



Welcome to October's newsletter. Our website continues to be a place where you will find a wealth of information including resources for educational settings. For those that need a reminder our website can be found [here](#). We would also like to highlight the importance of supervision, if you are currently not accessing this within your setting please feel free to contact us. *Working Together to Safeguard Children states "effective practitioner supervision can play a critical role in ensuring a clear focus on a child's welfare. Supervision should support practitioners to reflect critically on the impact of their decisions on the child and their family."*



Evaluation of the Extension of
Virtual School Heads' Duties to
Children with a Social Worker
Final Report
August 2025

We wanted to flag to you the final report with regards to the Extension to role which came into effect in September 2021. Whilst this role was seen as strategic there are recommendations for all partners. The full report can be found [here](#) however, below are the recommendations from the report specifically for school leaders.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOLS:

1. Schools should ensure they become full partners in the team around the child subject to a plan and recognise in their policy and practice the safeguarding risk that absence, suspension, and permanent exclusion constitutes for these (and other) vulnerable children.
2. Schools should recognise the benefits to attendance, inclusion, attainment, and progress that the adoption of more relational approaches to learning can have and take advantage of any training offered by the Virtual School.



3. Empower the school's DSL to enable them to fulfil their role and provide them with sufficient time to fulfil it effectively.
4. Include children subject to a CIN or CP plan as a separate category in reporting to governors and trustees.

Alongside this document, we also wanted to highlight the updated version of this document:

Guidance

Promoting the education of children with a social worker and children in kinship care arrangements: virtual school head role extension

Updated 2 September 2025

The full document can be found [here](#) but the barriers which are identified are highlighted on Page 2 & 3 of this briefing.

Whats On

- ★ Thursday 9 October 2025 SENCO Induction Programme
- ★ Tuesday 14 October 2025 Wokingham DSL Meeting
- ★ Tuesday 21 October 2025 Designated Person for Child Protection in Education Training
- ★ Monday 27 October 2025 – Friday 31 October 2025 WBC Half Term
- ★ Friday 31 October 2025 t Secondary School application deadline
- ★ Thursday 13 November 2025 Racial Equity Conference 2025
- ★ Monday 1 December 2025 PEP/PP+ Deadline
- ★ Friday 19 December 2025 WBC Last day of term



Barriers to education for children with a social worker

Based on data taken from the [review of children in need](#), children with a social worker are present in 98% of state schools and face barriers to education due to experiences of adversity, most commonly as a result of domestic abuse, mental ill-health, and substance misuse, with 62% of children needing a social worker having experienced one or more of these.

On average, children with a social worker do worse than their peers at every stage of their education. In 2018, 50% of children who had a social worker in the last 6 years were able to achieve a good level of development in the early years, compared to 72% of children who never had a social worker.

Pupils who had a social worker in the year of their GCSEs were around half as likely to achieve a strong pass in English and maths than their peers, and at the end of key stage 4 were around 3 times less likely to go on to study A levels at age 16, and almost 5 times less likely to enter higher education at age 18.

After age 18 of those who needed a social worker in the year of their GCSEs, 6% were in higher education compared to 27% of those who did not have a social worker; and by age 21, half had still not achieved level 2 qualifications (including GCSEs), compared to 11% of those not in need of a social worker.

Some children with a social worker go on to become looked-after. Of the cohort of children who were looked-after children in 2017 to 2018, 62% had spent some time on a child in need plan in the previous 5 years and 39% had spent some time on a child protection plan.

Attendance has fallen for all pupils since the pandemic with children in need particularly affected. In 2021 to 2022, all social care groups (apart from looked-after children) were over twice as likely to be absent than the overall pupil population.

Improving attendance is a priority for both social care and education.

Children with a social worker are around 3 times more likely to be persistently absent from school, and between 2 to 4 times more likely to be permanently excluded from school than their peers. This group are also over 10 times more likely to attend state-funded alternative provision settings than all other pupils.

Unlike looked-after children, or previously looked-after children, the cohort of children with a social worker who are subject to children in need plans or child protection plans have not had the benefit of a strategic leader that is able to champion the educational needs of their cohort and help them make educational progress.

These experiences can affect children's attendance, learning, behaviour, and wellbeing and, if children cannot access support, they may struggle to reach their full potential. Even after a child no longer has a social worker, poor educational outcomes can persist.

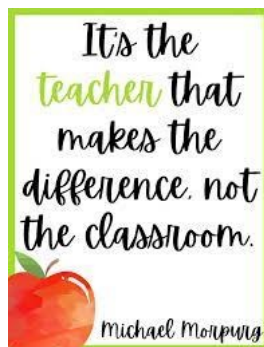
While there is no single cause for the poor educational outcomes for children with a social worker, experiences of adversity can create barriers to good outcomes. Children with a social worker are more likely to have experienced complex family circumstances; some may have been at risk of, or have suffered, physical, emotional, sexual abuse or neglect.

At home, they may have lived in families where there is domestic abuse, mental ill-health, or substance misuse. Outside of the home, they may be at risk of extra-familial harms, such as experiencing criminal or sexual exploitation or serious violence. Data tells us that children with a social worker are much more likely to experience frequent transitions, including moving home or school and experience changes in the professionals that are supporting them and their families.

Despite the challenges that children with a social worker face, with the right support, the aspirations of these children can be raised, and they can go on to achieve more than their peers.



It is crucial that those supporting children with a social worker have the vision, awareness, and the right tools to enable these children and young people to achieve their best and ensure there is equal access to education opportunities.



We have changed the way we offer training to ensure that all colleagues across the borough are able to benefit.

If there is specific training you would like for your school/ trust please get in touch so that we can support the needs of our cohorts.

If you would like to discuss the training needs of your setting please contact:

Ruth.Blyth@wokingham.gov.uk

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.

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