; include PLAC in pupil premium strategy; annual staff training on trauma, attachment and loss.
- **Assessment & planning:** ask about PLAC status on admission; concreate an annual education plan with parents/guardians; plan reasonable adjustments.
- **Teaching & environment:** predictable routines; co-regulation; reduce sensory load; pre teach; movement breaks; avoid shame based practices.
- **Attendance & inclusion:** track EBSA early; graduated attendance plans; time limited part time timetables only with consent and review.
- **Transitions & safety:** enhanced transitions; manage safeguarding around contact; protect sensitive data; agree names/photos usage.
- **Partnerships:** link with Virtual School, TfA, EP, CAMHS; signpost Adoption SF routes.

## Education Providers e-Learning:

The online training for education professionals on attachment: [becoming an adoption friendly school from PAC-UK](#).

Whilst PAC-UK's training is centred on the needs of previously looked after children, the e-Learning is relevant in supporting and meeting the needs of all vulnerable children – a key focus area for Ofsted. The training is relevant for everyone who works in or alongside schools.

Prices start at £35 plus VAT per licence with discounts available for purchases of over 10 group licences. Once payment is made you will receive instant access to e-Learning content, the e-Learning has three modules:

- **Module 1 – Understanding attachment and trauma;**
- **Module 2 – Creating adoption friendly classrooms and schools;**
- **Module 3 – Becoming an adoption friendly school.**

**PAC-UK e-Learning**  
The online training for education professionals on attachment: a self-guided route to becoming an adoption friendly school  
[www.pac-uk.org/education](http://www.pac-uk.org/education)

Written by an Educational Psychologist specialising in developmental trauma and adoption, PAC-UK's e-Learning is delivered by teachers and therapists to provide a comprehensive guide on how you can support vulnerable children who have experienced a difficult start in life.

Comprising of three modules:

- Module 1 Understanding attachment and trauma: explores the needs of children that have experienced a difficult start in life.
- Module 2 Creating adoption friendly classrooms and schools: Provides strategies to support vulnerable children in the classroom.
- Module 3 Becoming an adoption friendly school: delivers ideas on how to make schools a safe and welcoming place for children that have experienced early life trauma.

Our engaging videos and specialists trainers will guide you through each module, culminating in quizzes to consolidate your learning.

Upon successful completion of the final quiz counts as 3 hours of CPD.

Prices start at £35 plus VAT per licence with discounts available for purchases of over 10 group licences.

Once payment is made you will receive instant access to e-Learning content. If you are unable to make instant payment, you can select the 'Invoice and purchase order payment' option.

For more information, please contact us via phone 0113 264 6837, email [education@pac-uk.org](mailto:education@pac-uk.org), or visit [www.pac-uk.org/education](http://www.pac-uk.org/education)

PAC-UK was rated Outstanding by Ofsted in 2012, and was selected as overall winner in the King's Fund 2014 Impact Awards 2017, for 'Supporting Excellence in Community Health Care'.

The videos and specialist trainers will guide you through each module, culminating in quizzes to consolidate your learning. Upon successful completion of the final quiz. For more information please visit their website or contact .....

phone 0113 264 6837, email [education@pac-uk.org](mailto:education@pac-uk.org) website [www.pac-uk.org/education](http://www.pac-uk.org/education)



## Adoption Support Fund (ASF): What Teachers Need to Know

### Purpose:

The ASF provides funding for **therapeutic support** and **specialist assessments** for children who have been adopted or are under a **Special Guardianship Order (SGO)** and were previously in care. It aims to help children overcome trauma and attachment difficulties, improving their ability to engage in learning and relationships.

### Who is eligible? Children and young people up to age 21 who:

- Have been adopted from local authority care in England, Wales, Scotland, or NI.
- Were adopted from overseas and live in England.
- Are under a **Care Arrangement Order** while a Special Guardian is being assessed.
- Are subject to a **Special Guardianship Order** and were previously in care.

### ASF fund's therapies:

- Psychotherapy or talking therapy for the child.
- Family therapy to strengthen relationships.
- Therapeutic life story work.
- Creative therapies (art, music, drama, play).
- Therapeutic parenting training for guardians.



