

# Surrey Virtual School (SVS) Designated Teacher Newsletter

## Edition 4 Autumn Term 2021

### Virtual School Head Update

I hope you have enjoyed a well deserved and relaxing summer break and that the new term has started well for you, your staff team, children and young people. The Virtual School Team has had a busy summer. We enjoyed our first 'Extravaganza' event with care experienced children from Year 6, young people also took part in a University of Surrey residential, and some of our Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) enjoyed a great residential to Jamie's Farm. We are – as ever – hugely grateful to everyone who supported these events. After such excitement, we have returned to a Local Authority OFSTED monitoring visit focussing on Care Leavers – in which the Virtual School is very much involved so a busy start to the term for our Post 16 team in particular. You may also be aware that Virtual Schools across the country now (from September 2021) have a [new strategic duty](#) to promote the educational achievement of children with a social worker. We are working hard to get everything in place for this and will feed back progress to date in our Spring 2022 newsletter.

We are very much looking forward to working with you and your schools and I hope that the following is a useful update for you to all things Surrey Virtual School. As always please do get in touch with me or a member of the SVS team if we can help you in any way. Wishing you all the best for a great term and new academic year.

**Anwen Foy** [Anwen.Foy@Surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:Anwen.Foy@Surreycc.gov.uk)  
Surrey Virtual School Headteacher

### **Pupil Premium Plus for looked after children**

Thank you very much to Designated Teachers (DTs) who contributed to our survey this year, where you shared your views about Pupil Premium Plus (PPP). As a result of your feedback and that of children and young people from our care councils, we have made some changes, and a [brand new policy](#) is now in place on our SVS website. There are examples of SMART targets, and a number of frequently asked questions that we are asked by DTs and others. Your views about children looked after with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) have been taken on board and you can now request PPP for these children through their Personal Education Plan (PEP).

You also fed back that the planning is sometimes difficult whilst you wait to hear if PPP has been agreed. You can expect an automatic payment of £600 per child in early October that you will not need to request. (This is in place of the request not additional to it). We will of course still need you to report the impact this has made on the Spring PEP and look forward to hearing about the difference this is making to our children. A reminder that we do read every single PEP for every child each term, and provide quality assurance feedback on the final page of each PEP.

### **Pupil Premium Plus for children previously looked after (PLAC)**

The following information relates to pupil premium arrangements for children previously looked after. Please note, there are some differences between previously looked-after pupil premium and PPP for looked after children.

Pupil Premium for permanently placed children was introduced in 2014 in recognition that children who ceased to be looked after as a result of adoption, a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) or a Care Arrangements Order (CAO) often require extra support and help in school in view of their early life experiences.

Pupil Premium for Previously Looked-After children is available for children from Reception to Year 11 in state schools in England. Children in independent schools or home education may be eligible if their education is funded by the Local Authority.

Pupil Premium is currently £2,345 per year, per eligible pupil, and this is paid directly to the child's school rather than to the Virtual School. From April 2021, pupil premium allocations will be calculated based on the number of eligible pupils recorded by schools in their census in October 2020.

Surrey Virtual School has provided a letter to Surrey Adoption and the Family and Friends teams to share with Parents and Guardians of Surrey's previously looked after children. The letter explains Previously Looked After Children's (PLACs) eligibility for pupil premium and how to declare their child's PLAC status to their school.

If you would like further information on Pupil premium for Previously looked after children, please visit our website - [Pupil premium - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/pupil-premium) or you can contact our Education Support Officer For Previously Looked-After Children.

**Ellie Bissell** [Ellie.Bissell@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:Ellie.Bissell@surreycc.gov.uk)  
Education Support Officer Children Previously Looked After

### **School Admissions and looked after children**

We have worked with our colleagues in the Surrey Admissions team to update the [Protocol for 2021/22 on the Processing of In Year Admissions for Children in Care](#). Information regarding this has been sent to Headteachers. This explains the key processes that the Virtual School and the School Admissions team will follow to ensure the consistent, transparent and timely admission of children in care, and to ensure there is a clear and recognised process for handling applications across the local authority and its schools, which is in line with our statutory responsibilities. DTs may want to make sure that colleagues with responsibility for admissions are aware of the following from the protocol:

School Admissions will now refer Children in Care applications to the preference school within 3 working days [instead of 5 as previously];

- the preference school must tell School Admissions whether they are willing to admit the child within 7 school days of receiving the referral [no change];
- the child must be admitted within no more than 12 school days of the school receiving the initial referral from School Admissions [instead of 15 school days as previously], to ensure a placement is secured within a maximum of 15 school days [instead of 20 school days as previously].

