**FAQs for Parents & Carers of Previously Looked After Children**

## **What is the definition of a previously looked after child? What support does my child qualify for?**

A previously looked after child is one who has left the care of any Local Authority in England or Wales through adoption, a Special Guardianship order (SGO) or a Child Arrangements Order (CAO). If a child returns to their birth parent(s) (outside of these three conditions), they are **not** considered to be previously looked after.

Your child is eligible to receive Pupil Premium Plus funding (currently £2,410) through the school, during Reception through to the end of Year 11. Children aged 3 to 4 who are receiving the universal free 15 hours in an early years setting can claim Early Years Pupil Premium.

Your child may also benefit from support from the [local authority post-adoption](https://www.essexadoptionandfostering.co.uk/adoption/what-support-will-i-get/) or [Special Guardianship](https://www.essex.gov.uk/special-guardianship/support-for-special-guardians) teams. For adoption, the responsible authority is the placing authority for 3 years after the adoption, then it is where the child resides.

## **How does the Pupil Premium Plus work for previously looked after children?**

For the school to claim the funding, you need to make the Designated Teacher aware that your child is previously looked after at the start of the school year. Most schools let you do this in the way you feel most comfortable with, for example telling the class teacher, head teacher, SENCO, or emailing in. You will need to show them a copy of your adoption or court order.

The school must use the funding to reduce barriers to learning and improve educational outcomes of the cohort of previously looked after children, but it is important to understand that the money is not ring-fenced for individual children. This allows schools to use it in the most effective way for their particular setting. For example, it could go towards learning mentors or support assistants, counselling, small group or individual intervention, extra-curricular activities or mental health support. They should be transparent about how the funding is being used and you can ask your designated teacher about this.

If you are unhappy about the use of the Pupil Premium Plus, you should first speak to the Designated Teacher. If the problem continues, you should follow the school’s complaints procedure, for example by escalating to the head teacher and to the governors.

## **What is the Virtual School’s statutory duties towards children who are previously looked after?**

The Virtual School has a duty to promote the educational achievement of previously looked after children through the provision of information and advice to their parents, educators and others who the Virtual School Head considers necessary. This duty applies to all children attending school in the local authority, regardless of where the child lives.

The Virtual School is not the corporate parent for previously looked after children, so it does not monitor nor is held to account for individual children’s attainment and progress. Any intervention must be by the consent of the parent.

Please contact the Essex Virtual School by emailing christina.addenbrooke@essex.gov.uk if you would like to talk about your child’s education.

## **What else can the Virtual School do to help previously looked after children?**

Essex Virtual School will liaise with relevant services with parental consent. We can advise parents, schools and other services, such as social workers or SEND partners. We can attend virtual or face-to-face meetings where situations are particularly challenging, to help everyone think about how to resolve difficult situations.

We also offer schools bespoke training. We have online resources through Creative Education that are available to parents of previously looked after children, to give you some strategies to use with your child.

In Essex, the Local Authority advocates [Trauma Perceptive Practice](https://schools.essex.gov.uk/pupils/social_emotional_mental_health_portal_for_schools/Documents/TPP%20Leafletv5-Accessible.pdf) and [Attachment Awareness](https://schools.essex.gov.uk/pupils/Essex_Virtual_School/Pages/Virtual-School-Training.aspx) as ways to ensure the needs of all children are met. You may wish to ask your school where they are on heir journey towards being trauma perceptive.

Finally, we have a number of offers for previously looked after young people. Please see our ‘Opportunities for PLAC’ page for full details of support for you and your child.

## **Who is responsible for supporting my child at school?**

The **Designated Teacher** is the key point of contact for ensuring educational outcomes for your child. You can see their statutory responsibilities [**here.**](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) Many schools have a number of adults around a child, and you may wish to consider regular meetings with key adults to ensure that your child’s needs are correctly identified, the correct intervention is put in place and that it is monitored regularly. You can also make sure that information about any triggers and calming strategies are shared and that you, your child, and the school know what to do if there are any worries. For previously looked after children, it is useful to have one key point of contact at the school to avoid things becoming disjointed or overwhelming.

## **I have concerns about whether my child has additional learning needs.**

In the first instance, please speak to your child’s SENCO at school to explore your concerns. They may decide to put a [One Plan](http://www.essexlocaloffer.org.uk/category/one-planning-and-education-health-and-care-plan/) in place, to ensure that the right assessments and interventions are carried out, and that the impact of these interventions are evaluated regularly. Some schools choose to put a similar document in place that is specific for adopted children, an Education Plan for Adopted Children. In either case, you should have regular meetings with the school to discuss progress. The [Local Offer](http://www.essexlocaloffer.org.uk/) website has lots of information about what is locally available to support your child and your family.

If your child has already been given an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), we recommend contact is made with Essex SEND IASS. This is an impartial, free and confidential service and operate at arm’s-length from the Local Authority. Essex SEND IASS website.