

Havering Virtual School Handbook

2023- 2025

Havering Virtual **School**

VSHT@havering.gov.uk

Introduction & Overview

The role of the Virtual School Head Teacher (VSH) is one of only a few statutory roles required of a local authority. Connected to this role is the current statutory guidance in relation to the duty of a virtual school to promote the educational attainment of looked after children, '*Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children, statutory guidance for local authorities*' (February 2018). This guidance states that the VSH should be the lead responsible officer for ensuring that arrangements are in place to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of the Authority's looked after children, including those placed out-of-authority. For previously looked-after children, the VSH will be a source of advice and information to help their parents to advocate for them as effectively as possible.

The Virtual School approach is to work with children in care as if they were in a single school, providing support and challenge to the schools they attend, tracking their progress and supporting them to achieve as well as possible.

As the Virtual School, we work in partnership with schools, caregivers, social workers, Independent Reviewing Officers and a wide range of other professionals to:

- Remove barriers and inequalities in educational achievement for children and young people in the care of London Borough of Havering
- Ensure that there is suitable education in place for all children in our care
- Make sure each child receives the help and support they need to be a successful learner
- Prioritise schools judged by Ofsted to be 'good' or 'outstanding' for our children in need of a new school in line with Statutory Guidance
- Ensure that there is effective and timely communication between all professionals, particularly in relation to possible education placement changes, admissions and exclusions
- Challenge low expectations, stereotypes and misconceptions around this group of children and young people

Havering Virtual School ensures that statutory guidance is met by having in place:

- A maintained up-to-date school roll that gathers information about educational placements, attendance and educational progress
- A system for ensuring that head teachers and designated teachers in schools are fully aware of children in their schools who are Children In Care (CiC)
- A training and support strategy that enables designated teachers, social workers, care-givers and IROs to understand their role in the development and actions related to Personal Education Plans (PEP) and the outcomes of our CiC.
- A Personal Education Plan (PEP) system that ensures every child has one and that they are up-to-date, effective and of high quality, focusing on educational outcomes.
- Implementing pupil premium arrangements for Children in care in accordance with the latest conditions of grant published by the Department for Education.

Extended Duties

In July 2021, the Department of Education announced an extension to the role of Virtual School Head to take on a strategic leadership role in promoting the educational outcomes of children with a social worker and those who had previously had a social worker aged 0 up to 18. The extension in

duties was supported with grant funding from 1st September 2021 and non-statutory guidance [*'Promoting the education of children with a social worker June 2021'*](#).

The initiative came out of the findings from the [Children in Need review](#), undertaken in 2019, which identified the gap between the educational outcomes for children with a social worker and their peers. On average, children with a social worker do worse at every stage of their education. They are half as likely to achieve a strong pass in English and maths at GCSE and almost five times less likely to enter higher education at age 18. They are around three times more likely to be persistently absent from school; two to four times more likely to be suspended; and over ten times more likely to be in Alternative Provision. With one in ten children needing a social worker between 2012 and 2018 (roughly three children in every classroom), these were issues that almost all schools were facing. The review recognised the role Virtual School Heads had played in developing partnerships between local authorities and schools in their work with children in the care system and wanted to explore how this could be extended to promote the educational needs of children in need and on child protection plans.

Although it was recognised that Virtual School Heads would adapt their leadership to meet local need, there were some generic activities that would be critical to undertaking the role, including:

- identifying the needs of the cohort;
- addressing barriers to educational success;
- offering advice and guidance to key professionals to help children make progress;
- increasing confidence in using evidence-based interventions

In addition, the strategic leadership role would aim to:

- Enhance partnerships between education settings and local authorities, ensuring all agencies work together and hold high aspirations for children with a social worker;
- Promote practice that supports children's engagement in education;
- Level up children's outcomes and narrow the attainment gap, which has widened following the impact of COVID-19

Havering Aims and Objectives

1. Identify key schools where numbers of children on CIN and CP plans are currently educated
2. Create an Education Summary form that can be used in a similar way to a PEP
3. Improve attendance in education for the cohorts supported through weekly monitoring of attendance on eGOV
4. Deliver drop-in and targeted support to social workers and education staff
5. Schools report improvements in the children's engagement and behaviour's whilst in school
6. Children report feeling supported and able to engage in school better
7. Children report improved confidence and esteem.

