

Virtual School News

Autumn 2026

Keep up to date on latest news and offers for Children in Care, Previously Looked after Children (PLAC), Children with a Social Worker (CWSW) and those in Kinship Care

Welcome back to the new term

We've been busy over the summer preparing for the new academic year, and we're excited to share some updates with you!

Following the recent Royal Assent of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, revisions to the statutory guidance for Virtual School Heads are currently being developed. The new guidance is expected to reflect the legislation's strengthened responsibilities and expanded focus, including children with a social worker and kinship care arrangements. While the updated guidance has not yet been published, we are actively monitoring developments and will share further information with schools as soon as it becomes available.

Stay Connected – Fortnightly Emails for Designated Teachers

We introduced fortnightly emails to Designated Teachers (DTs) following feedback from DTs with updates, resources, and PEP information. We will continue to send these out as feedback has been positive. If you'd like to receive these emails, or know any other staff involved in supporting our children may be interested please contact us at virtualschool@hants.gov.uk.

If you're a **new** Designated Teacher, please ensure we have your contact details and don't forget to book onto our [Statutory Designated Teacher Training](#). Dates for this term are within our training brochure.

Training & Events - What's New This Term

Our new [training brochure](#) is now available! We've refreshed our offer to include:

- Additional attachment webinars
- Empowering Teachers and Schools: Supporting Executive Functioning
- Supporting Vulnerable Students as a Learning Support Assistant



Several new short PEP webinars have been developed to support Designated Teachers in writing effective Personal Education Plans. These webinars are available on our Moodle page and can be accessed whenever needed, either before or after a PEP meeting, to help ensure all necessary elements have been completed and contribute to producing a high-quality PEP. Each webinar is a standalone resource and focuses on a specific module within the PEP. These include:

- Completing the data section
- Completing the pupil voice section
- Using needs analysis tools
- Completing the meeting section
- Creating meaningful SMART targets in PEPs
- Using Pupil Premium Plus and recording this as part of the PEP process

These short webinars can be accessed via the Virtual School Moodle page here:

[Course: The Personal Education Plan \(PEP\) | Hampshire Virtual School](#)

Save the date for our **Annual Conference on Thursday 5th November**. We're thrilled to welcome keynote speakers:

Hampshire Designated Teacher Conference
Thursday 5 November 2026
Expert speakers, impactful strategies and networking for professionals supporting vulnerable children and young people

Jaz Ampaw-Farr
"Be 10% braver!"
Multi-award-winning speaker, comedian, author and TEDx presenter. Specialist in resilience, leadership and motivation. Inspires action through powerful lived experience, including her time in care. Jaz is one of the top female motivational speakers in the UK. Jaz is a force of nature who galvanises people to take action. Jaz speaks internationally and works with industry leaders such as the BBC, and is also the author of 'Be 10% braver!'. Jaz combines lessons learned from a challenging and often brutal childhood with those from her rise to TV presenter, TEDx speaker, stand-up comedian and 2-1st reality TV star. Her authentic honesty and humor consistently empowers people to think differently about leading themselves and others. Jaz's determination drove her from appalling abuse at the hands of her own parents to running away from foster care and life as a lone on the streets, to advising countries on education policy and living as the resilience influencer she is today.

Steven Russell
CEO of Elements SEHn Support
Care-experienced leader with expertise in trauma and resilience
Award-winning innovator improving outcomes for vulnerable children
Having grown up within the care system, Steven's story is one of resilience, empathy, and relentless determination to create meaningful change. In 2007, he was an advertisement for a Residential Support Worker. Steven soon found himself supporting children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Having experienced rejection, uncertainty, and trauma throughout his childhood, Steven can put himself in a place of understanding and empathy to provide young people with the support they need. Celebrated for his innovative approaches and profound impact, Steven has received well-deserved recognition, including being the winner of the Global Inclusive SEHn Award 2025. Steven published his book 'Only by Drop Day by Day' in 2025.

Date: Thursday 5 November 2026
Time: 9am-4pm
Venue: South Hampshire Area
Cost: £150
Book your place now on Eventbrite
at: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/designated-teacher-conference-autumn-2026-tickets-1911690536008?aff=oddeditor>
For further information contact the Virtual School at HSC.VS.Training@hamp.gov.uk

- **Jaz Ampaw-Farr**, Multi-award-winning speaker, comedian, author and TEDx presenter
- **Steven Russell**, Care-experienced leader with expertise in trauma and resilience and Award-winning innovator improving outcomes for vulnerable children

A great opportunity to connect with other Designated Teachers and colleagues, share practice and gain insight into supporting our vulnerable children and improve outcomes.

To book please follow [link](#).

Guidance on the Use of PP+ Funding for Therapy

We have developed new guidance to support education professionals when considering the use of PP+ funding for therapeutic support.

