

Welcome back to another packed half term where we have a plethora of training activities for you to embark on. We hope that you had a relaxing half term break and return refreshed ready for all that the countdown to Christmas has to offer.

As always we just wanted to remind you of a few bits which may have fallen off your radar.

- Academic data needs to be entered on to the PEP for this term. Although PEPs are, wherever possible, completed in the first half term academic data is not always available. Please can you upload this to the PEP as soon as it is available.
- PEP funding needs to be requested at the time of the PEP however if there is something that comes to light after the PEP meeting please do get in touch with the Virtual School worker assigned to the case and they will discuss the funding that is required with you.
- Our extension to role means that we should have oversight of any child with a social worker in your setting. If a child falls into this category and is persistently absent please contact us. We can also act to support settings and social care to ensure we are all working for the best educational outcomes for these children.
- For those that have completed PEPs this term you will have noticed that we have significantly changed the PEP document to embrace our STAR mission that every child is successful, thriving, achieving and resilient. We have also made the PEP more slim lined for our Designated Teachers. We welcome feedback —the good, the bad & the ugly so do get in touch and let us know what you think of the changes.

## School Admissions

It is that time again when school admissions for primary open as Secondary admissions close. Wokingham Borough Council have lots of useful information on supporting with the



transition and it starts with the beanstalk.

The interactive beanstalk can be found here:

[Ready for School \(wokingham.gov.uk\)](http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/readyforschool)

## Whats On

- ★ Tuesday 31 October 2023 Secondary School Application Deadline
- ★ Wednesday 1 November 2023 – 09:00 – 15:00 Building Attachments Training Day 4
- ★ Wednesday 8 November 2023 – 09:00 – 15:00 Building Attachments Training Day 5
- ★ Monday 4 December 2023 PEP/PP+ Deadline
- ★ Friday 15 December 2023 Last day of term (WBC)
- ★ Tuesday 2 January 2024 WBC Spring Term Begins
- ★ Monday 15 January 2024 Primary/Junior School Application Deadline





A survey of local authorities in England

## UNDERSTANDING THE VARIATION IN SUPPORT FOR KINSHIP CARERS

Kinship carers are the family members and friends who care for children when their parents are unable to. There are different types of kinship care arrangements that vary in terms of legal status, parental responsibility and entitlement to support. Within this project, there is a focus on: family and friends foster care,<sup>1</sup> Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) and Child Arrangement Orders (CAOs), previously called Residency Orders (ROs). SGO and CAO/RO arrangements were further broken down to consider whether the child was previously looked after or not. There also dedicated sections to minoritised ethnic kinship families and informal kinship care. See the annex to this report for more in-depth definitions of these arrangements.

In both practice and policy, there is a clear prioritisation of existing relationships and keeping children within environments which are likely to be more familiar to them. However, unlike deciding to become an unrelated foster carer or adoptive parent, the life-altering decision to step up as a kinship carer is often a response to circumstances, rather than a lifestyle change that has been planned and prepared for a long period of time. Furthermore, research has shown that kinship carers can often face additional challenges, such as a higher likelihood of being older, parenting alone, having poor health, and facing poverty and deprivation.

As part of its *response* to the *report* published by the independent review of children's social care, the Department for Education in England (DfE) is developing a kinship care strategy, which will set out the government's position on kinship care and its comprehensive plans for improving the support provided to children and their kinship carers. Where a child cannot live with their birth parents, we want to ensure that they live in a loving and caring environment – in many cases kinship care can provide this.



## Spotting Child Exploitation Toolkit

Identifying if child exploitation in either its criminal or sexual form can be a minefield. Its identifiers are often difficult to detect, but as with everything early intervention is key to preventing the occurrence of child exploitation. Which is why every effort must be made to uncover it if possible. Unfortunately it is often not that simple, and can descend into unforeseen complexities. Brook, an organisation focusing on matters of sexual health and wellbeing has released a suite of tools aimed at helping professionals to investigate suspected cases of child exploitation. If you want to find out more please click on the link below:

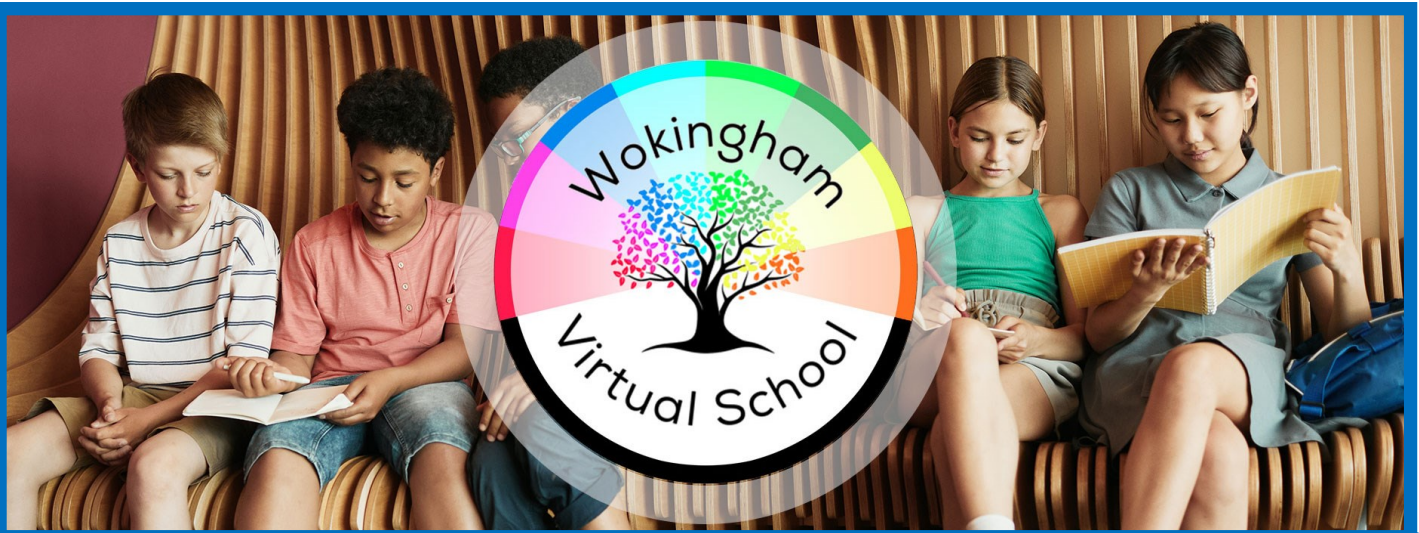
<https://www.brook.org.uk/spotting-the-signs-tool/>



## Senior Mental Health Lead - DfE offers second grants

The DfE has announced that eligible settings can apply for a senior mental health lead training grant to commence training by **31 March 2024**. Relevant schools can also now claim a second grant to train a new person if the senior mental health lead they previously trained left their setting before embedding a whole school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing. The grant can be used to cover (or contribute to) the cost of attending a quality assured course, and may also be used to hire supply staff while leads are engaged in learning.

The Department for Education offers grants of £1,200 for eligible state-funded schools and colleges in England to train a senior mental health lead to develop and implement a whole school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing. This training is not compulsory, but it is part of the government's commitment to offer this training to all eligible schools and colleges by 2025. Although independent schools are not eligible for a grant, all assured courses are available to their staff.



**childline**

ONLINE, ON THE PHONE, ANYTIME

It is a sad truth that in the United Kingdom, there are peaks and troughs of violent crime among teenagers. We are currently going through a peak, with mainly 15 to 17 year olds being both the perpetrators and victims. The effect is felt throughout the under-18 demographic nationally, and due to this nature should be a prime concern of educational establishments. Of these armament categories, that of knife crime is by far the greater danger of the two for pupils. Sometimes these offences are the result of gang activity, and sometimes it's simply a case of out-of-control emotions directed in a manner whose consequences, the perpetrator does not fully understand. In any case, it is an area that educational professionals must be aware of, and be prepared to address in their schools. To help clarify this area, Childline has published a page focusing on gun and knife crime. What it is and its potential consequences, if interested in reading what they have to say please click on the link below:

<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/crime-law/gun-knife-crime/>

#### What you need to know:

- if you carry a knife or weapon, you're more likely to be targeted by people who want to hurt you
- if you feel you're in danger, you should tell a trusted adult or call [Childline](#) for help
- it's never too late to ask for help if you're worried about gun and knife crime.



