

# Making Sense of the Surrey PEP for Looked After Children

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1. What is Surrey Virtual School?

You can contact Surrey Virtual School either by email virtual.school@surreycc.gov.uk or by phone (0208-5417761)

Senior Leadership Team:

* Anwen Foy – Virtual School Head Teacher
* Stacey McCabe – Deputy Head Teacher, Performance and Standards
* Michelle Cain – Deputy Head Teacher, Children with a Social Worker and CPD lead
* Helen Hale – Assistant Head Teacher, Inclusion, Additional Needs, Health & Wellbeing
* Cass Hardy – Assistant Head Teacher, Post-16, UASC & Progression to Independence
* Victoria Betts – Assistant Head Teacher, Transformation
* Liz Stanbridge – Data, Business & Performance Manager

Education Advisors:

* Jessica Wilson – Previously Looked After Children & Kinship
* Rachel Clement – Early Years
* Kiri Read – Children with a Social Worker

Education Support Officers:

* Michele Hawkins – Education Support Officer (North-West)
* Caroline Carter – Education Support Officer (South-West)
* Sandy Ball – Education Support Officer (North-East)
* Mary Cooke – Education Support Officer (South-East)
* Nicola Maunder – Education Support Officer (Countywide)
* Anne Vickers – Education Support Officer (Post-16)
* Amina Mohammed - Education Support Officer (Post-16)
* Lisa Scrivens – Education Support Officer (Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children)
* Nadia Mughal - Education Support Officer (Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children)
* Andrea Mowatt-Hall – Education Employment Advisor for Care Leavers
* Ellie Bissell – Education Support Officer (previously looked after children & Kinship)

Admin Support Team:

* Imraan Husain – Data Quality and PEP Officer
* Micky Wolfsthal – Data Quality and PEP Officer (secondment)
* Lyndee Whyton – Data Quality and PEP Officer
* Anthony Hanley – Data Quality and PEP Officer
* Shilpa Patel – PEP Administrator

## The Role of Surrey Virtual School (SVS)

Surrey Virtual School acts as a local authority champion to promote the progress and educational attainment of children and young people who are, or who have been, in care so that they achieve educational outcomes comparable to their peers. We also support Children with a Social Worker and those living in Kinship arrangements. Our role is to ensure these children receive a high-quality education is the foundation for improving their future life chances.

Surrey Virtual School is not a teaching provision. However, it plays a vital role in helping Looked After Children, Previously Looked After Children (including Special Guardianship Orders) and Children with a Social Worker to access education. It works to bring together all the information about the children and young people who are cared for by Surrey Local Authority. This ensures that their progress can be tracked and supported, while also ensuring that interventions are effective.

For Looked After Children we are their Corporate Parent and have statutory duties to fulfil alongside education settings, social care and wider local authority teams. The Children’s Wellbeing Bill is currently with the Houses of Parliament and is likely to result in the Virtual School also having statutory duties for Children with a Social Worker and those living in Kinship arrangements, from September 2025.

When a child becomes looked after in Surrey, they will remain with Surrey Virtual School until they leave care. This means that if a child is placed in another county, then Surrey Virtual School will still be responsible for them. If a Looked After Child from another county is placed in Surrey, then they will remain the responsibility of the Virtual School in the county where they became looked after. Surrey Virtual School can still offer advice with local information and signposting.

2. What is a PEP?

“All looked-after children 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 looked-after children to enable them to make at least expected progress and fulfil their potential. 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.” [Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children (publishing.service.gov.uk)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683556/Promoting_the_education_of_looked-after_children_and_previously_looked-after_children.pdf)

Under [Section 52 of the Children Act 2004,](https://ealing.cmis.uk.com/ealing/Document.ashx?czJKcaeAi5tUFL1DTL2UE4zNRBcoShgo=gXbP7tcdyGLuqb3EcIJsfrh%2BZzd6jKI9xA3TdxSL9EhVDjYWWGwqNQ%3D%3D&rUzwRPf%2BZ3zd4E7Ikn8Lyw%3D%3D=pwRE6AGJFLDNlh225F5QMaQWCtPHwdhUfCZ%2FLUQzgA2uL5jNRG4jdQ%3D%3D&mCTIbCubSFfXsDGW9IXnlg%3D%3D=hFflUdN3100%3D&kCx1AnS9%2FpWZQ40DXFvdEw%3D%3D=hFflUdN3100%3D&uJovDxwdjMPoYv%2BAJvYtyA%3D%3D=ctNJFf55vVA%3D&FgPlIEJYlotS%2BYGoBi5olA%3D%3D=NHdURQburHA%3D&d9Qjj0ag1Pd993jsyOJqFvmyB7X0CSQK=ctNJFf55vVA%3D&WGewmoAfeNR9xqBux0r1Q8Za60lavYmz=ctNJFf55vVA%3D&WGewmoAfeNQ16B2MHuCpMRKZMwaG1PaO=ctNJFf55vVA%3D) Local Authorities must promote the education of all children in care: *“(3A) The duty of a local authority under subsection (3)(a) to safeguard and promote the welfare of a child looked after by them includes in particular a duty to promote the child’s educational achievement.”*