The guidance is aimed at helping education settings and professionals make clear, consistent decisions by linking any request to the child's educational needs, barriers to learning, intended outcomes and the wider PEP process.

The guidance can be found [here](#) on our Moodle

Guidance on the Use of PP+ Funding for Therapy
For Virtual School colleagues supporting Personal Education Plan discussions and funding decisions

Key principle
PP+ should be used to support educational outcomes, not to fund social, emotional, and mental health needs. Therapy may be appropriate where there is a clear evidence that educational, social, emotional, and mental health needs are barriers to learning, engagement, attendance or participation in school.

The central question should be: How will this intervention improve the child's engagement, participation, attendance, behaviour, or learning, emotional, social, or educational progress?

This guidance is intended to support consistent decision-making when schools request PP+ funding for therapy interventions. It should be used alongside the child's PEP, views of the virtual school, professional advice and any relevant support plans.

1. Purpose of PP+ in relation to therapy
PP+ (Premium Plus) is intended to improve the educational outcomes of children in care through targeted support identified within the Personal Education Plan (PEP). Therapeutic interventions may be funded where there is a clear educational, emotional and/or behavioural need and evidence that educational, social or behavioural needs are barriers to learning. Therapy should not usually be the first consideration when a need is identified. Schools and professionals should demonstrate that needs have been assessed thoroughly and that appropriate universal and targeted interventions have been considered or implemented before requesting funding for specialist therapeutic support.

2. What should be considered first?
Before funding therapy through PP+
Schools should be able to show what has been tried, what has been learnt, what support has been used, and what other decisions have been made. This should be recorded clearly through the PEP process.

A. Assessment and understanding of need
Needs should be identified through assessment tools, observations and the views of the child and key adults. This helps ensure that any intervention is matched to the child's presenting need rather than selected because it is available.

Tool	Assessment	What to consider
SDQ	Emotional wellbeing and behavioural screening	What does it show about emotional distress, conduct, peer relationships or prosocial strengths?

Clarification on arranging and leading PEP meetings

Personal Education Plans (PEPs) should be in place for every child in care and reviewed termly to ensure their education, progress, attendance, wellbeing and support needs are regularly considered.

When a child first enters care, or starts at a new education setting, the Social Worker should arrange the first PEP, working closely with the education setting. After this, termly PEP reviews should be arranged collaboratively by the education setting and Social Worker, with the education setting leading the meeting, as the PEP is primarily an education plan and most of the information, targets and agreed actions relate directly to the child's learning, progress and support.

Effective PEPs rely on strong partnership working, with all professionals contributing to ensure the plan is meaningful, up to date and focused on securing the best possible educational outcomes for the child.



Attachment Research Community (ARC)

The Virtual School have purchased membership for **all** Hampshire schools and settings to [ARC](#). ARC's purpose is to support all schools and education settings through completing the online self-assessment framework to be attachment and trauma aware in their practice for the benefit of all members of the learning community and particularly the most vulnerable, by bringing together, sharing and celebrating best practice.

★ To date over 280 Hampshire schools and settings have signed up to be a member. We have 28 schools on the Bronze pathway, nine on the Silver pathway and three gold pathway schools. This demonstrates the strong commitment from our schools to develop an attachment, trauma aware relational setting. We are delighted with the commitment of the



schools on their journey. We validated our third gold pathway school, Bosmere Junior School at the end of last term. It was a great visit to end the term, meeting staff, governors and young people. The Bosmere Bears are proudly showing off their certificate in this photo!

For those schools that are at the silver pathway stage they have completed a case study, and those at gold or working towards gold have delivered a webinar. These are really varied and can be viewed on our [Moodle](#) - definitely worth a look!

Additionally, Hampshire Virtual School won the Alex Timpson ARC Attachment Award South East Collaborative Category at the recent ARC Conference, we are now attending the National Conference in the hope to win this!



If you would like to sign up to begin your ARC journey please complete this [form](#).

Virtual School Educational Psychologist (EP) consultations

Our Virtual School EP will be holding weekly consultations throughout the year. These are bookable for Children in Care, Previously Looked After Children (PLAC), Children with a Social Worker (CWSW) and those in Kinship Care. Details on how to book a one-hour consultation are [here](#).

What is an Educational Psychologist (EP)? EPs work to support children and young people in education settings to reach their full potential by working with them and key adults supporting them. They draw on a range of psychological theories in their work, and the underpinning ethos involves looking at the environment around the child.

What is consultation? Consultation is a problem-solving space where key adults in a child's life meet to discuss their strengths, needs and aspirations with an EP. During the hour the group will work to understand the child's situation and if this can be moved forward in any way.