Pupil Premium Spend

Funds are allocated to the Virtual School by way of the Pupil Premium for looked after children (DfE). This money is the responsibility of the Virtual School Head (VSH) to allocate as they see fit but with the end result of supporting educational outcomes for CiC pupils. This additional funding is largely distributed to schools to support the educational outcomes of CiC who are pupils within their school. At present the Pupil Premium for looked after children amounts to £2410 of additional Government funding. Pupil Premium is allocated in accordance with the Havering Virtual School Pupil Premium Policy for Children in Care which is updated annually.

The annual budget for funding is based on the number of CiC pupils in the borough on a given census date. It is therefore important to ensure that funding is available for pupils who become looked after following this census date too. Each year some of the funding is held centrally to fund support staff and experts to offer support, guidance, training and assessments to school, caregivers, social workers and individual children, plus motivational/aspirational initiatives that will support/promote better educational outcomes for CiC pupils. This includes activities such as study skills and booster sessions, letter box reading scheme, additional careers guidance and Educational Psychologist time, mentoring and motivational programmes.

Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

All children in care must have a care plan, of which the PEP is an integral part. The PEP (pre-school, to age 18) should be initiated as part of the care plan. It is an evolving record of what needs to happen for the child to enable them to make at least expected progress and fulfil their potential.

The PEP is the joint responsibility of the local authority and the school and an initial PEP should be completed within 20 working days of the child becoming looked after. The social worker has the duty to initiate the PEP. Every eligible CiC from pre-school to 18 must have a PEP. The designated teacher leads on how the PEP is developed and used in school to make sure the child's progress towards education targets is monitored. PEPs should be updated every school term. PEP review meetings are usually led by the Designated Teacher, with the Social Worker and HVS support. It is expected that all parties arrive at a PEP review meeting well-prepared and briefed to contribute professionally.

Whenever a child's education provision changes the VSH should expect an early PEP Review meeting to take place, so that information is shared with the new provision and they can have immediate access to the existing PEP, which they should be expected to follow until they provide an updated PEP that takes account of the changed provision.

Where there is a risk that a child may be permanently excluded, or where there is a pattern of exclusion, or significant behaviour concerns are raised by a school, the VSH should expect the social worker and DT to cooperate in calling an early PEP Review so that strategies to address any concerns can be discussed and agreed as an alternative to further exclusion

The Virtual School team quality assures and liaises with schools/designated teachers and social care in this respect. Training is provided for designated teachers and social workers so that they are

aware of how to complete an effective PEP. On-going support and training is offered on a regular basis around the use of the ePEP for Designated Teachers and Social Care.

The PEP should reflect the importance of a personalised approach to learning that meets the child's identified educational needs, raises aspirations and builds life chances. The school, other professionals and the child's carers should use the PEP to support achieving those things.

All of those involved in the PEP process should ensure the child is involved (according to understanding and ability) and where appropriate, the child's parent and/or relevant family member are also actively involved in the whole pep process.

[Please refer to the PEP section of the statutory guidance for more information.](#)

In Havering we use ePEP Online to record all the information needed for a PEP. ePEP online is a web based portal which provides the Virtual School, teachers, social workers and other named professionals access to the child's current and past PEPs.

Designated teachers ePEP guidance

The role of Designated Teacher for Looked after Children in all schools and education centres has been statutory since 2009 and is described in detail in the latest Statutory Guidance (2018). The Department for Education strongly recommends that the Designated Teachers for Looked after Children is a member of the senior management team.

PEPs are education plans drawn up at a meeting, usually held in school or virtually. They are a statutory part of the care planning for each child.

They are designed to ensure that all important decisions, about the education of Children in Care (CIC) are made jointly by the corporate parents; this includes all professionals supporting the young person, including designated teachers.

PEPs need to take place once a term, a review of the PEP should take place termly or more frequently if there is a need. If a child is new to care or new to the school, a PEP needs to take place within 20 school days and then be reviewed each term.

A PEP can be done at the same time as IEP or EHCP reviews (or similar), if this is convenient.