### ASF fund's specialist assessments:

In-depth trauma and attachment assessments by qualified clinicians.

### Funding limits (*until March 2025*):



- £2,500 per child per year for specialist assessment.
- £5,000 per child per year for therapy.

### How does it work?

**Schools cannot apply directly.** Parents request an assessment from their local authority or Regional Adoption Agency (RAA). **Together for Adoption** – covers Cheshire West & Chester, Halton, St Helens, Wigan, Warrington. who applies to ASF and commissions the support.

### Why is this important for schools?

- ASF-funded therapies can **complement school-based interventions**.
- Teachers should **signpost families** to their local authority or RAA for ASF support.
- Understanding ASF helps schools plan holistic support for adopted and SGO pupils.



## Together for Adoption (TfA)

is a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) in the North West UK, combining Cheshire West & Chester, Halton, St Helens, Warrington, and Wigan councils to find families for children needing adoption, provide comprehensive support for adopters and adopted individuals, and facilitate early permanency for children in care. They focus on efficient family matching, offer extensive post-adoption support, and welcome diverse applicants to help children find secure, loving homes.



**Phone:** 01942 487272

**Email:** [5boroughs RAA 'Together for adoption' Enquiry](mailto:5boroughs.RAA@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)

**Website:** [Together for Adoption](http://TogetherforAdoption.co.uk)

## Adoption and special guardianship support fund team

**Email:** [ASF@mottmac.com](mailto:ASF@mottmac.com)

**phone:** 01223 463 517

## Key Functions:

- **Family Finding:** Efficiently matches children awaiting adoption with suitable prospective parents across the region.
- **Adopter Recruitment & Assessment:** Recruits, assesses, and trains adults to become adoptive parents.
- **Comprehensive Support:** Offers support for families before, during, and long after the adoption order, including training, social events, advice for adopted adults and birth parents.
- **Regional Collaboration:** Works across five local authorities to share best practices, increase resources, and support families more effectively.

## Who They Serve:

- Children needing permanent families.
- Prospective adopters from diverse backgrounds.
- Adopted adults and birth parents needing support.



## When an adopted child joins your school

### The experience of adoptive parents and special guardians

Children may have been placed with their adoptive parents or guardians at a pre-school age or parents may approach the school shortly after a child or children have been placed with them. These parents may just be developing an understanding of the impact of any additional needs that their child or children experience. Unsurprisingly, adjustment to an 'instant' family can also be challenging in itself.

Adoptive parents or guardians may have missed usual pre-school and induction experiences. They may not always know what to expect from schools or what schools may expect of them. It is important to remember that children and young people can present very differently in different environments. It may be that a child or young person's behaviour at home is very different from what is seen at school. This makes close home school communication essential in developing a coordinated approach to support the child or young person.



### Home-school partnership – Good home-school communication typically involves:

- An agreed plan for an appropriate level of communication that meets the needs of the parents and is manageable for staff
- A clear plan about which staff will be the point of contact for parents
- A home-school book sharing positive aspects of the day to be shared with child at home
- A means of sharing when things don't go well. Email is often used for ease and to prevent the child having to hear the adults discussing what has gone wrong and/or the parents being told in front of other parents at the end of the day

**Whatever system is in place, ask:** Do the parents feel that their feelings and views are being heard?

### Information-sharing: about children's experiences and needs

It is essential to spend some time with parents to consider the scope of information-sharing about the child with others. Understanding aspects of a child's early life can help school staff make sense of any difficulties they experience. Information about birth family is useful to know as well as contact arrangements and any 'tough' anniversaries as these may affect emotional wellbeing and behaviour of children. It is also useful to gain a picture of a child's strengths and needs from parents, perhaps triggers that cause their child stress, as well as activities they find calming.

It is also useful to consider the child's understanding of their life story. Children may never mention their early life or adoption but if they do it is useful to know in advance what and who they may talk about and the language that they use when describing people, places and events. Sensitivity to how information is shared and who this is shared with is really important and focusing on a 'need to know basis' – with the staff who come into regular contact – is often a good place to start.

### Getting started

Transitions and change can be very difficult for children and young people who are adopted or under special guardianship. Additional preparation to become familiar with the school environment, routines and key people in school may be useful in helping children and young people to feel safe in their new school.

