



Virtual School newsletter – Summer 2023

Dear Headteachers, Designated Teachers, DSLs & Social Workers,

Welcome to the Summer term Virtual School newsletter!

Staffing changes & other updates

Hard to believe we're already in the summer term! Thank you as ever for your hard work supporting our children in care and children with a social worker. A particular strength of the Spring term PEPs was the quality of pastoral updates - thank you very much for the thought, time and care that has gone into capturing this; it has been really valuable to have this insight, particularly when discussing the young people with colleagues across the authority.

For this term's email update, we are sending it out as a joint communication to Designated Teachers, DSLs and social workers, as we felt there was a lot of information to be shared with you all to support the education of our children and young people (remember we now cover Post-Looked After (PLAC) and Children with a Social Worker (CWSW) as well as Children in Care now!)

This term, Gemma will be returning from maternity leave, we welcome Gemma back in June to the role of Early Years Support Worker. For those of you who have not met Gemma yet, I am sure she will be in touch over the coming months.

Unfortunately, Rachael Williams, our Primary PEP Lead, will be leaving the team at the end of the term. I am sure you will join us in thanking Rachael for her dedication to the Virtual School, we are all going to miss her and wish her well in her next adventure! We are therefore recruiting for the role of Primary PEP Lead and the role is currently being advertised on the Halton Borough Council website, if you wish to have a look or share with friends and family! [CLICK HERE TO HAVE A LOOK!](#)

Summer Careers Event

The Virtual School will be holding a careers event at the stadium on Tuesday 20th June from 3.30pm to 6.30pm. The event will be aimed at those in Year 9 and above and we would welcome carers, parents, mentors or social workers to attend with the young person. Please can I ask that you share the attached flyer with Halton Look after Children and encourage them to attend. **THIS EVENT IS ONLY FOR HALTON LAC, UNFORTUNATELY WE CANNOT SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE THAT ARE UNDER SOCIAL CARE FROM A DIFFERENT AUTHORITY.**

PEP & PP+ Policy

We have been busy updating our Virtual School policies and guidance documents to ensure they reflect our practice and provide sufficient support and clarity.

Please find attached our updated guidance regarding PEP meetings.

Key points:

The purpose of the PEP meeting is to:

- capture the pupil's wishes and feelings around education
- use the pupil's views to underpin planning
- shape the whole PEP as a collective, collaborative plan.

There should be three PEP meetings a year. Typically, these will take place at school and the attendees would be the child, the social worker, the Designated Teacher and the carer. There will be variations of this however, depending on the pupil's preference and what is best suited to their needs.

Please note the PEP deadline for this term is FRIDAY 9TH JUNE.

PP+ payments for the summer term will be processed shortly after this date with late submissions resulting in a delay to funding being released. Please don't miss the deadline!

CPOMs

As you will be aware, the Virtual School are in the process of joining CPOMs. The aim of this is to streamline information sharing regarding our CIC, PLAC and CWSW cohorts, therefore reducing the number of emails that are sent and enabling us to work more strategically.

If you have not yet attended, CPOMS are hosting webinars on the launch of CPOMS Engage for the Virtual School and what this means for school (including those who don't currently have CPOMS)...the final dates for these sessions are below, no need to book, just turn up

19th April at 3.45 [Click here to join the meeting](#)

27th April at 3.45pm [Click here to join the meeting](#)

Over the coming weeks, we will be sending our further guidance as to what categories of information should be shared, as discussed in our network meetings; we do not want or need to turn into a switchboard for every issue that is raised by a teacher, however, as DTs and Head Teachers, you will know how some information needs to be shared in a timely manner and actioned by the Virtual School or social care. CPOMs will open that 2-way line of communication, meaning we can also share any urgent social care information with yourselves. We will then enhance this over the coming months to enable us to use the software to its full potential!

Our plan is to get set up during the summer term and have all permissions and information sharing agreements in place via the system, with a view to a full rollout in September. Further information and guidance will be sent out in due course.

P-LAC & Children with a Social Worker (CwSW) Updates

To help inform us of the areas of support that is needed for our P-LAC and CwSW cohort, we have created a short survey that we ask you to complete. We are continuing to expand our offer in this area so any information you can provide would be gratefully received.

https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=MUxaFLJvrUaSkpKuP3lo_mYEJUBkVPBGpolAdVUSqs1URE4wTUVRWfQ0WUZLQzdRTFIITFFZFISNy4u

The Virtual School is available to offer advice and guidance relating to the education of all previously looked after children who attend Early Years settings, schools and colleges in Halton. We offer both phone and email support and there is additional guidance on the Halton Virtual School website.

Transitions

It is important to remember that adoption or a permanent plan does not eliminate past experiences for Previously looked after children and young people and these can have a lasting impact, particularly around transition times.

All Previously looked after children and young people should be considered for enhanced transitions to support their move to the next year group. They should be given the opportunity to meet key members of staff and to become familiar with their new classroom (where appropriate) before the end of the summer term.

We have seen an increase in demand for advice and guidance for our previously looked after cohort this term. As ever, we will do our best to support where we can, please ensure that you have written consent from a parent/carer if you would like to discuss child level information.

If you have any enquiries relating to PLAC please contact David Bradshaw:

David.bradshaw@halton.gov.uk

Or alternatively visit the Halton Virtual School Website:

<https://www.myvirtualschool.org/>

Summer Training & Network Meeting dates:

So our out of borough colleagues can join us, the Summer Designated Teacher Network meeting will be via Teams. Links will be sent out nearer the time

EY & Primary – 21st June 3.45pm

Secondary & Post 16 – 28th June 3.45pm

Upcoming training for DTs, DSLs & Social Workers – PLEASE CONTACT JO TO BOOK ON TO ANY OF THE SESSIONS BELOW

SMART Targets

Following our internal moderation in the Autumn term, we provided several supporting documents which focussed on writing SMART Targets.

Following this, we are now providing two training sessions on the importance of SMART targets within the PEP.

Please share these dates with colleagues who you also feel may benefit from the session:

Wednesday 26th April at 12.30pm

Thursday 27th April at 3.45pm

New to DT role training

Thursday 20th April at 12.30pm & 3.45pm (session is repeated, only one session needs to be attended)

Don't forget we also have our CPOMs information sessions on the 19th April at 3.45, the session is then repeated on 27th April at 3.45pm, you will find the links to the session in the CPOMs section of this document.

Data

Attendance

	<u>Overall attendance</u>		<u>Persistent absence -% of cohort</u>		<u>Fixed term exclusions-% of cohort</u>	
	<u>Autumn</u>	<u>Spring</u>	<u>Autumn</u>	<u>Spring</u>	<u>Autumn</u>	<u>Spring</u>
<u>Primary</u>	<u>98%</u>	<u>97%</u>	<u>7%</u>	<u>10%</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1%</u>
<u>Secondary</u>	<u>84%</u>	<u>82%</u>	<u>28%</u>	<u>31%</u>	<u>9%</u>	<u>10%</u>

Our attendance has dipped since last term, this could be for a variety of reasons, however, if you are starting to see a trend with our Looked after Children, this needs to be addressed in the PEP. The PEP Leads will also be focussing on our persistent absences this term, ensuring any support is put in place in a timely manner and challenged with social care where necessary.

Thank you as ever for all you do. Please get in touch if there is ever anything we can help, advice or support with.

Ben & Jo