“The quality of the PEP is the joint responsibility of the local authority that looks after the child and the school. Social workers, carers, VSHs, designated teachers and, as appropriate, other relevant professionals will need to work closely together. All of those involved in the PEP process at all stages should involve the child (according to 15 understanding and ability) and, where appropriate, the child’s parent and/or relevant family member.” ([Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children (publishing.service.gov.uk))](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683556/Promoting_the_education_of_looked-after_children_and_previously_looked-after_children.pdf)

All of Surrey’s PEPs are electronic and are available on a secure web portal. These are known as ePEPs and this is maintained by [Welfare Call.](https://www.welfarecall.com/) The ePEPs will remain Key Stage specific based on the age and national curriculum year of the individual, from Early Years through to Post-16. There is a separate PEP for UASC, Early Years (nursery or below) and post-16. These must be reviewed on a termly basis, with PEP meetings and subsequent ePEP documents including commentary from the young person’s education setting, social worker, carer and, most importantly, the young person themselves. Surrey Virtual School Education Support Officers may also be involved in the PEP meeting (there is separate guidance on how we prioritise our attendance at PEPs). The Designated Teacher will self-assess the quality of the PEP before submission for evaluation and monitoring by Surrey Virtual School. There are always deadlines (well-publicised and shown at the top of each page in the ePEP) for the completion of the PEPs as there is a lengthy process of quality assurance and evaluation of financial requests that take place after the PEP has been written. The quality assurance framework is published in the ePEP and is designed to support the completion of outstanding PEPs. The PEP is the *vehicle* to support Looked After Children achieve their best outcomes

Best practice is that the ePEP document is completed within 3-5 days of the meeting.

The social worker will arrange the first PEP meeting date, liaising with the education setting.

* For a child new to care and of statutory school age, the first PEP meeting will be held within 20 days of them coming into care.
* For a child placed in emergency care, the first PEP meeting will be held within 10 working days of them coming into care, wherever they are placed.

It is highly recommended that a new PEP take place if a young person moves educational setting.

If a child does not have an on-roll education setting, it is vital the PEP still takes place. The child’s Education Support Officer will act as Designated Teacher and complete the PEP with the social worker.

What does the DfE say about PEPs?

* It is a statutory requirement and is integral as the education component of the child’s care plan
* 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 quality of the PEP is a joint responsibility of the school and Local Authority
* PEPs should involve the child at all stages of the process
* The PEP should reflect (and link with) but not duplicate any existing plans
* It should help everyone gain the clear and shared understanding about the teaching and learning provision necessary to ensure academic progress, address barriers to learning (which may be non-academic) and meet the child’s educational needs, describing how support and interventions will be provided.

## Pupil Voice

Though the PEP is a statutory document, it should be done with the intention of supporting the child or young person with their education. Throughout the PEP process they should be fully supported to participate, to ensure that their wishes and feelings have been considered through the development, implementation and review of the PEP.

It is requested that before the PEP meeting, professionals meet with the child or young person to complete the ‘My Wishes, Aspirations and Feelings’ section within their PEP. These views should be included, considered and recorded at each stage of developing the rest of the young person’s PEP. Creative ways of recording the young person’s voice are welcomed, especially for those young people with additional needs. These alternatives can be uploaded to the ‘Documents’ section of the ePEP and should be referenced in the ‘My Wishes, Aspirations and Feelings’ tab of the ePEP. Please refer to the quality assurance framework to help you achieve the best use of children’s wishes and feelings.

If a child is too young or feels unable to attend their PEP meeting, then their views must be brought to the PEP meeting by an appropriate person and recorded in the ePEP document. The key discussion points should be shared in an appropriate way with the child or young person after the meeting.

Children Missing Education (CME) and post-16 NEET must have a PEP meeting. It is arguably more important that they do so, more than others. In this instance, the SVS ESO will act as Designated Teacher and meet with the young person and their social worker (as a minimum). This will then be quality assured by an SVS manager.