### Keeping the child in mind

- Consider supporting the development of a relationship with a 'key adult' in school. A key adult performs a different role to the class teacher or learning support. Instead, through getting to know the child and regular 'checking-in' – and perhaps a little protected time, over time – the relationship can provide an 'emotional safety net' and the opportunity to further develop trust and belonging in the school setting.
- If necessary, in order to promote a sense of safety and security, transitional objects and/or visual cues can be used to help the child gain a sense that they are being kept in mind by parents and/or the key adult in school when they are not physically present.
- There are a number of interventions and approaches that enhance a key adult relationship (e.g. Thrive, ELSA, Attachment-based mentoring)

### Day-to-Day Considerations

We know that children and young people who are adopted or under special guardianship often present very differently at home and at school. This can be confusing and at times can cause tension between home and school as both try and make sense of the child's experiences. Finding a way to work closely together is important as adopted children can be really tuned in to any conflict of ideas or breakdown of trust or relationship, increasing their anxiety levels.



Getting to know adopted children and sharing what you find out is really appreciated by parents. Use the agreed home-school communication system to share successes and also patterns of behaviour even if they appear relatively 'low level'. It helps build up the wider picture of the child.

## Curriculum

Be sensitive to aspects of the curriculum that are not inclusive of adoptive families, those with special guardianship or children's experiences. In particular, be mindful of:



- family trees and family history
- autobiographical work including memories, timelines, baby photos
- growth and development
- sex education, drug education, personal safety, the law - genetics
- changing in front of other children
- celebration dates including birthdays, Father's and Mother's Days etc - themes or literature which include loss and loneliness

Reflect the diversity of family experiences in the class and also in the wider school environment.

## Changes

Changes to routine and expected happenings may be particularly hard for children and young people who are adopted or under special guardianship. Even very small changes e.g. to the routine of a lesson, can cause great anxiety to some children. We find that behavioural incidents often occur when trusted staff members are absent or there is a change to the routine.

Make plans to support children if there are going to be changes to routines e.g. school visitors, supply teachers, school trips, and anticipate the impact on the child. Some children may just need additional reassurance, others may need more preparation.

## Friendships

Maintaining relationships can be really hard for children and young people who are adopted or under special guardianship. Some gravitate towards much younger children whereas others feel safer and more comfortable with adults. This can become more critical during adolescence when young people are exploring their sense of identity and establishing their social groups.

A helping hand to both make and keep friends is often required and may well be the most important intervention to support young people. This might include:

- Encouragement to become involved in groups or clubs that involve co-operation as these offer a safety net of adult mediation and/or supervision
- Increased supervision during unstructured times
- Time to listen to their worries, concerns and experiences and validate their feelings
- Quick support to help children make amends if there has been a falling out
- Teaching social skills; such as personal space, turn-taking and sharing with lots and lots of opportunities for practice
- Targeted interventions such as the Circle Of Friends approach, ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) materials, and there are a range of other social skill focused interventions



## Supporting transitions

Transitions to new classes and between schools may lead to high levels of anxiety. It is important for schools to consider how we can help make these transitions as smooth as possible.

### Joining a new school

- Where possible, plan for the transition, working collaboratively with adoptive parents or guardians, ensuring that appropriate information is shared
- Consider additional visits, introducing a few key staff at a time
- Depending on the needs of the child, it may be helpful to consider timing of drop off and pick up, particularly if separation anxiety is high /and or the child presents as hypervigilant in busy situations
- It may be that the child or young person benefits from having a transitional object from their adoptive parents or guardians to help them to still feel connected to their parents/ guardians whilst in their new school

### Class transitions

Staff to be particularly aware of the potential sensitivity to loss and difficulty with endings that children who are permanently placed may experience – it can be valuable if a level of relationship with the previous teacher is maintained so that the child can experience being ‘kept in mind’.