### **Supporting Transition**

#### **Summer 2021**

Summer Extravaganza (Year 5-8)

In August, we ran our first ever 'Summer Extravaganza' (initially for Year 6s transitioning into Year 7, then expanded to allow for increased capacity, designing at boosting the confidence and self-esteem of our care experienced young people (YP). Workshops including doggy therapy/agility, superhero mask-making and some music and theatre. It was a resounding success and very well-received so we will be looking to run that again next summer (or even before!) Many thanks to Cranleigh School for hosting us in their wonderful grounds.

#### **New Year 7 Transition Support**

I have, where known in July, contacted the Designated Teachers for most of our Year 7 cohort to make you aware of the Summer Term Progress and Attainment data for your new young

people (YP). Where necessary, SVS are willing to fund an additional 15 hours academic or social/emotional/mental health support to help our YP settle at their new schools. This funding is to develop our transition work to mimic the longer-term transition support in place for Year 11 into 12. Your YP's Education Support Officer is the first point of contact for this additional funding or you can contact me directly (email address above). \*This funding is over and above this term's PP+ funding which is being paid directly to you school in the next few weeks.

### **Surrey University Widening Participation Residential Summer School (Year 9-11)**

25 YP (Y9-11) attended Surrey University's Widening Participation Summer Residential for 2 nights and 3 days where they experienced sample apprenticeship work, Engineering and Psychology sample lectures and a host of social activities. I went to visit on the second day and saw all the young people immersed in some wellbeing work and heard from the University's Student Ambassadors how well our YP were doing. This experience will not only be offered again next year but will roll out through this year offering Saturday schools, student mentors and other types of support.

### **Transition 2020-21 (and 2021-22) Year 11 into 12: 'Tartan in the Time of Covid'**

Last academic year we supported over 100 Year 11s in care (some 50% being new to care last academic year) make a successful post-16 transition. As you know from previous communications, this support varied from offering Functional Skills exams entries to tailored 1:1 careers coaching and everything in between. One way and another our Y11s will continue to be supported through this programme until February 2022 and through the work of our Post-16 Team onwards. Although we are still collecting exam results data, we are looking at around 25% of our cohort that achieved a Level 2 pass in English and maths and are also celebrating all other personal success stories such as those gaining ESOL qualifications or Level 1 passes. Our work with the new Year 11s (that began after Easter of Year 10) has continued over the summer and will continue in earnest throughout the year. Please look out for regular communications from me about this additional support – especially for any young person not making expected progress in their subjects (for any reason).

## **Research and Data**

### **How the PEP progress & attainment data is used**

Some of you will have attended previous CPD sessions on how we, in Surrey Virtual School use the Progress and Attainment data you enter into the PEPs each term. In short, please rest assured it is exceptionally well used and informs much of our work with individuals and different cohorts. I meet with the Education Support Officers (ESOs) regularly to discuss different year groups and individuals within the cohorts to ensure we are supporting schools to ensure our young people secure the best possible educational outcomes. Please do contact me if you'd like any further information on this.

### **Research Learning Community with 'What Works in Education for Children with Social Care.'**

This year we are working with the very well-respected 'WWCSC' organisation on research projects aimed at further supporting our current Year 5 and 6s. We welcome volunteers to be part of this research and will be analysing the summer term Progress and Attainment data to target specific young people. The project is led by a professor from Durham University and supported by NAVSH (National Association of Virtual School Headteachers).

**Stacey McCabe** [Stacey.mccabe@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:Stacey.mccabe@surreycc.gov.uk)

Assistant Head Teacher Progress Attainment & 'Surrey East Strategic Lead'

Designated Teachers will also be interested in reading [The Trauma and Attachment Aware Classroom](#) written by Rebecca Brooks is an Education Policy Advisor at Adoption UK, a former

secondary school teacher and foster carer. This book is about transitions and change for care-experienced young people in school.

