



Children with a Social Worker Cohort and what this means to your school.

We would like to draw your attention to the newly published Department of Education guidance which was published in June 2022. Although this document is entitled **Promoting the education of Children with a Social Worker Virtual School Head role extension guidance June 2022**, it is also relevant to:

- School and Alternative Provision Leaders
- Headteachers
- Directors and Chief Executives of Multi-Academy Trusts
- School staff and governing bodies in all maintained schools, academies and free schools.
- Designated Teachers (DT)
- Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL)
- Senior Mental Health Leads (SMHL)
- Special Education Needs Co-ordinators (SENCO)

Government Guidance can be found here [Promoting the education of children with a social worker \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Virtual School Kent.

Many of you will know us through the work we do with Kent Looked After Children, or perhaps through our championing the needs of Previously Looked After Children. The work for the new cohort of Children with a Social Worker began in September 2021 and since then, we have been working across Kent, bringing everyone together in support of this cohort. With over 600 schools, we appreciate that we may not have had time to speak with you directly, so please bear with us!

Virtual School Kent's Cohorts:

- **Looked After Children:** All Kent children who are currently being looked after by the Kent local authority.
- **Previously Looked After Children:** Children who have left care of a local authority under an Adoption, Special Guardianship or Child Arrangement Order who attend a Kent education setting.
- **Children with a Social Worker:** We are pleased to see that there is a more robust definition of the Children with a Social Worker cohort (CWSW) which is now defined as:

All children who have been assessed as needing or previously needing a social worker within the past 6 years due to safeguarding and/or welfare reasons. It includes all children aged 0 to 18 across all education settings subject to a CiN plan or a Child Protection Plan.

This, we know, will help schools in identifying their cohort.

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Why is this Children with a Social Worker cohort important?

Last summer, we put together this short video to explain why this cohort was so important to us in Kent. Although it is now a year old, it is still just as relevant, so please do take 5 minutes to remind yourself of why we are all working so hard for these vulnerable young people.

<https://vimeo.com/595327272/8f332f60ce>

Kent Analytics Data

Over the summer of 2021, we commissioned Kent Analytics provide an overview of Kent's school pupils in academic years Reception to Year 14, who were recorded as a child in need (CHIN¹) or had a child protection plan (CP²) during the 12-month period from September to August, in 2018-2019 and 2019-2020.

¹ Pupils who were CHIN only and were not CP or CIC between September to August.

² Pupils who had a CP plan only and were not CIC between September to August.

- **ONE IN 8 of the pupils with a social worker had three vulnerabilities.** They were regularly absent or excluded from school, had SEND and were from a challenging family and socio-economic environment.
- **58%** of pupils with a social worker were eligible for free school meals, which is more than **THREE TIMES** the rate of all KCC pupils.
- **36%** of pupils with a social worker recorded poor attendance at school, which is **THREE TIMES** the rate of all KCC pupils.
- **9%** of pupils with a social worker had a fixed term exclusion, which is nearly **FOUR TIMES** the rate of all KCC pupils.
- **21%** of pupils recorded as being permanently excluded from school in 2018/2019 had a social worker in the same year.
- **24%** of pupils with a social worker had SEN support at school, which is more than **DOUBLE THE RATE** of all year R-11 non-special school pupils.
- **8%** of secondary school pupils with a social workers had an EHCP, which is more than **FOUR TIMES** the rate of all KCC secondary school pupils.
- **7%** of primary school pupils with a social worker had and EHCP, which is more than **THREE times** the rate of all KCC Primary school pupils.
- **2%** of pupils with a social worker were known to the youth offending team, which is **TEN TIMES** the rate of all KCC school pupils.
- **11%** of pupils with a social worker visited a Children's Centre or Youth Hub, which is more than **TWICE** the rate of all KCC pupils.

We are sure you will agree that these figures are not comfortable reading. We are very much looking forward to working with you, education provisions and all services and teams supporting these young people to see a positive impact on this data. When we achieve this, we will know that we have made a positive impact on the educational outcomes for these children and young people.

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What schools need to do.

From your analysis of your cohort, you will be able to begin to show impact for the cohort regarding the key educational indicators:

Health and Emotional Wellbeing
Attendance
Attainment and Progress

Behaviour
Engagement

Questions to think about as a school:

- What do we need to do as an education setting to ensure that we have levelled up the children's outcomes and narrowed the attainment gap between this cohort and the general population of the school?
- Do we use wellbeing assessments for all of our children?
- Do we use Boxall Profiles? Have we looked at them for the CWSW cohort as a whole?
- Is the school part of the Nurture training offer as part of the Countywide Inclusion Strategy?
- How trauma informed is the school and all of its staff? Developing and embedding trauma informed practice within your school's ethos, policies and everyday practice will benefit all who are part of your community – pupils, families and staff.
- What training is available that would enhance our collective knowledge around the disadvantages of this cohort of children?
- How engaged is the school with other services to help with attendance, engagement, mental health support etc?
- Have we adapted our processes and policies in line with the new Working Together to Improve School Attendance guidance and understand our responsibilities for the cohort [Working together to improve school attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)
- Does the school use EEF guidance and evidence-based interventions? [What Works in Education for Children who have had Social Workers - What Works for Children's Social Care \(whatworks-csc.org.uk\)](https://whatworks-csc.org.uk) and [Education Endowment Foundation | EEF.](https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk) Have you seen our trauma informed look at the [Education Endowment Foundation - Improving Behaviour in Schools Leaflet.](https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk) ?
- Does the DSL, DT, SENCO and MHL regularly meet to discuss the individual needs of young people within this cohort?
- Do we understand this cohorts needs when we are planning for the pupil premium strategy, and including those not eligible for FSM?
- Do we have high expectations for this cohort? Children want us to have high expectations for them, to believe in them and not to treat them differently. Are you supporting them to achieve their potential and not becoming a barrier to their success?
- How do we work with Social Services to ensure we are working together to promote the education of these young people? Do we have in-depth conversations around education with social workers and think collectively around how we can support the young person and their family to ensure the best educational outcomes for the young person?
- Do we access the VSK website for links to further information and resources [Welcome to the Virtual School Kent Website:Virtual School Kent \(lea.kent.sch.uk\)](https://www.lea.kent.sch.uk)