HVS will regularly monitor PEPs for quality assurance. This will help inform us where our children are being well supported by a quality PEP, and also identify any areas in need of improvement.

Who should attend a PEP and what are their responsibilities?

- Social Worker completes Section A: this includes; essential information and care information.
- Young Person (if appropriate) completes Section B: child/young person's views section with the support of the Designated Teacher.
- Designated Teacher completes Section C: Education Information; attainment levels, attendance, targets, Health and Emotional Well-Being, SEND and 14-19+Plan etc.
- Once the 3 sections have been completed HVS will complete Section D, which is the QA and final comments page of the ePEP.

Social Worker ePEP guidance

All Children in Care must have a current Personal Education Plan (ePEP), which should be reviewed every school term as part of the statutory review of the child's Care Plan. The ePEP acts as a record of what needs to happen for a Child in Care to reach their educational potential.

For a PEP to be compliant with statutory guidance it must:

- Be started within 20 working days of first coming into care and be available for the first statutory review of the care plan (which takes place after 20 working days) This applies to all young children in care from pre-school to 18 years. In Havering good practice is to hold a pep for any child in Year R and continue until the end of Year 13.
- Be a high-quality effective plan that is up to date (i.e reviewed termly) N.B This is applicable even when the young person is temporarily between education establishments, work or training; in these circumstances the PEP actions should relate to securing new education place and maintaining education during this transition.
- Involve the child/young person - so there should be clear evidence of their voice reflected throughout the PEP (according to understanding and ability)
- Involved the Caregiver and/or relevant family member(s) - so unless ill, or the young person is between care placements, the caregiver should be present and contribute to the actions.
- Set clear, short and long term targets which relate to developmental goals, academic achievement and progress, out of school activities, learning/study support and educational ambitions and higher education
- Set out a personalised learning approach through clear identification of the child/young person's developmental and educational needs
- Record specific interventions and targeted support by providing details of who will initiate the actions; set specific timescales for actions to be taken; record how progress will be rigorously monitored; and set dates for review.
- Set out information of how the school/social worker will identify any mental health needs relevant to the child/young person's education and how aspiration and self-confidence are nurtured.
- Link to but not duplicate other education plans if relevant
- Contain information on work experience and career plans and aspirations for all 14 years +.
- Identify funding sources (including notional SEN budget where applicable) to implement the action.
- Include the following age, care status, where they live, school history, any SEND needs and plans, carers level of delegated authority, contact details and restrictions, which Virtual School and Local Authority are the corporate parents.

The PEP is the joint responsibility of the Local Authority and School / other education settings.

The Social Workers statutory duty is to initiate a PEP as part of the care plan; and then develop and review the PEP with other professionals. They should be present at PEP meetings.

The Designated Teachers statutory duty is to develop the PEP, make sure it is effective and lead on it within school, although other relevant staff should contribute. The DT should lead PEP meetings once the SW has initiated it.

The Virtual School statutory duty is to ensure there is an up to date, high quality PEP in place for all of its children in care that is focussed on educational outcomes. They work with the social worker and DT to facilitate / ensure PEP completion.

At least one target must be linked to Pupil Premium Plus. ePEPs are signed off by the Virtual School and Pupil Premium Plus spend will be tracked via the ePEP.

The ePEP Review should include an evaluation of the impact of the Pupil Premium Plus; this effectively reviews and audits the school's administration and implementation of the Pupil Premium Plus.

Social Worker (SW)

- Liaises with the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children at school/education provision to arrange a date for the PEP meeting within 20 working days of coming into care or change of education placement.
- If new to care or no school place – informs HVS in order for initial ePEP to be set up.
- Informs the Foster carer/care placement of meeting date and time.
- Completes Section A of the ePEP in detail: for example Care Information; Contact Information; checks that Care Start Date and Legal Status are correct on the ePEP. This should be completed prior to the ePEP meeting.
- Will upload any relevant documents e.g. psychology reports/assessments.
- Once complete - Marks Section A as Complete on the Sign Off Page.