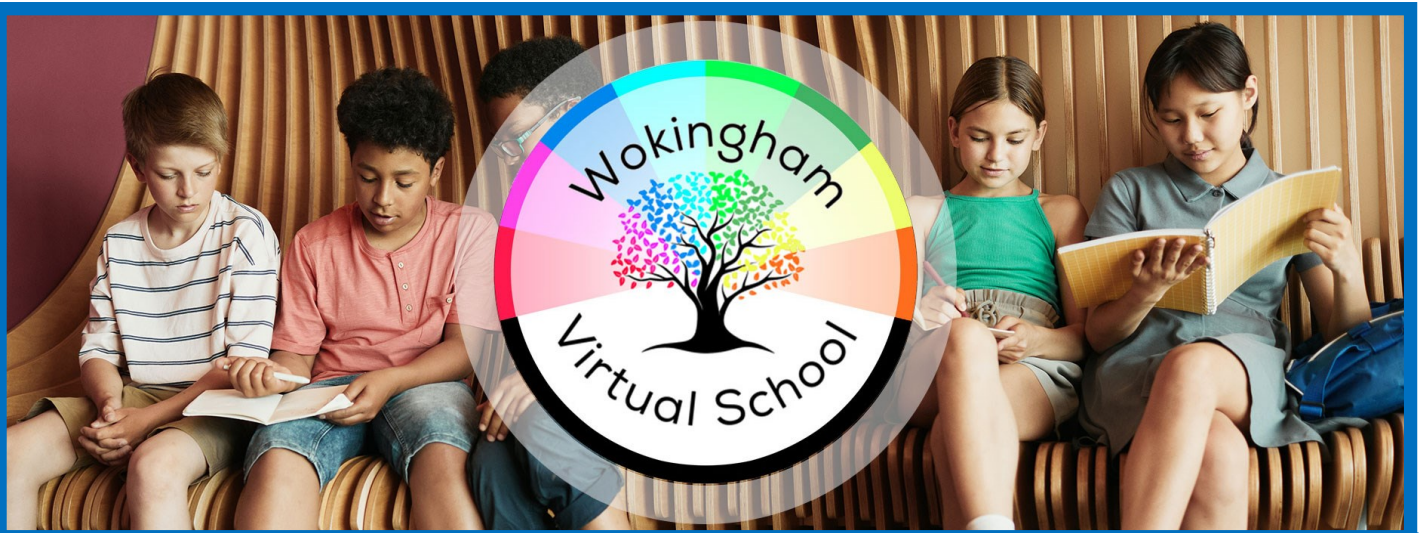
#### EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES OF CHILDREN IN SOCIAL CARE REPORT - ACTION FOR CHILDREN

- \* Between 2019 and 2021, children with a social care referral were more than twice as likely to fail their English or Maths GCSEs than children without a social care referral.
- \* Children who didn't get support the first time they were referred to social care had significantly worse GCSE outcomes than those who got support the first time they were referred, and those that never got support at all.
- \* 58% of children in our cohort with a social care referral were persistently absent at some point in their school career.
- \* 31% of children with a referral were suspended from school at some point, and 3% were permanently excluded.

Poverty and material disadvantage is a significant background condition that underpins family stress and children's social care and educational outcomes. Of the 2004/05 birth cohort Action for Children studied, 67.4% of the children that had a social care referral were eligible for free school meals at some point in their childhood. Research on the educational attainment of children in need and children in care also found that a significant proportion of parents of children in need found it hard to afford educational essentials, such as uniforms and internet access.

Continued overleaf...





Continued....

The common maxim is that for children to do well in education their home life should be stable. Back in August, the organisation, Action for Children published its report into the attainment gap for children with social care referrals with the aim of looking into this issue. The report was authored with the aid of FFT Education Datalab with the objective to investigate the educational attainment of children, that are referred to children's social care in England. The report is well worth a read for those involved in education. To find out more please follow the link below:

<https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/our-work-and-impact/policy-work-campaigns-and-research/policy-reports/the-educational-outcomes-of-children-referred-to-childrens-social-care/>



Don't forget the virtual school are here to assist you should you require any support. You can email us at the following addresses and we promise we will respond within 24 hours.

**Jane Everton Head of Virtual School and Vulnerable Learner Support**

[Jane.Everton@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:Jane.Everton@wokingham.gov.uk)

**Ruth Blyth Acting Deputy Headteacher**

[Ruth.Blyth@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:Ruth.Blyth@wokingham.gov.uk)

**Tracy Meadows PEP Officer**

[Tracy.Meadows@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:Tracy.Meadows@wokingham.gov.uk)

**Kat Johnston Post 16 PEP Officer**

[Kat.Johnston@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:Kat.Johnston@wokingham.gov.uk)

**Emma Griffith Early Years Officer**

[Emma.Griffith@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:Emma.Griffith@wokingham.gov.uk)

**Jessica McGinley UASC & PEP Officer**

[Jessica.McGinley@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:Jessica.McGinley@wokingham.gov.uk)

**Jenny Lucas Education Coordinator**

[Jenny.Lucas@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:Jenny.Lucas@wokingham.gov.uk)