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Pupil Premium

When planning for your Pupil Premium strategy, please note that the guidance has changed to now **INCLUDE** this cohort, irrespective of if they are eligible through FSM or not. [Pupil premium: overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

The Education Endowment Foundation guidance on Pupil Premium Strategies [Using pupil premium | EEF \(educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk\)](#) is a fantastic guide to support you with your strategy planning.

We would recommend, for those of you with Previously Looked After Children (those who have left care under an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order), to use EPPLAC (Education Plan for Previously Looked After Children) in order to understand the needs of the individuals within this cohort, so that you are planning effectively for the use of Pupil Premium for previously looked after children. More information on EPPLACs can be found here [Education Plan for Previously Looked After Children:Virtual School Kent \(lea.kent.sch.uk\)](#)

Please remember to identify all new previously looked after children who have been enrolled at your school in time for the October census.

VSK plans for the year:

Data Systems:

Over the course of this academic year, we will be working alongside our Management Information Team and other colleagues to look at how we can set up systems to support you in your identification of the cohort and therefore reporting around their attainment, attendance etc.

Whilst this is developed, we would urge you to continue to identify your cohort within your school – to include current and those who have had a Child in Need Plan or a Child Protection Plan in the last 6 years.

VSK School Partnership Meetings:

We will continue to offer Partnership Meetings with you to discuss your cohort. If you would like to arrange a meeting with us, please email VSKAdvisoryTeam@kent.gov.uk. We had some wonderful meetings with schools last year, hearing the good practice that is going on and collectively thinking around the needs of the school's cohorts as well as hearing about your relationships with social services and Early Help.

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School Training Opportunities:

We are continuing to offer in-person Whole school attachment and trauma training as well as a host of online training packages, which are all free of charge to schools who have Children with a Social Worker, Previously Looked After Children or Looked After Children on roll.

We have worked with KCA training to set up a series of short, interactive video-based e-learning courses which give space for reflection as you learn about the impact of trauma and unmet attachment needs and the power of connected relationships. After each video clip you are invited to make some notes relating this knowledge base to your own life and work. These notes build up to create a reflective journal for you to share with others in the team as you work together for your children and young people.

These courses, which will be available within the coming months, include:

- Social workers and schools working together to close the gap for vulnerable learners
- Developing trauma-informed practice
- Maintaining staff resilience
- Mapping network resilience
- Emotion Coaching

For more details, please visit our website [Training:Virtual School Kent \(lea.kent.sch.uk\)](https://lea.kent.sch.uk).

New Training Opportunities for January 2023.

We are very excited to let you know that we are currently developing some exclusive training for Kent Schools with Luke Rodgers (The Care Leaders). Luke will be one of our Key Note Speakers at our Conference on October 14th, so please do come along and find more.

VSK Conference:

Just to remind you of our fantastic conference we are holding on Friday 14th October at Detling Showground. This will be the first conference since the pandemic and we aim to bring together education settings from across the county and will be the first conference covering our three cohorts – Children in Care, Previously Looked After Children and the Children with a Social Worker cohorts.

We have two fantastic key note speakers and will be introducing some exciting opportunities for you in your support of these cohorts. Please refer to the attached flyer for more information.



VSK Conference
Flyer.pdf

It is free to those attending and it will help schools and VSK to develop, support and inspire us in the work we do with young people.

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VSK and Education Psychologist Solution Focused Consultations:

Although we have a strategic role for this cohort, we offer a solution-based approach for individual cases through 'Solution Focused Consultations'. The aim of this work is to support schools when they are struggling to see the next step for an individual young person and it allows us to understand the 'themes' that schools are facing, which then helps us to direct our strategic planning.

A Solution Focused Consultation (SFC) is a multi-professional meeting to discuss challenging education issues. SFCs are a consultation meeting held between school staff (this could be the SENCO, class teacher or another key adult who is responsible for the child's support in school), VSK, the child's social worker if appropriate, and an Educational Psychologist where issues of concern for the individual pupil can be discussed.

Dates for Solution Focused Consultations are published on our website. The consultations for next term are:

- Tuesday 15th November 2 – 5 pm
- Tuesday 29th November 2 - 5 pm
- Thursday 1st December 9.30 – 12.30 pm

These sessions tend to book up quickly, so please do get in touch with us or the school, as soon as possible, if you are interested.

Virtual School Kent Contact Details:

For Children with a Social Worker and Previously Looked After Children cohorts:

Email: VSKAdvisoryTeam@kent.gov.uk

If you have a specific request regarding a cohort discussion, or around individual young people within the Children with a Social Worker cohort, please complete the following referral form:

[Request advice for children with a social worker cohort - Return to Kent.gov.uk \(achieveservice.com\)](#)

If you have a specific request regarding a cohort discussion, or around individual young people within the Previously Looked After Children cohort, please complete the following referral form:

[Request advice for previously looked after children - Privacy notice - Return to Kent.gov.uk \(achieveservice.com\)](#)

For Kent Children in Care:

Please contact your VSK Area Team, or:

Phone: 03000 412777

Email VSK@kent.gov.uk