Designated Teacher (DT)

- Ensures that the child/young person has input into the ePEP. The Young Person can complete Section B; complete the Alternative Views Section on the ePEP; or attach a document/picture to the ePEP. Alternatively, or in addition the young person may attend the meeting to verbally give their views and this can be recorded during the meeting on the PEP Meeting Page.
- Completes Section C of the ePEP; Attendance, Attainment; SEN Page; Health and Emotional Well-Being Page and draft targets. This should be completed prior to the EPEP meeting.
- Discusses with the class/subject teacher/s to gain feedback and should be prepared to share this at the meeting to provide a basis for further discussion regarding progress.
- Ensures a suitable room is available for the meeting with computer and internet access, preferably with a screen for all to see.
- Depending on the age of the young person – facilitates the completion of the 14-19 plan with the young person and careers advisor.
- If necessary/appropriate, invites additional professionals to the meeting (e.g. Learning Mentor, TESS Worker, Education Psychologist).
- Upload all relevant documents; e.g. EHC Plan, Target Plans, School Reports, copies of certificates.
- Will upload any photos of the child involved in school activities.

Role of Havering Virtual School:

- Supports with any queries with the set-up of the of the PEP Meeting
- Will support and advise on the completion of the ePEP pages prior to the meeting if required.

- Will attend the PEP meeting to support and facilitate with the PEP in complex situations. HVS workers will not attend all EPEP meetings.
- If in attendance at the PEP meeting will offer advice and guidance and will support with facilitating the meeting
- Will sign off funding requests attached to targets.
- Will consider requests made for additional funding.
- Following the meeting, the ePEP will be quality assured and the Final Sign Off of the ePEP completed with constructive feedback in the comments box within 4 weeks of the PEP meeting and prior to the end of term.
- Will Reject the PEP within the 4 week sign off period if further information is required for Sign Off.
- Will offer advice with regards to expectations of high quality and effective PEPs.
- Will record any interventions in the VS Interventions Section of the ePEP and any relevant case notes on the VS Case Recording Section of the ePEP, e.g. Important/relevant emails or telephone conversations.

At the meeting

- This is the Young Person's meeting and as such, discussions should remain focussed on them. Issues that need resolving between professionals may best be dealt with beforehand.
- SW to update the meeting re: any changes in care plan.
- Young person, if present, to share their views – if not DT to do this on their behalf.
- DT to share and discuss Section C.
- Previous targets to be reviewed and signed off as Achieved; Not Achieved; or In-Progress
- New targets and Pupil Premium Plus spend to be discussed, agreed and recorded on the Targets page and funding request to be submitted.
- Caregiver to share views.
- DT to record detailed minutes of the PEP meeting discussion in Section E; including who attended, what was discussed and agreed – this can be supported by the SW or HVS.
- Set date and time for next meeting – record on PEP Meeting page.
- Following the PEP meeting DT to mark DT page and YP page as complete on the Sign Off Page (this can only be done only once the date for next meeting has been set)

Effective and high quality PEPs should

- Create a comprehensive and enduring record of the child's experience progress and achievement (academic and otherwise)
- Be linked to information in other education plans including a statement of special educational needs/EHCP and IEPs
- Identify developmental and educational needs (short and long term) in relation to skills, knowledge, subject areas and experiences
- Set short term targets, including progress monitoring against each of the areas identified against development and educational needs
- Set long term plans and educational targets and aspirations (e.g. in relation to public examinations, further and higher education, work experience and career plans and aspirations)
- Document identified actions for specific individuals intended to support the achievement of agreed targets
- Identify how the Pupil Premium Plus and other funding will be used to support the targets set in the PEP

- Identify how other interventions will make a difference to a child's learning and achievements

Attendance and exclusions

Havering Virtual School commissions eGov Solutions to monitor and report on the daily attendance and exclusion of CiC pupils of school age, and weekly attendance of all children of school age on CIN and CP plans. This information is provided to the designated Attendance and Behaviour Officer, and the HVS team who follow up on information to support improving attendance. Work to support the engagement of CiC pupils also includes liaison with the Havering Inclusions team who advise and support on educational engagement for CiC pupils who are struggling with mainstream education. Data are collated and reported to the Corporate Parenting Panel and the Virtual School Governing Body.

The Virtual School maintains a 'Watch List' of all children that is reviewed on a fortnightly basis by the whole team. The list allows the team to focus on those children whose attendance is of the highest concern and agree actions.