Consultation with the Virtual School EP is not:

- Part of an Education Health and Care Needs Assessment.
- Part of a diagnostic pathway for disorders such as ADHD and ASD.
- A pathway to an in-depth EP assessment and school visit.
- Linked to Hampshire Educational Psychology Team.

For further information on how to access any of the above please speak to your school SENDCo.

Who can come? Important adults in the child's life such as parent/carers, teachers and other school staff, social care staff, virtual school staff, and other relevant adults and professionals. The child may also want to join the meeting to share their views.

Needs analysis tools

Virtual School have two needs analysis tools they use, the [PEP Toolkit](#), developed by Virtual School staff and Hampshire Educational Psychology, and have bought access to Reach2Teach for all DTs. The needs analysis tools are designed to support designated teachers to look deeper and beyond the operational aspect of completing the personal education plans (PEPs) and focus on an effective process leading to writing a meaningful PEP.

The needs analysis tools are proving particularly useful not only for our children in care but PLAC, CWSW and those in kinship care as focus on presenting behaviours and how professionals can use strategies to support the young person.

REACH 2TEACH		The BIG APP (Behaviour Intervention Guide)			
Highly anxious	Clingy	Can't sit still	Hypervigilant		
Denies need for support	Can't organise or forgets work	Overly dependent	Resists teacher's guidance		
Continually avoids work	Argues about rules or can't follow	Seeks to control the teacher	Rubbishing teacher's work		
Rubbishes or rips up work	Doesn't want adults being close	Appears manipulative	Wants to work on their own		
Rapid mood changes	Resists difficult conversations	Runs out	Misinterprets others' behaviour		
Sulks if not picked	Can't follow instructions	Overly argumentative	Finds transitions & endings difficult		
Appears arrogant & controlling	Does not talk about feelings	Easily distracted	Appears indifferent or uncaring		
Insists on going first	Talks about feelings a lot	Lies and fabricates	Angry & aggressive		
Steals or gorges food	Needs constant reassurance	Avoids eye contact	Hates & rejects praise		
Gets Upset easily	Risky behaviour	Limited imagination	Attention seeking		
Click on a behaviour to start					
		Have uncontrolled/unpredictable emotional outbursts (to release/relieve pent-up anger/aggression/anxiety)?			
EBR3		Have difficulty controlling reactions when they do not get immediate attention (poor frustration tolerance)?			
EBR4		Overreact to affection or attention? (they may become overexcited, loud, boisterous)			

If you are a new DT or a DT who hasn't accessed Reach2Teach yet, please do so through the PEP or contact virtualschool@hants.gov.uk.

Extended Duties Team

The Extended Duties Team within Hampshire Virtual School plays a vital role in supporting vulnerable children and young people who fall outside the scope of statutory Virtual School responsibilities. This includes, but is not limited to:

- **Previously Looked After Children (PLAC)** who are no longer eligible for statutory support
- **Children in kinship care** (e.g. Special Guardianship Orders, Child Arrangement Orders and informal kinship arrangements).
- **Children with a Social Worker (CWSW)** who are not in care

The team works closely in partnership with schools, social care, and other agencies to ensure that vulnerable learners receive appropriate educational support and safeguarding oversight. They advocate for children's educational needs in multi-agency forums and contribute to strategic planning around inclusion and attendance.

By analysing attendance, attainment, and exclusion data, the team identifies patterns and risks, enabling early intervention. They support schools in using this intelligence to inform provision and planning.

While not offering direct case management, the team provides consultation and advice to schools and professionals working with individual children. This includes advice and guidance around transitions, reintegration, and education planning for children in complex circumstances.

If you would like to get in touch with the Extended Duties team, email VSExtendedDuties@hants.gov.uk

PLAC Census Training

Short sessions for DTs, business managers, and school staff to ensure correct census recording to secure PLAC pupil premium.

Training dates: 10th, 14th or 15th September

Booking: Email virtualschool@hants.gov.uk (as booking link closed)

Important:

PLAC status must be recorded on the October census to receive the £2690 PP+ per eligible pupil from April 2026. Last year, a number of Year 7 PLAC were missed off the Autumn census, representing approximately 60 less pupils than had been recorded in year 6 at the end of the Summer term - don't lose funding!

Remember: for a pupil to be classified as a previously looked after child (PLAC), they will have been under the care of a local authority for at least 24 hours prior to receiving an new order of permanence through adoption, special guardianship order (SGO) or care arrangement order (CAO)

NEW! Kinship Care Indicator

From Autumn 2026, schools will be required to record pupils identified as living in kinship care on the census. This is a separate census category to PLAC. Some pupils in kinship may also be PLAC, but this will not be the case for all of them. Where applicable, both the PLAC and the Kinship coding should be recorded. Unlike PLAC, the kinship care indicator does not attract any specific pupil premium or additional funding. However, it will help improve understanding of the experiences and needs of pupils living in kinship care.