## Training and development for Designated Teachers

Anna MacLean leads on our training offer for Designated Teachers (DTs), Social Workers, Personal Advisors, Foster Carers, Adoptive Parents and Special Guardians, and has been working hard to develop this further following our successful programme in 2020-21. Take a look at our website for our [Autumn term CPD training offer](#) with Spring and Summer term events soon to be advertised. Additional events will be added as the term progresses so we encourage you to regularly revisit the Training and Events tab and to keep an eye out for emails from the VS Admin Team.

The [Department for Education \(DFE\)](#) is clear about the responsibility of the DT to access regular training and ensure this is kept updated. *'A key part of the designated teacher's role is ensuring that they, and other school staff, have strong awareness, training and skills around the specific needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children and how to support them.'* (DFE 2018). We hope that you find this year's offer to be valuable and look forward to seeing you at one of our virtual events in the near future.

## Language, labels and love in the care-experienced narrative

This was the theme for our recent Surrey Virtual School (SVS) Autumn Term Conference 2021 where we will be joined by published author Kirsty Capes. As a care leaver, Kirsty is an advocate for better representation of care-experienced people in the media. She recently completed her PhD which investigates female-centric care narratives in contemporary fiction, under the supervision of 2019 Booker prize-winner, Bernardine Evaristo. Careless is her first novel.

At our conference, using her own journey and records, academic research and examples in fiction, literature and news media, Kirsty examined how language is used to story looked-after children and care leavers. Language often reinforces negative stereotypes about care experienced young people and it is essential to recognise this, critically examine it and work to disrupt it through practice. She offered everyday practical solutions to overturn harmful language patterns and narratives.

At the end of October SVS sponsored a Writing Workshop with Kirsty Capes organised by our colleagues in the User Voice and Participation (UVP) team for care experienced young people.

## Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

### Surrey PEP Template

This term you will notice a few small changes to our PEP templates:

- PEP deadlines for the academic year are now displayed prominently at the top of each page
- The targets page has been updated to enable better recording of a child's individual needs (see exemplification in our new Pupil Premium Plus policy)
- Year R is now included on the statutory school age PEP rather than the early years template
- The early years template has been fully updated (in consultation with settings) to more meaningfully record individual needs and learning targets of our youngest children.

Data supporting the continued improvements to quality and timeliness of PEPs including Early Years and Post 16 is available upon request

Feedback from quality assurance of Statutory School Age Person Education Plans for Summer 2021 focussed on 'The Big Five' Quality Assurance criteria as follows:

Fully Evidenced is Green, Not Evidenced is Red and Partially Evidenced is Amber

1. There is evidence that the Pupil Voice has been heard and is evident in the PEP planning. Green, 88.1%, Red, 3.9%, Amber, 2.9%
2. Short and long-term learning targets are included which are aspirational, challenging and SMART. They include detail on how and when it will be achieved and name the adults that will be responsible for actions. Green 77.8%, Red 5.0%, Amber 11.6%
3. There is evidence of updated attainment and progress data. Green 79.3%, Red 6.8%, Amber 7.7%
4. The review of the previous Learning targets demonstrates the use of the previous term of Pupil Premium Plus Grant spend and the impact it has had on learning (excluding new LAC) Green 83.3%, Red 3.6%, Amber: 1.9%
5. New Learning targets include the proposed use of the Pupil Premium Plus and how this funding will support the achievement of the Learning Objectives. Green 59.6%, Red 1.7%, Amber 2.4%

#### **Strengths from Recent PEPS we have Reviewed:**

- 97% of Statutory School Age PEPs were completed in Summer 221 – our best result ever. Thank you for your contribution to achieving this!
- More PEPs are demonstrating evidence of PPP spend. A reminder that this term (Autumn 2021) schools/education settings are being directly and automatically sent a PPP allocation. We will still need to see feedback on how this was spent and the impact it has made.
- Although the overall percentage of Progress and Attainment data submitted dropped this was largely due to schools being understandably cautious about submitting Teaching Assessment Guidance (TAG) for Year 11.

#### **Areas for Development:**

- We continue to see some targets which are too generalised and nonspecific which may result in poorer progress being made by a child. Please see some examples of SMART targets on pages 9-15 of our new 2021 Pupil Premium Policy. There is also a focus on this in the bi-termly training for Social Workers and Designated Teachers.
- Whilst progress and attainment data is generally good for transition years and those years with statutory assessment, we are seeing a lack of current progress and attainment data in some other year groups such as Year 8 and Year 4. SVS uses data from all year groups to put appropriate interventions in place and therefore this data is crucial, especially where we are undertaking wider research into the best interventions for Looked After Children (LAC).