Supporting previously looked after children

It is important to remember, that all children who have been adopted, have positive futures in front of them. Past experiences can have a lasting impact, especially at school. Trauma can be experienced in utero. Young people adopted from birth may face challenges with attachment or have unresolved trauma that affects their thoughts and behaviours in ways that the young person may not understand.

Educators play a crucial role in supporting the academic, emotional and social needs of Previously Looked After Children (PLAC). Education providers must be able to empathise and support the young person through reasonable adjustments and the provision of a designated adult available to them when required.

In February 2018, the Department of Education (DFE), published the statutory [guidance for maintained schools and academies](#).

The guidance explains PLAC as a child, "who is no longer looked after in England and Wales because s/he is the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements which includes arrangements relating to with whom the child is to live, or when the child is to live with any personor has been adopted from 'state care' outside England and Wales if s/he is in care of or accommodated by a public authority, a religious organisation or any other organisation the sole or main purpose of which is to benefit society."

This guidance directs educators, to give a certain amount of support to PLAC, because, they are more likely to have some sort of disrupted learning, through absences and some may have special educational needs (SEN). These gaps in their learning, may have an impact on their emotional experiences and therefore, may lead to significant barriers in their educational attainment.

Pupil Premium+

Pupil Premium funding is available to pupils, from Reception to Year 11. The school should, record information on the October school census, and the school will receive the funding in the following financial year, along with the FSM pupil premium.

Pupil Premium is available for children who have had the following orders:

- adoption
- special guardianship
- child arrangements (previously known as a residence order)

All the three options specified above must have been in local authority care for 1 day or more.

Pupil premium funding is available to:

- schools maintained by the local authority, including schools for children with special educational needs or disabilities or pupil referral units (PRUs), for children who can't go to a mainstream school
- academies and free schools, including specialist SEND provision and alternative provision (AP), for children who struggle to attend a mainstream school
- voluntary-sector AP, with local authority agreement
- non-maintained special schools (NMSS), for children with special educational needs as approved by the Secretary of State for Education under section 342 of the Education Act 1992

For schools to access the funding, parents and guardians must declare their child's adoptive, SGO or CAO status directly to the school before the school completes the census.

Parents and guardians must provide evidence, for example, a copy of the legal order, or a confirmation letter from the local authority which placed their child. Parents should not need to declare their child's status again until their child changes school.

This money is not ring-fenced for one child, so it allows the school flexibility to ensure maximum impact for this cohort of children. The school can make the final decision, but it would be civil, if the decision is made after parental consultation. Having meetings with the Designated Teacher, is a very useful and effective way of discussing the progress and needs of the child as well as discussing (if appropriate) the use of PP+ funding.

Information on what a school uses all its Pupil Premium funding for, should be available on their website or ask the school's Designated Teacher for further information in the first instance.

The role of the virtual school for previously looked-after children is to promote their educational attainment through the provision of information and advice to their parents, educators and others where necessary. We will strive to:

- Champion those with previous care experience and are now AO, SGO or CAO.
- Offer advice and information to parents and signpost them to other services for advice and support if necessary.

- Offer advice and information to providers of early education, designated teachers in schools and providers of alternative provision in respect of individual previously looked after children.
- 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 includes promoting good practice on identifying and meeting children's needs and guidance on effective use of the PP+ funds.

Care Leavers

Havering Virtual School works in partnership with Children's Services officers and post 16 providers in the borough to support the positive engagement of care leavers. The Virtual School leads on the regular monitoring and reviewing of data on Havering CiC NEET in collaboration with Children's Services and the Young People and Adults Learning team to support care leavers to access further/higher education, apprenticeships and employment opportunities.

The role of the Virtual School's KS4 and post 16 EET Officer is to support the KS4 cohort with post 16 progression and NEET reduction and to work with the NEET cohort to reduce this. There is also a focus on promoting on improving the quality of post 16 PEPs, seeking higher education opportunities, raising aspiration and engaging with the post 16 cohort.