If you have any questions, please contact the Extended Duties team on VSExtendedDuties@hants.gov.uk

Children with a Social Worker and attendance

Children with a social worker are more likely to experience barriers to regular attendance, which can impact their learning, wellbeing, and long-term outcomes. The Department for Education (DfE) identifies attendance as both an educational and safeguarding priority, highlighting regular school attendance as a key protective factor that supports children to achieve, improve wellbeing and secure better long-term outcomes. The DfE also notes that children with a social worker are at greater risk of absence and that improving attendance should be integral to social work practice and multi-agency planning.

The Virtual School's 2025 *Children with a Social Worker (CWSW) 100% Attendance Pilot* showed the impact of early, targeted support, with 86% of participating pupils improving their attendance compared with the previous academic year. While the cohort was very small, 71% of pupils achieved 100% attendance in the first two weeks of term, and three pupils maintained this throughout the first half term. These pupils went on to make some of the strongest attendance gains, highlighting the value of focusing on attendance from the very start of the school year.

The recently published DfE guidance strengthens this work by emphasising that school attendance should be a central consideration in all social work plans and conversations, recognising regular attendance as a key protective factor for children with a social worker.

Take a look at the guidance here: [Social workers and other practitioners: attendance considerations - GOV.UK](#)

Guidance

Social workers and other practitioners: attendance considerations

Published 18 March 2026

Applies to England

Contents

Attendance considerations in professional conversations about a child

How social workers can help

The impact of attendance on future outcomes and wellbeing

Checklist for support

Attendance considerations in professional conversations about a child

School attendance should be integral to all child in need and child protection planning. The [children's social care national framework](#) sets out how practitioners should:

- recognise attendance as a key protective factor
- use absence to identify wider needs

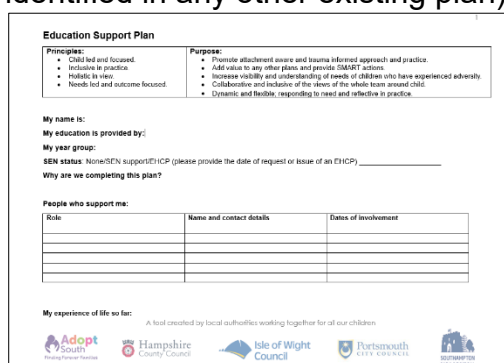
If you would like to get in touch with the Extended Duties team to discuss attendance issues for a child on a CIN or CP plan, a previously looked after child, or a child in kinship care, email VSExtendedDuties@hants.gov.uk

Education Support Plan (ESP)

The **ESP** is a collaborative tool developed by Hampshire, Southampton, Portsmouth and Isle of Wight Virtual School Virtual Schools and Adopt South to support children impacted by trauma and loss.

The ESP form provides carers, education settings and associated professionals with a clear process to identify and address the needs of children who have experienced care adversity within education settings. This includes adopted children, those with a Special Guardianship Order (SGO), Child Arrangement Order (CAO), children in kinship care and those supported by a social worker (CWSW).

It is expected that the ESP will be initiated at the start of the academic year, or whenever the child changes an education setting, and then monitored and reviewed every term so that any new targets can be agreed and implemented. The ESP is **not statutory**, but strongly recommended to improve attendance, engagement, and outcomes. It highlights the specific needs of children impacted by trauma and loss (where these needs are not already identified in any other existing plan).



The form is titled 'Education Support Plan' and contains several sections:

- Principles:** Child led and focused, Inclusive in practice, Holistic in view, Needs led and outcome focused.
- Purpose:** Promote attachment aware and trauma informed approach and practice, Add value to any other plans and provide SMART actions, Increase visibility and understanding of needs of children who have experienced adversity, Collaborative and inclusive of the views of the whole team around child, Dynamic and flexible, responding to need and reflective in practice.
- My name is:** (blank line)
- My education is provided by:** (blank line)
- My year group:** (blank line)
- SEN status:** None/SEN support/THCP (please provide the date of request or issue of an EHCP) (blank line)
- Why are we completing this plan?** (blank line)
- People who support me:** A table with 3 columns: Role, Name and contact details, Dates of involvement. There are 4 empty rows.
- My experience of life so far:** A text area for notes.

At the bottom, there is a footer with logos for Adopt South, Hampshire County Council, Isle of Wight Council, Portsmouth City Council, and Southampton City Council, along with the text 'A tool created by local authorities working together for all our children'.

A copy of the ESP can be found [here](#)

If you would like to get in touch with the Extended Duties team, email VSExtendedDuties@hants.gov.uk

Lastly, please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or comments.

Have a great term 😊

Michelle

Michelle Nye
Virtual School Head