Halton Virtual School & College

Supporting Children & Young People Previously in Care

2026-2027

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Supporting Children and Young People Previously in Care Policy

1. Introduction

This policy describes the provision in place from Halton Virtual School to support the education of Children Previously in Care (known nationally as Previously Looked after Children).

From September 2018, a new statutory duty on Local Authorities to provide support for Previously Looked after Children through a Virtual School Head (VSH) was declared. The Virtual School Head *'will be a source of advice and information to help their parents to advocate for them as effectively as possible. VSHs are not acting as part of the corporate parent role in these circumstances but are there to promote the educational achievement of these children through the provision of advice and information to relevant parties.'*

Local authorities have a duty under section 23ZZA of the Children Act 1989 (inserted by section 4 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017) to promote the educational achievement of previously looked-after children in their area by providing information and advice to:

- *any person that has parental responsibility for the child;*
- *providers of funded early years education, designated teachers for previously looked-after children in maintained schools and academies; and*
- *any other person the authority considers appropriate for promoting the educational achievement of relevant children.*

Previously looked-after children are those who:

Previously looked-after children are children who are no longer looked after by a local authority because they became subject to an adoption order, special guardianship order or child arrangements order. The definition also includes children adopted from state care outside England and Wales.

The duty applies to children who are in early year's provision (secured by the local authority under section 7(1) of the Childcare Act 2006) and continues throughout the compulsory years of education where the child is in provision funded in part or in full by the state.

VSHs are integral to ensuring that local authorities discharge their duty to provide suitable advice and information for the purpose of promoting the educational achievement of previously looked-after children. They can also undertake any activity they consider appropriate where that activity will promote the educational achievement of such children in their area.

(Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children,

Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities February 2018)

Role of the Virtual School Head (VSH) for previously looked after children

The role of the VSH for previously looked-after children is to promote their educational achievement through the provision of information and advice to their parents, educators and others who the VSH considers necessary.

VSHs must discharge their duty from the point at which the child becomes eligible for free early education, which is currently the start of the term following a child's second birthday and conclude when s/he has completed the compulsory years of education.

The duty relates to previously looked-after children who are in education in the area served by the VSH irrespective of where the child lives. This avoids the need for education settings to work with more than one VSH and prevents cross-border complications.

VSHs, in conjunction with the Director of Children's Services, should decide the extent of their offer to parents, early education providers and schools but as a minimum, the VSH must:

- respond to parental requests for advice and information – e.g. advice on school admissions in their area. Where appropriate, the VSH should sign-post parents to other services that can offer advice and support;
- respond to requests for advice and information from providers of early education, designated teachers in maintained schools and academies, and providers of alternative provision in their area in respect of individual children supported by the local authority. In particular, the VSH should develop/ build on existing good working relationship with designated teachers for previously looked-after children in their area; and
- make general advice and information available to early year's settings and schools to improve awareness of the vulnerability and needs of previously looked-after children. This should include promoting good practice on identifying and meeting their needs, and guidance on effective use of the PP+.

However, it is important to note that the local authority and VSH are no longer the corporate parent for previously looked-after children and the VSH role in relation to these children reflects this. VSHs are not expected to monitor the educational progress of individual children or be held to account for their educational attainment. Any intervention in the education of a previously looked-after child must be with the agreement of the person(s) who have parental responsibility for the child. They, like all parents, are responsible for overseeing their child's progress in education.

What might providing information and advice look like?

- Providing advice and information to frequently asked questions, via discussion, email, phone calls etc.

- Providing advice to individual parents/ carers and schools where they have a query.
- Advising schools on how they can support previously looked after children to improve behaviour to help avoid exclusion becoming necessary.
- Advising schools on how to best use Pupil Premium to support previously looked after children.

2. Advice for Parents

Halton Virtual School can provide advice directly to parents / carers of Children Previously in Care. See details of Halton's previously looked after education officer below:

- David Bradshaw david.bradshaw@halton.gov.uk
- All members of the Virtual School Team can be contacted through the Virtual School Inbox: virtual.school@halton.gov.uk

Advice will include:

- how best to support the young person to make educational progress
- developing consistency between home and school in meeting the needs of the young person
- how to be an advocate for the young person in an education setting
- school admission arrangements
- special educational needs information
- attendance
- exclusions
- homework
- choosing exam (GCSE) options
- Signposting to outside support agencies for managing challenging behaviour
- promoting positive educational and recreational activities
- Further education, employment and training options

Advice for Schools

The Virtual School is also able to provide advice and support directly to schools help them provide for the needs of children previously in care.