Virtual School Annual Report

The Virtual School Head Teacher produces an Annual Report which provides data and commentary on key areas such as attendance, exclusions, attainment, PEP compliance, pupil voice and care leaver destinations. The report assesses also how well support systems are working to ensure better educational outcomes for looked after pupils. This then links to the Virtual School Dashboard and reporting shared with the Governing Body which sets out priorities/key actions for the following year; and progress against these.

Virtual School interventions

In addition to the PEP and administration and oversight of the PP+ LAC the Virtual School works closely with other professionals and networks and delivers direct work and training opportunities all with the ambition to achieve optimal outcomes for CiC and their education.

HVS attend weekly Access to Resource meetings (HARP) with Children's Services officers and has the responsibility to source appropriate education provision, where this is not already in place. Wherever possible, placements are sourced with schools that are either good or outstanding. Where schools refuse to accept children looked after, this can be escalated to the Virtual School Head Teacher to consider directing an admissions authority to accept a pupil.

HVS Work alongside school staff and other professionals to put in place effective intervention work for the child or young person at tier 1 universal support and early help stages. (This could include supporting a child to catch up with missed work, reviewing timetables, advice on how to resolve transport difficulties or supporting the parent or carer to ensure a child attends their educational setting.)

HVS monitor the educational progress of children in Care via the ePEP and engage regularly with schools.

Training and support is offered to ensure that Designated Teachers to help them fulfil their roles effectively in line with up to date government policy and guidance and there is a regular DT Forum chaired by the Virtual School to share best practice, and develop an environment for local solutions and interventions such as transition programmes, AP programmes and avoiding exclusions.

In addition to the interventions and support put in place in educational provisions for CiC, the Virtual School have a programme of events and activities throughout the year to promote aspiration and educational progress. The aim of the events are to engage children and young people with the Virtual School in order to provide personalised opportunities and support to encourage and foster educational achievement. This includes transitional support for children and young people at critical transition points in their education.

HVS work with the Foster carer and Adoptive parent networks and support groups providing a response to problem solving discussions with foster carers / parents via phone calls or emails, encouraging and supporting them to develop strong relationships with schools and education providers, and to pass on their concerns to both their own supervising social worker and child' social worker for them to support.

The Virtual School offers continuous support, training and advice for social care colleagues with respect to education policy and practice. This includes direct support and guidance with regards to children with a social worker on CIN and CP plans.

Virtual School Governance

The Virtual School Governing Body meets three times a year. The overriding purpose of the Governing Body is to ensure that the Virtual School Head and virtual school are effective in driving forward improvement in, and raising the educational attainment of each of the Local Authority's children in care. The Governing Body provides support, oversight and scrutiny of the work of the Virtual School Head and virtual school in the following key areas:

- Ensure all children in care are in high quality, suitable education, and where this is not the case, have protocols in place for an additional level of scrutiny, taking action where required
- Ensure the attainment gap between children in care and their peers is narrowing, and the virtual school maintains accurate and up-to-date information about how children are progressing at school and takes urgent and individual action when they are not achieving well.
- Ensure there are accurate and timely assessments of children's needs, as well as specialist support where it is needed, paying particular attention to the needs of those children who have special educational needs and/or a disability
- Ensure children in care receive the same support from their carers as they would from a good parent.
- Ensure children and young people who do not attend school have access to good-quality registered alternative provision. They are encouraged and supported to attend the provision and there is regular review of their progress.
- Ensure urgent action to protect children is taken where they are missing from school or their attendance noticeably reduces.

- Ensure social workers, residential staff and carers support children and young people to enjoy what they do and to access a range of social, educational and recreational opportunities.
- Ensure that the local authority's Designated Teachers for children looked after are offered training and supported by the virtual school to fulfil their role and duties.
- Ensure there are robust plans in place to support young people who approach leaving care and/or those at risk of NEET, aged 16-18yrs (including those 'missing' education)

The Virtual School reports regularly to the Corporate Parenting Panel. In addition, the Virtual School Head teacher sits on the Children's Services Improvement Board and reports as requested.

Pupil Voice

The Virtual School receives feedback from Mind Of My Own. Mind of My Own is directly linked to the Virtual School for any concerns in regard to education. Concerns are swiftly followed up and discussed with the appropriate designated school teacher and/or social worker.

