**FAQs for Schools and other Professionals Working with Previously Looked After Children**

## **What is the definition of a previously looked after child?**

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.

## **Which PLAC are eligible for Pupil Premium Plus?**

Children who are in school from the start of Reception to the end of Year 11 who fulfil the above criteria. Children aged 3 to 4 who are receiving the universal free 15 hours in an early years setting can claim Early Years Pupil Premium. Please click [**here**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-funding-2022-to-2023)for government guidance and conditions of grant.

## **How do I claim the Pupil Premium Plus for PLAC?**

Please click [**here**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-allocations-and-conditions-of-grant-2022-to-2023)for the current DFE Conditions of Grant for your setting. All **state funded** education providers may claim the pupil premium for this cohort of children, including alternative provisions such as pupil referral units. The amount is currently £2,570 per child.

The setting must claim the Pupil Premium Plus by declaring any PLAC students on the October census. You must be satisfied that the child is eligible, for example by seeing an adoption, Special Guardianship or Child Arrangements Order. You should prompt parents and carers to disclose their child’s status, and we provide a template letter for doing so [**here**](file:///%5C%5Cssnts0c1-00150%5CTeamShare%5CThe%20Schools%20Services%5CSIEY%5CVirtual%20School%5CPLAC%20and%20CWSW%20Team%5CPLAC%5CGuidance%20%26%20Policies%5CTemplates%5CPP_PLAC_template_letter%20for%20schools.docx). The Local Authority does not oversee the allocation or spending of PP+ funding for PLAC.

## **How should the school use the Pupil Premium Plus?**

The DfE recognises that many care experienced young people will have suffered grief and loss and will have had traumatic early-life experiences. They may face additional barriers to attending school, accessing learning and fulfilling their potential. They often do not do as well as other pupils. The funding is not ring-fenced as a personal budget for each pupil and schools are not required to spend all of the allocated grant on eligible pupils. Schools can decide how best to use the finding, whilst meeting the requirements of the grant, which states that it must be spent to support the educational attainment of the PLAC cohort.

The government’s recommendation is that pupil premium spending is most effective when used across 3 areas:

1. High-quality teaching, such as staff professional development.
2. Targeted academic support, such as tutoring.
3. Wider strategies to address non-academic barriers to success in schools, such as attendance, behaviour and social and emotional support.

Please click[**here**](https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/guidance-for-teachers/using-pupil-premium) to access the advice and guidance by the Education Endowment Fund on using Pupil Premium.

Please click [**here**](https://schools.essex.gov.uk/pupil-support-and-wellbeing/pupil-premium-and-disadvantaged-learners) to access Essex’s guidance for disadvantaged learners.

At the Virtual School, we strongly support the whole-school [Trauma Perceptive Practice](https://schools.essex.gov.uk/pupil-support-and-wellbeing/social-emotional-and-mental-health-semh/semh-training/trauma-perceptive) approach, as well as [Attachment Awareness.](https://schools.essex.gov.uk/pupils/Essex_Virtual_School/Pages/Virtual-School-Training.aspx)

## **Are PLAC entitled to Free School Meals (Ever 6) Pupil Premium?**

Children are only entitled to one source of Pupil Premium, so if they are PLAC, they will get Pupil Premium Plus funding as it takes precedence.

## **Do schools have to tell parents what they spend the Pupil Premium funding on?**

Schools must be able to show how the Pupil Premium Plus funding is being used to benefit eligible children. Schools should ensure that they are transparent in how the funding is being used and should aim to involve parents and carers in discussions around its use.

## **What is the education process when a child is moving from Local Authority care to their adoptive/permanent home?**

Moving to a new home can be very difficult for young people and they may require a high level of support to settle in their new education setting. This move needs to be thoroughly planned for. The Virtual School and Adoption service have developed a [**joint protocol**](https://schools.essex.gov.uk/pupil-support-and-wellbeing/essex-virtual-school/previously-looked-after-children-plac/adoption) to support this process. Please liaise with the Virtual School and Post-Adoption if you need further guidance about strategies for effective transitions.

## **What else can schools and other professionals do to support a previously looked after child at school?**

The Designated Teacher has a statutory responsibility for ensuring the educational outcomes for previously looked after Children, as well as Looked After Children. The [statutory guidance](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) has useful information and suggestions about how schools can support PLAC students. It is clear that interventions should be evidence-based, that parents and carers should be actively involved, raising awareness of the cohort’s needs with staff is key, and that mental health, transitions, and multi-agency working are priorities.

We recommend a proactive approach to assessing, monitoring, evaluating and intervening in a previously looked after child’s educational journey. There may be periods where you have no concerns or the child seems to be managing well, but it is quite possible that there may be barriers to learning and/or unresolved developmental trauma that make it difficult for them to trust adults and settle to learn. A Team Around the Child approach that identifies a key adult and other supportive adults in school is a good starting point. Other services should be involved in meetings, with parental consent.

We are currently developing our templates for recording meetings for previously looked after children. We would suggest considering the use of [One Planning](https://send.essex.gov.uk/help-learning/make-plan-action-support-your-child-0/one-planning-process) and a One Page Profile for PLAC, with an emphasis on understanding triggers and stressors for the child and ways that staff can help the child to learn most effectively, and to co-regulate and support them when distressed. We would also recommend careful planning for any transitions, in-year and within school as well as between schools.

## **What are 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.

## **What support can the Essex Virtual School offer?**

Please see our ‘Opportunities for PLAC’ page for full details of support for you and your PLAC cohort.

We work alongside families and professionals, offering advice, reflections and signposting to services. We are able to liaise and consult with key services on parents’ behalf, for example SEND partners. We can, where wished, attend meetings to help create a plan for a PLAC and can offer schools and social care colleagues bespoke support and training.