- Additional opportunities to build up a relationship with the new member of staff in advance of the transition may be helpful
- If support staff are to also change, it may be helpful where possible to stagger these changes to ensure that the child has some consistency until they begin to develop a familiarity with the new staff (or the new support staff might visit prior to the change of class)
- A transition book to look at over the summer break with photographs jointly taken of the new classroom, seating etc. to increase a sense of familiarity
- Consider how the child or young person can begin to develop a sense of belonging and connection with their new classroom and/or teaching staff, for example leaving a picture or piece of work with a new teacher or in a workspace

### Key adult relationships

It is likely to be beneficial for children and young people who are adopted or under special guardianship to have a named key adult to support them in feeling emotionally safe and to gradually develop a positive relationship that can act as a secure base or ‘key attachment figure’. In addition to emotional support from a key adult, children and young people may benefit from consideration of how to help them feel safe through consistency in terms of their environment, the structure of the school day and their routines. It will be helpful for a consideration of who the child or young person can seek support from if their key adult is out of school or unavailable. It will also be important for there to be consideration of an agreed safe space in addition to a safe person, for a child or young person to have access to if they are distressed.

Children and young people need clear boundaries to help them to feel safe and contained, with adults responding predictably and calmly to their behaviour, especially when they may be finding things hard. This model emphasises the fundamental nature of safety and relationships as the building blocks and precursor to higher level skills of reflection and emotional regulation.



### Links to key online documents:

Transition into Education for Newly Placed Adopted Children: **A Framework for Decision Making**

This guidance is intended to assist families, social workers, and education professionals in making decisions about a positive transition into nursery or school after a child moves into their adoptive placement.

Discussions about educational transitions often occur before adoption transitions.

Meeting the needs of adopted and permanently placed children  
A guide for school staff

Children spend as many as 15,000 hours at school. Every one of those hours is an opportunity to give them a new experience of themselves, others and the world.

Adoptive parents' wishes for their children are the same as our wishes for all children: to feel safe and happy; to be able to settle to learn; to thrive and fulfil their potential. Teachers and schools can make all the difference in making these wishes come true. This guide, commissioned by the Department for Education, explains how we can all do our part.

**Adoption Support Plan**

A practitioner's guide to the Adoption Support Plan (ASP)

The Adoption Support Plan is a key document for the child and their adopters. It brings together what is known about the child's needs.

Then, when they are being matched and moving to their adoptive family, the Adoption Support Plan also sets out the support that has been identified for the child and their adopters in the short term, and what may be needed in the longer term. This will enable the adopters to feel confident in knowing what support will be available to them.

**Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children**

Statutory guidance for local authorities

This is statutory guidance from the Department for Education. It is issued under section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970.

This means that it must be followed unless there are exceptional circumstances that justify departing from it. This guidance sets the framework through which local authorities discharge their statutory duty under 22(3A) of the Children Act 1989 to promote the educational achievement of looked-after children. That includes those children placed out of authority.

### 4 Up Cards

Supporting adopted and permanently placed children to...  
**Build trusting relationships with adults**

- Allocate a key worker who regularly spends time building a relationship with the child
- Use transition objects and postcards over the holidays to maintain a connection with the child, letting them know that they are held in mind even when they are not at school
- Encourage the child to seek and accept help: 'When you get in a muddle you can come to me and we will always be able to sort out the problem together'
- Reconnect with the child and make a repair when things have been difficult: 'That was a tricky day, wasn't it? I'm looking forward to seeing you back in my class tomorrow.'

Simple strategies to support adopted and permanently placed children in school

PAC-UK Quality Standard for Education

### Case studies

**Case Studies**

**Peter**

Peter is in Year 5. He lives with his grandmother who is his special guardian. His birth mother lives in a care home intermittently, tending to come up or without warning. She takes no role in parenting Peter. Peter finds it very difficult to let adults be in charge at school. He often withdraws into his desk, and when he does go to play with other children, he is often alone, and being very 'tossy' when he is playing. He is sometimes very affectionate towards his teacher, often finding reasons to chat or call out to her. At other times, he can express a lot of anger and aggression towards her.

Peter's grandmother and class teacher identify that Peter behaves similarly towards them both. They wonder whether Peter might feel that he is unpredictable, and expect adults to behave in a very unpredictable way. They agree that the world must feel quite scary for Peter. Together they make a plan to support Peter. They agree that Peter needs to feel safe and secure, and that he himself is lovable. They both use 'PACE' with Peter: being playful, accepting, curious and empathetic. The SENCO identifies a key worker in school who can build a strong relationship with Peter, with regular 1:1 time built into his timetable. When Peter has a bad day, the class

### We want you to know

"We want you to stop making snap judgements about our child. Please ask us what would help."