Feedback from participants of the events organised by the Virtual School is gathered in order to develop and shape the service to ensure it is directly in line with the children and young people, for example the Children in Care Council decide the theme of the annual HVS Celebration and Awards ceremony, and share their experience of education and the support received from the ePEP and Pupil Premium to help shape improvements.

Havering Virtual School is signed up to the Our Pledge to the children and young people who are cared for by Havering Council.

Work with other Virtual Schools

The Havering Virtual School is an active member of the National Association of Virtual School Head (NAVSH) Teachers and the VSH attends the Pan London VSH network. This aids joint working with other virtual schools, especially in relation to supporting virtual schools that place pupils within the borough and in seeking support from other virtual schools where Havering pupils are placed with carers outside Havering.

Appendix 1: What does ‘in care’ mean?

The Different Types of Court Orders. There are two main categories by which Children are defined as “Looked After Children”:

1. Being accommodated under **Section 20 of the Children Act 1989** or
2. Being made the subject of a Care Order under **Section 31 of the Children Act 1989 or Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 (Accommodation)**

Under **Section 20 of the Children Act 1989**, children and young people can be accommodated with the consent of those with parental responsibility. If the young person is 16 or 17 years old, they do not need the consent of those with parental responsibility in order to be accommodated by the Local Authority.

A Local Authority may also provide accommodation to anyone between 16 and 21 years old in a community home if they consider it necessary to safeguard or promote that young person’s welfare. Any person who has parental responsibility for a child may at any time remove the child from accommodation provided by or on behalf of the Local Authority. If the young person is 16 or 17 years old, they can leave the accommodation without parental consent.

Section 20 is based on co-operative working between the Local Authority, the young person and their parents. The parents retain their parental responsibility and should be allowed to exercise it. If a child or young person is being accommodated by the Local Authority, then the Local Authority **MUST** have regard to their views. Before making any decision with respect to a child whom they are looking after, or proposing to look after, a Local Authority shall, so far as is reasonably practicable, ascertain the wishes and feelings of the child.

The Local Authority **MUST** also ascertain the wishes and feelings of any other important people in the young person life, including:

- The parents
- Any person who is not a parent but has parental responsibility
- Any other person whose wishes and feelings the authority consider to be relevant

In making such a decision the Local Authority shall give due consideration to:

- The child or young person’s wishes and feeling, having regard to their age and understanding.
- The wishes and feelings of any person mentioned above and
- To the child’s religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background.

Section 31 of the Children Act 1989 (Care Order)

Under **Section 31 of the Children Act 1989**, the Local Authority or any authorised person can apply to the court for a child or young person to become the subject of a Care Order.

Authorised person means:

- (a) the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and any of its officers, and
- (b) any person authorised by order of the Secretary of State to bring proceedings under this section and any officer of a body which is so authorised

Care Orders can only be made by the court.

When an application for a Care Order is made the Local Authority must prepare a care plan for the future of the child, unless the Local Authority is applying for an interim Care Order. (See **Section 38 of the Children Act 1989** for interim Care Orders). The court will only make a Care Order if it believes that it is better for the child or young person than not making an order. A Care Order can only be made on young people below the age of 17.

To make a Care Order, the court must be satisfied:

- That the child concerned is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm.
- And that the harm, or likelihood of harm is attributable to:
 - The care given to the child, or
 - Likely to be given to him if the order were not made, or
 - The care not being reasonable or if
 - The child is beyond parental control

Once a Care Order is made, the Local Authority obtains parental responsibility in addition to the other parental responsibility holders. A Care Order can only be discharged by the court on the application of any person who has parental responsibility for the child or young person, the child or young person themselves or the Local Authority designated by the order.

Other routes that could lead a child into the care system include:

- When a child is removed from the parents or carers under an emergency protection order (**Section 44 of the Children Act 1989**) and then potentially subject to an interim Care Order and care proceedings.
- Children that have been taken away from home under a child assessment order (**Section 43 of the Children Act 1989**) and then potentially subject to an interim Care Order and care proceedings.
- Where a child has been removed to suitable accommodation under police protection (**Section 46 of the Children Act 1989**) and then potentially subject to an interim Care Order and care proceedings.
- Juveniles remanded in care and refused bail.