3. What is Pupil Premium Plus (PP+/PPP)?

PP+/PPP is a DfE grant that is allocated to Virtual Schools for the purpose of raising the educational attainment of children in care. Children from Reception Year (R) to Year 11 are eligible for Pupil Premium Plus. Virtual School Heads have responsibility for managing and tracking Pupil Premium Plus for looked after children within their local authority in line with the [DFE Conditions of Grant](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-allocations-and-conditions-of-grant-2024-to-2025) (updated annually) and [guidance.](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/pupil-premium-virtual-school-heads-responsibilities)

Full information about the grant, current arrangements in place, how it should be used, and good practice guidance, are available via the Virtual School’s current PP+ policy which is reviewed and updated annually. The latest policy is available via a link in the ePEP.

PP+/PPP is accessed via the targets set in the child’s PEP. \*Please note, if a PEP is quality assured as RED then PP+ will not be agreed.

Looked after children in the Early Years are eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium.

For guidance on the eligibility, allocation and use of this funding, please see the Surrey Virtual School Pupil PP+ Policy. From 2023, the DfE is also allocating PP+ for young people in care in years 12 and 13 (post 16), however, this is not allocated or managed in the same way as it is for statutory school age children.

The DfE also allocates PP+ to children previously looked after, however Virtual Schools do not hold responsibility for this funding, which goes directly to schools. Guidance around this grant may be found [here.](https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/children/social-care/svs/young-people/plac/pupil-premium)  From 1 April 2023, PP+, eligibility for children who have been adopted from care or have left care will also include children adopted from state care or equivalent from outside England and Wales.

# Welfare Call

Welfare Call is an online system we use to monitor the education of looked after children. Each child’s Designated Teacher and Social Worker will be given access to the secure system and allocated the child. This allows the DT and SW to complete the online ePEP document prior to, at, and following the PEP meeting to record the child’s views, attendance information, progress and attainment and targets. The ePEP is also the mechanism to request Pupil Premium Plus. If you become the DT or SW for a looked after child, please contact Surrey Virtual School (virtual.school@surreycc.gov.uk) so that we can set you up with a secure account with Welfare Call.

Once you are set up with an account, if you have any problems accessing or using your account, please call the Welfare Call helpdesk on 01226 716333.

# Role of the Social Worker

Please also see [DFE Statutory Guidance Pg 16 and 18)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-the-education-of-looked-after-children)

* Agree the date of the PEP meeting every term with the School/DT and set the date for the meeting, adding the date to Welfare Call
* Take urgent action to avoid a missed or late PEP
* Complete ‘The PEP meeting’ section including who attended the PEP
* Complete the ‘About me’ section
* Ensure the views of the child/YP are sought and have been recorded on the PEP
* Support the child/YP to attend part or all of the PEP if appropriate
* Ensure all detail is completed and that robust targets are agreed
* Record the child/ YP’s SDQ score on the PEP in the ‘Academic & Pastoral Summary’ section
* Check that pupil premium plus has been requested where appropriate
* Support foster carers prior to the meeting and at the meeting as appropriate, ensuring their feedback and views and are expressed
* Add any thoughts, views and comments to the ‘Views and Feedback’ section and encourage the child/YP and carers to add their comments
* Follow through any agreed actions
* Ensure that up-to-date PEP information is fed into the first statutory review meeting of the child’s care plan

# Role of the Designated Teacher

Please also see [DFE Statutory Guidance Pg 18](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-the-education-of-looked-after-children) and [DFE Statutory Guidance on the role of Designated Teachers Pg 15](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a901d6ce5274a5e67567fc1/The_designated_teacher_for_looked-after_and_previously_looked-after_children.pdf)

* Agree the date of the PEP meeting every term with the Social Worker
* Ensure the views of the child/YP are sought and have been recorded on the PEP in the ‘My Wishes, Aspirations and Feelings’ section
* Ensure all information about the child/YP’s education is recorded fully in the ‘My Education’ section and record information about their additional needs if relevant in the

‘My Additional Needs’ section. Only complete the ‘SEND Pathway’ if the child is working below the National Curriculum (no matter their age).

* Complete the ‘My Academic and Pastoral Summary/Targets’ section and take note of the mandatory fields which lead to mandatory target setting.
* Review previous targets using recent tracking information; (progress, attainment, attendance and pastoral information) linking this to pupil premium spend.
* Set new SMART Targets (including English/ Maths/ SEMH/ Attendance where appropriate) drawing on the guidance in the Virtual School’s current PP+ policy
* Link the new targets to the request for pupil premium
* Complete the ‘Wider Curriculum’ information
* Gather thoughts, views and comments of the people in attendance at the meeting and add these to the ‘Views and Feedback’ section
* Complete the compliance check and quality assurance by answering the questions in the ‘Quality Assurance’ section
* Follow through any agreed actions
* Ensure that the PEP is reviewed before the statutory review of the care plan, is up-to date and contains any new information since the last PEP review, including whether agreed provision is being delivered

If a child is not attending school and therefore CME (child missing education), or NEET (not in education, employment or training) if post-16, the PEP meeting must still go

ahead, and the Education Support Worker from Surrey Virtual School will act as the DT, with quality assurance from an SVS Senior Leadership.