"We want to have someone in our lives who actually understands what adoption means to us."

"We want you to have training from specialists to help you understand when our child sometimes gets anxious, sad, mixed up, empty, confused, angry and lonely."

"We need support from our placement: someone to talk to and help us deal with our emotions."

"We want to learn about fostering and adoption in a more way that we learn about LGBT issues and other cultures and religions."

"We want help to meet other adopted teens."



## Key web links to provide support

and resources for previously looked after children in schools and settings:



For family or friends who step up to raise a child.



### Together for Adoption

is the regional adoption agency (RAA) for Cheshire West & Chester, Halton, St Helens, Warrington, and Wigan. It recruits and assesses adoptive families, supports them through the whole process, and provides post-adoption support—like therapy, peer mentoring, and online resources—to ensure lasting success for children and their new families.

### First4Adoption

is the Department for Education's national information and advice service for people considering adoption in England. Run by Coram Children's Legal Centre and Adoption UK, it offers impartial guidance, myth-busting resources, an agency finder and a helpline to support adoptive applicants.

### PAC-UK

(Post Adoption Centre-UK) is the UK's largest independent adoption support agency, offering specialist, trauma-informed counselling, training, education services and advice lines for adoptive, special guardianship, birth families and adopted adults. It works with over 100 local authorities to support families Lifelong.

### Adoption UK

is a national charity offering information, peer support networks, training, campaigns and advocacy for adoptive families, prospective adopters, adoptive adults and professionals. Its vision is to secure the right support at the right time for everyone affected by adoption and kinship care.

### Adoption England

is a collaborative improvement body for Regional Adoption Agencies across England. It works with the DfE, VAAs, LAs, and third-sector partners to standardise and enhance adoption practices—addressing recruitment, family matching, early permanence, contact, and lifelong support—and amplify adopters' and adopted people's voices.

### Kinship Compass

is a specialist UK charity and online hub providing free advice, resources, workshops and local support group signposting for kinship carers—relatives or close family friends raising children—across England and Wales.

### Kinship Families Liverpool

(also known as Kinship Carers Liverpool) is a city-based charity supporting grandparents and relatives who care for children in Liverpool. It offers guidance, emotional support, family activities, peer networks and champions kinship carers' needs locally.



## PLAC Support Pack for schools: Supporting Previously Looked-After Children

### A. Identification & Context

#### 🔍 Know who your PLAC are

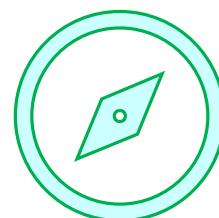
- ▢ Secure, confidential PLAC register kept up to date
- ▢ Staff who need to know are informed sensitively
- ▢ PLAC included in vulnerable pupil reviews
- ▢ Leaders understand how PLAC needs shape provision



### B. Leadership & Culture

#### 🏡 Strong leadership drives outcomes

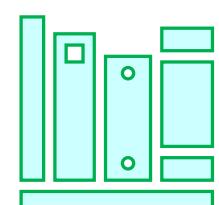
- ▢ Designated Teacher confidently leads PLAC strategy
- ▢ Governors receive clear updates on PLAC
- ▢ Leadership demonstrates inclusive culture
- ▢ Termly monitoring of PLAC progress and well-being



### C. Teaching & Curriculum

#### 📘 High-quality, trauma-informed teaching

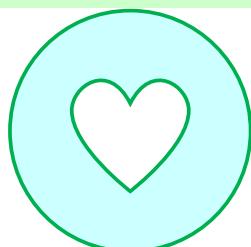
- ▢ Staff understand trauma, attachment & identity needs
- ▢ Curriculum supports emotional safety and accessibility
- ▢ Teachers adjust practice to meet individual needs
- ▢ Early help strategies in place for dysregulation



### D. Pastoral Care & Well-being

#### ❤️ Relationships at the heart

- ▢ Each PLAC has a personalised support plan
- ▢ Termly well-being reviews with child & family
- ▢ Safe spaces or trusted adult systems in place
- ▢ Access to therapeutic services where needed





