PLAC - FAQs for Parents and Guardians

How do I know if my child meets the criteria as a PLAC?

If your child was under the care of a local authority (even if they were placed with you during this time) before their new order of permanence (through adoption, special guardianship or a care arrangement / residency order) then they will be classified as previously looked after (PLAC).

What is the role of the Virtual School towards young people who were previously looked after?

Since September 2018, Virtual Schools have had a statutory responsibility to promote the education of previously looked-after children. Virtual Schools have a duty to provide advice, guidance and information to schools, parents and a range of professionals around the educational needs of previously looked after children. Virtual Schools are not corporate parents for this group of children.

Which Virtual School should I contact if I need advice?

For advice and guidance, you should contact the Virtual School within the local authority where the education provider is located, regardless of your home address: If your child attends a Hampshire education setting then you would contact the Hampshire Virtual School. If your child attends a Surrey education setting, even if you live in Hampshire, then you would contact the Surrey Virtual School for advice and guidance.

Virtual Schools are established by local authorities to champion the educational progress of looked-after and previously looked-after children and young people.

What should I expect from the Virtual School?

The Virtual School can offer advice, guidance and information to education providers, parents, carers and professionals on educational needs, interventions, and how to access support services. They may also offer training and support to education settings to develop attachment-aware, trauma-informed and relational practice.

The Virtual School is not able to case hold for your child, or access additional funding, but are happy to assist with any education related queries.

PLAC - FAQs for Parents and Guardians

Can post-16 education settings claim Pupil Premium Plus (PP+)?

No. Pupil Premium Plus funding applies to eligible pupils in Reception to Year 11 and is not available for students in post-16 education.

Post-16 providers may instead access funding through national post-16 funding arrangements and student support schemes.

Is there any additional funding available for previously looked after students?

There is no statutory funding for previously looked after students in post 16 settings.
However, if eligible, students may be able to access support from:

- The 16–19 Bursary Fund.
- Discretionary college bursaries.
- Financial support for travel, meals, equipment and course costs.

Young people should speak with their education provider's student services or finance team about eligibility for available support.

What support is available in post 16 education?

Post-16 providers are expected to support care-experienced learners by identifying barriers to participation, achievement and progression and providing appropriate academic, pastoral and wellbeing support. They have a responsibility to help learners successfully progress into higher education, apprenticeships, employment or training

Many colleges also offer: learning support services, mental health and wellbeing services, study skills support, mentoring, careers guidance and access to financial support through bursaries and hardship funds (where available / if eligible)

Is there a Designated Teacher for Previously Looked After Children post 16?

Unlike schools, colleges are not required to have a statutory Designated Teacher for previously looked-after children. They should have a named member of staff with responsibility for care experienced and previously looked after learners.
Many post-16 settings also have:
a designated safeguarding lead (DSL), a pastoral wellbeing and inclusion team, a learning support adviser or a student experience lead.

Parents, carers and young people should speak to the settings and ask who is best placed to coordinate support.

PLAC - FAQs for Parents and Guardians

Staff do not seem to understand my young person's needs. What can I do?

Where appropriate, students should be encouraged to discuss concerns with a trusted member of staff so that reasonable adjustments and supportive approaches can be considered

You can also discuss any concerns directly with your child's tutor, pastoral team, safeguarding lead or learning support in the first instance.

Sharing PLAC status can help staff understand how early childhood experiences or disrupted education may continue to affect learning, wellbeing and relationships.

You can also ask whether a support plan, reasonable adjustments or additional pastoral support can be put in place.

Education settings, as well as parents and guardians, can contact the Virtual School Extended Duties team for further advice and guidance as needed.

How can I work with the education setting to support my child?

If there are aspects of a course, learning activities or discussions that may be emotionally challenging for your young person (for example topics involving family history, genetics, relationships, loss, trauma or personal identity), it can be helpful to discuss this with the college or training provider as early as possible.

Sharing relevant information with the student's tutor, pastoral lead or learning support team can help staff understand any potential sensitivities and consider appropriate support.

With preparation, understanding and support, most students can engage successfully in all aspects of their programme.

If additional advice is needed, colleges and training providers can seek guidance from the Virtual School.

Where appropriate, students should be encouraged to discuss concerns with a trusted member of staff so that reasonable adjustments and supportive approaches can be considered.

The focus in post-16 education should increasingly be on empowering the young person to participate actively in decisions about their education and support.

PLAC - FAQs for Parents and Guardians

Will information about my child's care experience be kept confidential?

Your child's legal status should remain confidential at all times. It is your decision as to who you inform that your child is PLAC.

Some families worry about stigma or confidentiality. Information about PLAC status should be treated sensitively in line with confidentiality and GDPR policy and procedures.

Young people should be involved in decisions about how and when information is shared wherever possible, recognising their increasing independence and right to privacy.

My child is becoming more independent. Can they make decisions themselves?

Yes. Post-16 education encourages increasing independence and self-advocacy. Depending on the young person's age and circumstances, they may choose whether to disclose their PLAC status and what support they would like.

Parents and guardians continue to play an important role, but staff will also work directly with their students to ensure their views and wishes are heard.

Why should we share PLAC status with a post-16 setting?

Sharing PLAC status is voluntary, but it can help colleges, sixth forms and training providers to:

- Better understand a young person's experiences and strengths.
- Provide appropriate pastoral, wellbeing and academic support.
- Make reasonable adjustments where needed.
- Support successful transitions into further education, apprenticeships or training.
- Access advice from the Virtual School and other specialist services when appropriate.
- Help students achieve their full potential.

Information is treated sensitively and only shared with staff who need it to provide support. Sharing this information can help education staff understand a student's experiences so that they are able to offer appropriate academic and pastoral support.

Many students find that sharing PLAC status with a small number of key staff enables them to access support without having to repeatedly explain their circumstances.

Any further questions?

If you have any further questions or would like support, please contact the Virtual School Extended Duties team:
VSExtendedDuties@hants.gov.uk