# PEP Quality

Every looked after child needs an effective and high-quality PEP which focuses on improving their educational outcomes (DfE[).DFE Statutory Guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-the-education-of-looked-after-children) makes clear the criteria that should be in place to ensure that PEPs are effective and high quality (P.16, 25). These inform and underpin this guidance and the SVS Quality Assurance Framework.

Surrey Virtual School is responsible for ensuring each PEP is completed to a high standard and reflects good quality planning. As such, following quality assurance from the DT, we will quality assure each PEP every term, and rate the PEP based on our updated Quality Assurance criteria below, full details of which can be found in the PEP on the Quality Assurance tab.

1. Child’s voice has been heard and is evident in the PEP
2. Evidence of current and updated attainment and progress data
3. PEP evidence a review of child’s previous targets or current learning needs, and the effectiveness of support
4. Targets are SMART and appropriate to the educational needs of the child

We aim for each child to have 2 full PEP quality assurance (QA) checks per year with a RAGG rating awarded of Red, Amber, Green or Gold depending on how well the PEP meets each criterion. One term per year, the PEP will receive a “light touch” QA with a “Blue” rating to ensure basic compliance plus approval of PPP requests.

The absence of any one of the above will result in an automatic Red grading. If a PEP is graded Red, Pupil Premium Plus will not be allocated, and the Designated Teacher will be asked to review and amend the PEP in order to improve the quality.

1. PEP Process

Before the PEP meeting: If the child is new to care, please contact Surrey Virtual School for log-in details to the electronic PEP. The first PEP is to take place within 20 days of coming into care, initiated by the Social Worker.

Otherwise, the PEP review date should have been identified at the last meeting. A PEP review should take place each academic term, ideally in the first half of the term to allow for revisions necessary to secure a good quality PEP.

Social Workers need to complete section 1 and 2, and parts of section 4, 6 and 7 of the ePEP document prior to the PEP meeting. Please note that there are mandatory confirmations in section 2 regarding up-to-date contact details.

Designated Teachers need to contact subject/class teachers, TA and anyone working with the young person, requesting information on progress and achievements. Complete sections 3-7 (or 3-8 for KS4) of the ePEP.

At the PEP Meeting: Ensure all have copies of the document. Discuss each section in turn and complete the Views and Feedback section including mandatory questions. Then arrange the next PEP date before the end of the meeting. The PEP cannot be signed off without this date.

Social Worker needs to: Ensure all Social Worker sections are complete and then sign off the PEP by clicking the ‘complete’ button at top of the page – within 3 days of PEP meeting.

Designated Teacher needs to: Ensure all Designated Teacher sections are complete including new compliance and DT QA sections and then sign off the PEP by clicking the ‘complete’ button at top of the page – within 3 days of PEP meeting.

Surrey Virtual School will audit the PEP and inform the DT or SW if it is complete or rated ‘red’. If the PEP is rated red, the DT or SW will be contacted and amendments requested before the document can be finalised. Otherwise, the PEP will be signed off ready for next term’s PEP review.

# Admissions Arrangements

Surrey Virtual School can provide advice and guidance to Social Workers on applying for a school place for a looked after child, including key-stage transfers as well as in-year admissions. Please contact Surrey Virtual School for more information. Further guidance can be found on the Virtual School website.

# Definitions & References

* SVS - Surrey Virtual School
* PEP - Personal Education Plan
* SW – Social Worker
* DT – Designated Teacher
* PP+/PPP - Pupil Premium Plus
* WFC – Welfare Call
* VSH – Virtual School Head
* ESO – Education Support Officer
* CLA – Child Looked After
* LA – Local Authority
* QA – Quality Assurance

## References

Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children. Statutory Guidance for local authorities (DfE 2018)

[Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children (publishing.service.gov.uk)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683556/Promoting_the_education_of_looked-after_children_and_previously_looked-after_children.pdf)

The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children. Statutory guidance on their roles and responsibilities (DfE 2018)

[The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children (publishing.service.gov.uk)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683561/The_designated_teacher_for_looked-after_and_previously_looked-after_children.pdf)

Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE 2023)

[Keeping children safe in education 2023 (publishing.service.gov.uk)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1181955/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_2023.pdf)

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| Approved by | Anwen Foy |
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