## E. Safeguarding

### PLAC-specific risks understood and addressed

- Staff trained on PLAC safeguarding factors
- Clear information-sharing pathways
- Multi-agency working well-established
- Risk assessments updated when needs change



## F. Attendance & Behaviour

### Fair, relational and reflective practice

- Weekly monitoring of PLAC attendance
- Action plans for attendance barriers
- Behaviour policies reflect trauma-informed principles
- Suspensions rare, reviewed at senior level



## G. Family & Agency Partnerships

### Working together for stability

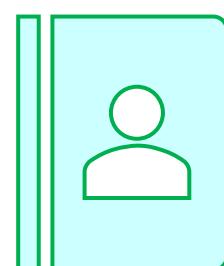
- Strong relationships with adoptive parents/carers
- Virtual School engaged for guidance
- External services accessed proactively



## H. Ofsted Evidence Readiness



- Leaders explain identification & support clearly
- Inspectors can view anonymised plans if needed
- Staff can describe PLAC needs confidently
- Case sampling would show strong provision





## 5 Things Every School Should Do:

in preparation for a child who is previously Looked after joining school or transitioning to a new class:

1

**Know Your PLAC**

2

**Support Well-being First**

3

**Train and Empower Staff**

4

**Work Closely with Families**

5

**Be Ready**

- Maintain an accurate, confidential list
- Share information only on a need-to-know basis
- Create a personalised support plan for each child
- Meet termly with the child and family
- All staff trained in trauma & attachment awareness
- Designated Teacher leads whole-school understanding
- Build trust with adoptive parents/carers
- Collaborate; avoid assumptions
- Be prepared to explain how you support PLAC
- Demonstrate inclusive practice and thoughtful leadership



## Tops tips for schools in relation to a what a young person who is previously looked after child has experienced in other settings.

- **Informed Professionals** – Young people want to have and to know a professional within school that is fully informed about adoption and will have an understanding of an adopted person's needs. We know there are designated teachers, but often that information is not passed on to the children themselves!
- **Pupil passports** – If you are going to go to the effort of making one please use it. Please share what is written in the passport with relevant teaching staff, ensure it serves its purpose of making your young person's needs and securities heard, and make sure your young person also knows who it has been shared with.
- **Consistency** – Children who are previously looked after want provision to be consistent. If it isn't consistent it leaves young people feeling unheard and it breaks their trust.
- **Lessons on family** – The topic of family is discussed in various lessons within school. Young people want adoption & fostering to be included within these discussions as this is one of the many family make ups within 21st century. When this isn't included it can feel isolating.
- **Family trees are also difficult** – it leaves young people wondering 'what do we do here' previously looked after children often don't want to ignore the fact that they have a birth family as well as an adoptive family.
- **Foreign language lessons** – Talking about family and what they look like can be very complex. When a teacher is asking young people about their family and what they look like, it can make them think about birth family and they often don't know the answers to these questions and they don't want to make them up. It needs to be considered as just presuming a child will talk about adoptive parents and not birth isn't ok.
- **Treating adoption as a protected characteristic** – Young people feel like adoption/ family circumstance should be treated the same as other protected characteristics. If someone in school is caught using racial slurs or bullying because of LGBTQI+ issues then it is treated as discrimination. Previously looked after children feel that when they are bullied or taunted because of their family circumstance then they are also being discriminated against, yet it is often not treated this way.
- **Compulsory training on needs of care experienced children** – Young people think that it should be compulsory for all teachers have specialist training in the needs of adopted and looked after children and for this training to be treated with the same importance as safeguarding training.
- **Take bullying about adoption seriously** – Young people fear in talking about their adoption is that they are adding fuel or ammunition for people to use against them. Whilst young people often want to be more open about their circumstances, when a school does not take this seriously or tackle bullying surrounding adoption then it leaves them feeling vulnerable.
- **Trust is key** – Young people need to be able to trust that school will support them, without trust in the school professionals then they struggle to open up about how they feel and their experiences.
- **And finally**, please do not underestimate the power of a hello and a smile. Being seen and acknowledged everyday is powerful and can mean a lot.