#### **PEP deadlines**

Please complete all PEPs on Welfare Call by:

Autumn Term: Friday 5 November 2021

Spring Term: Friday 11 February 2022

Summer Term: Friday 10 June 2022

## Feedback from the Quality Assurance of Post-16 Personal Education Plans – Summer Term 2021

For the third term in a row, we have seen a reduction of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) audited as Red with only 8% of all PEPs falling into this category. Thank you for all your hard work in driving up the quality of our Post-16 PEPs!

As shown by the Table on Page 6, we have seen an increase in the number of new to care Post-16 learners since the end of the previous term. This has in turn increased the number of new to care or interim PEPs which do not always contain enough information to meet the Fully Evidenced (Green) criteria. We continue to work closely with our Social Workers, Personal Advisors and Designated Leads to ensure a detailed initial PEP is in place, and are pleased to see ongoing progress in this area. We have also seen a small increase in the number of PEPs not completed, again most notably due to an increase in new to care where it has not been possible to complete a PEP before the end of the academic year. In these cases, a number of initial PEPs are completed over the summer break with the Social Worker and Carer to ensure each Young Person (YP) has a support plan in place ahead of the new academic year.

Where Young People (YP) decline a PEP Post-18, the narrative for this is recorded on their PEP and the PEP is audited as Amber. This most commonly occurs in the Summer Term when an increased number of our YP turn 18 and therefore increases the number of Amber PEPs at the end of the academic year. At the end of the summer term, the number of Amber PEPs increased from 25% to 30% - a figure which we expect to see reduced by the end of this term. PEPs continue to be offered to all Year 13 YP (regardless of age), up until the end of the academic year and can continue to be offered Post-18, should a YP request this.

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Assistant Headteacher for Post-16, Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) and CPD.

### Attendance summary for Surrey children in care

Overall, absence increased in 2020/21 compared to the previous year, with an attendance rate of 90.1% recorded. Clearly COVID continued to influence attendance patterns, with a period of lockdown from December 2020 to March 2021. The Virtual School worked closely with carers, social workers and schools to maximise attendance and stability.

We are delighted that overall, 35% of all looked-after pupils had 100% attendance during the autumn term, however, 21.6% had attendance which was below 90% and 11.6% below 80%. We have carefully tracked different groups of children throughout the year with overall attendance shown below.

Attendance for Surrey looked-after children 2020/21

Overall 90.1%

In County 90.9%

Out of County 89.2%

Primary 95.8%

Secondary 85.6%

EHCP 88.6%

SEN Support 89.8%

No SEN 91.7%

Surrey Virtual School will be launching a new Attendance policy soon and will continue to monitor attendance closely, in partnership with Social Workers.

## Suspensions and Exclusions

During the academic year 2020/21, the Virtual School worked closely and successfully with schools and inclusion services to secure alternatives to a very small number of permanent exclusions. However, 52 Surrey looked after children received suspensions, more than half of which were unfortunately not accompanied by an explanatory letter uploaded to Welfare Call, with 48% of these pupils receiving two or more during the academic year.

We will be introducing a new Suspensions and Exclusions policy and protocol for 2021/22 to ensure that different approaches are considered and that we always take account of the impacts of suspension on this group of children.

Please keep an eye on the SVS training offer, now live on our website. Our courses will help you to identify ways in which Pupil Premium Plus funding can be used to improve attendance and consider attachment and trauma informed approaches to help identify alternatives to use of suspensions.

**Cass Hardy** [cass.hardy@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:cass.hardy@surreycc.gov.uk)  
Assistant Headteacher



### Twitter

If you are interested in staying up to date with SVS, make sure to follow [our Twitter page!](#)

Our Twitter page is a hub for everything related to Surrey Virtual School and our partnering teams and is perfect for anyone who wants to stay up to date with what's going on in SVS to support our #careexperienced young people. We actively post on our Twitter feed to promote training and events hosted by us to further support you in your role, as well as promote opportunities from elsewhere in Surrey (and Nationwide) like job offers and other resources for #careexperienced children & young people and those working with them.

If you're new to Twitter, please contact [Stacey.mccabe@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:Stacey.mccabe@surreycc.gov.uk) for a 15 minute one to one training slot.