## NOT IN OUR COMMUNITY

Grooming is an issue which remains highly prevalent in the world of child protection. The objective could be sexual, gang-related or simply coercive in nature, but in all cases involves the gradual formation of intimate connections between typically older individuals and younger ones. With the goal of creating a relationship, to the extent that the subject no longer questions what is being asked of them. A process of psychological normalization of behaviours is a key tool of grooming. Unfortunately, it is a difficult area to counter, as actors utilise the relationship cravings of their targets to build trust. Once established it can be very hard to break that trust, making it hard to investigate and prevent. Nevertheless, it is vital that everyone involved in child protection understands its elements, and how to best approach it when it occurs. Not in Our Community is an organisation dedicated to looking at the phenomena and providing resources, designed to tackle it. To find out more please follow the link below:

<https://notinourcommunity.org/>



Overleaf you will find the Safer Schools Digital update for Autumn 2023 which looks at something which is extremely prevalent in the news currently—war and conflict. We hope that you find it useful.







Autumn 2023

Digital Edition

# DIGITAL SAFEGUARDING DAILY

## Are your Safe Search Filters Active?

Visit our Online Safety Centre and help protect the children and young people in your care from stumbling across harmful content online.



## Talking to your Child about War and Conflict

*Helping Children and Young People Make Sense of Distressing News*

We live in a time of constant news streams and updates. It's hard not to be filled with uncertainty and heartache every time you switch on the television or look at your phone. It can be difficult to process news about wars or conflict in the world. However, it is especially concerning for children and young people.

To help you guide those in your care through this uncertain time, our online safety experts have created this support for parents, carers, teachers, and safeguarding professionals.



### How children react to distressing world events

While news can be upsetting and worrying for everyone, it is not the first disruptive event to affect the children and young people in your care. In their lifetime, they have already spent over two years adapting to a pandemic, endured lockdowns and being isolated from their friends and family. They may even have lost loved ones during this time. If someone in your care is struggling, they might be:

- **Fixated**, spending more time on phones or tablets to stay 'up to date'.
- **Anxious**, especially about future plans or dreams.
- **Irritable**, over-reacting to minor inconveniences or issues.
- **Withdrawn**, not engaging with their friends, school, or extracurriculars.
- **Distressed**, with disruptions to regular eating, sleeping, or personal hygiene habits.
- **Obsessive**, thinking over every circumstance and talking about possible outcomes.

### Why is it important to talk about what's happening?

Children and young people are naturally curious. They want to know about what is going on in the world as much as they want to know the latest TikTok trend. Even if you try to limit the content they consume, they will inevitably hear about big world events from various outlets, such as television, social media, friends, family,

and school environments. They might even overhear something from one of your conversations! If it's what everyone is talking about, their interest in the topic increases.

It's difficult to know what content the young person in your care is viewing. If you don't acknowledge

questions or concerns they may have, they could 'fill in the gaps' with the wrong information. This might cause further anxiety, ignorance, or worrisome behaviour. Educating those in your care yourself assures they know how to process news reports on their own with critical thinking and media literacy skills.

### Top Tips for how to talk to children and young people about war and conflict

**Acknowledgement** - Don't deny what is happening or negate their worries by telling them it will 'all blow over soon'. Instead, tell them their concern is completely understandable and that you want to discuss it with them.

**Honesty** - It's important that you refrain from lying in your responses or ignoring any questions or thoughts your child has. It's okay if you don't know the answer. This allows you to open up a discussion with your child. You could even suggest seeking the answer together!

**Sources** - Discuss trustworthy news sources and how difficult it is to confirm things during times of conflict.

**Validation** - It is likely these emotions are complex and confusing for them. Remind them that, in this situation, feelings like this are normal.

**Listen** - No matter how worried or anxious you are, they will look to you for reassurance.

Set your feelings aside and give the young person in your care the attention and space they need to feel heard.

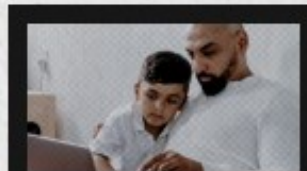
**Limits** - If they feel they are unable to look away from the news, suggest they switch it off.

If this isn't realistic, advise them to only check news sources 1-2 times per day.

**Gratitude** - Discuss gratitude around the dinner table or during morning drives to school. If a young person in your care seems to struggle with guilt, remind them that they have nothing to feel guilty about - just things to be thankful for! Suggest researching places that are taking in donations to bring to refugees or other ways to help the crisis in a local capacity.

**Support** - Your reactions to their reactions are key to helping those in your care feel protected and loved.

Tell your child you love them. Give them hugs or hold their hand. Allow them space when they need it, but remind them that you are here for them.



### Every child is different.

Their ability to process information will depend on their age, character, and resilience. As their guardian, you will know them best, but assessing their abilities can help you choose the level of information you share with them.

**SAFER SCHOOLS**  
oursaferschools.co.uk