The Virtual School Caseworkers work closely with each of the schools on their caseload and will be able to provide this advice and support in the first instance.

This advice and support might include:

- Ensuring PP+ is available for children previously in care
- Using the PP+ to provide appropriate interventions to meet the needs of the young people
- Developing high expectations and interventions to meet these expectations
- Whole school approaches to supporting children previously in care
- Encouraging education settings to share expertise on strategies to support children previously in care
- Signposting other professionals who might provide further support, including health professionals as well as those in education.

3. Pupil Premium Plus for Children Previously in Care

To access PP+ for Previously Looked after Children, the school will need to include this status in the October census return. However, it is the right of the parents to decide whether to declare the status of the child or not. The school should not pursue parents to include this information if the parents choose not to.

The Virtual School strongly recommends to parents that they do declare the previously looked after status to the school, this will enable the school to access the PP+ funding and therefore provide additional support.

Children who have ceased to be looked after by a local authority in England and Wales because of adoption, a special guardianship order, or a child arrangement order will have their entitlement to Pupil Premium Plus paid directly to the school. The school will need to work with the adoptive parents and special guardians to ensure the status of the young person is recorded on the census return, the Pupil Premium Plus funding will then be received through the normal school funding routes.

There is no direct responsibility for the Virtual School Head to monitor the use of this Pupil Premium Plus and there is no expectation of a PEP. However, support and advice for previously looked after young people is available and schools should contact the Virtual

School Head if this is required. Although there is no requirement for a Personal Education Plan (PEP) for previously looked-after children, schools may wish to use an inclusion plan or other appropriate planning document to record support, monitor progress and capture the voice of the child.

Not only does this serve as a valuable tool in ensuring the educational outcomes of previously looked after children are championed it also serves as an audit trail of post looked after provision and can prove especially important during times of school inspections.

NB: If a child has previously been in care and is discharged but returned to a biological parent then no pupil premium plus can be applied for by school (it is reserved only for children / young people who have been discharged on a special guardianship, adoption or child arrangement order.

Please see previously looked after tab on the Halton Virtual School Website for further information and resources including examples of 'PEP style' inclusion documents:

https://www.myvirtualschool.org/page/previously-looked-after-children-p-lac/103352

Appendix 1 Key contacts

Service	What they can offer	Key contact details
Together for Adoption	**Together for Adoption** is a regional adoption agency serving Cheshire West and Chester, Halton, St Helens, Warrington and Wigan, providing recruitment, assessment, training and ongoing support for adopters, adopted children, adopted adults and birth families throughout the adoption journey.	www.togetherforadoption.co.uk **Telephone: 01942 487272**
Adoption UK	Adoption UK is the leading charity providing support, community and advocacy for all those parenting or supporting children who cannot live with their birth parents. They connect adoptive families, provide information and signposting on a range of adoption related issues and campaign for improvements to adoption policy and legislation at the highest levels. With over 8,000 members, they provide a strong, supportive community and are the largest voice of adopters in the UK.	Adoption UK Charity

Family Rights group	The Adoption and Special Guardians Support Fund (ASGSF) The Adoption and Special Guardians Support Fund pays for a range of therapeutic support for adopted children and their adoptive family and, since April 2016, for children cared for by Special Guardians who are eligible. The ASGSF is available to those Special Guardians living in England who obtained a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) for a child aged 21 and younger (or 25 and younger if they have a Statement of Special Educational Needs or an Education, Health and Care Plan) who was looked after immediately before the SGO was granted.	Helping families Helping children - Family Rights Group **Telephone/Email:** **Advice Tel:** 0808 801 0366
Kinship Care	Kinship is the leading charity in England and Wales supporting kinship carers, including grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles, family friends, and special guardians who are raising children when their parents are unable to do so. The charity provides advice, information, training, peer support, and advocacy	www.kinship.org **Advice Line: 0300 123 7015**

Useful websites

Adoption UK Education Resources:

https://www.adoptionuk.org/pages/category/education-resources

PAC-UK education services:

https://www.pac-uk.org/our-services/education/

Advice and Information service:

http://www.ace-ed.org.uk/advice-about-education-for-parents

Beacon House resources:

https://beaconhouse.org.uk/resources/

Together for Adoption
https://www.togetherforadoption.co.uk/Home.aspx