



Welcome to the 8th edition of the Oxfordshire Virtual School's termly update for parents and carers of Children We Care For and Previously Cared For Children. Please circulate this newsletter to other people with parental responsibility or care responsibilities for Children We Care For or Previously Cared For Children. If you have any questions/requests for content of upcoming issues, contact clare.pike@oxfordshire.gov.uk or laura.east@oxfordshire.gov.uk

CONTACT US

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Advocating for your child and ensuring their needs are best met in school

Many care-experienced children have suffered disrupted learning, may have missed extended periods of school, and many of them have special educational needs (SEN). The gaps in their learning and, in many cases the emotional impact of their experiences, are likely to have become significant barriers to their progress. Schools have a duty to understand the things which can affect how care-experienced learn and achieve and how the whole school supports the educational achievement of these pupils.

Care-experienced children must explicitly be identified as a cohort requiring specific consideration and targeted support pathways.

Care-experienced children are more likely to experience social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) issues than their peers. SEMH needs are special education needs. For these children and young people, **we insist that schools use the [SDQ assessment \(xls format\)](#) to diagnose a child's SEMH needs** and support in putting together a needs-based intervention plan.

Many care-experienced children also have additional Special Education Needs or Disabilities (SEND). Education settings have a duty to use their best endeavours to meet the educational needs of children with SEND and **schools should be utilising the [SEN Ordinarily Available Toolkit \(pdf format, 1.4Mb\)](#) to support this work.** For more information on Oxfordshire's SEND Local Offer, [click here](#).

Oxfordshire Virtual School is committed to supporting all schools who support our children to ensure they are places where our children feel they are cared for and belong. We promote that schools adopt a relational and restorative way of working that is attachment and ACEs aware, trauma-informed and shame-sensitive.

If you are worried about your child and feel that their school is not doing enough to support them / is unfairly treating them, do contact us virtualschool.lac@oxfordshire.gov.uk

For more information, you might wish to click on the links below:

- [A trauma-informed approach - Supporting care-experienced children - BBC Teach](#)
- [Hidden In Plain Sight – The Impact Of Exclusion On Care | EachOther](#)
- [Oxfordshire Relational Schools Programme | Oxfordshire County Council](#)

Personal Education Plan (PEP) reminder

The deadline for holding Spring PEP meetings for Children We Care For is Friday 9th February 2023 (before the half-term week). The reason for this is that it gives Virtual School case holders time to quality assure the PEP documents and process Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) funding requests before the close of the 2023/24 financial year.

PEP meetings after this date will be processed in the new financial year (from 1st April 2024).

- The Virtual School provides up to £2,000 per financial year for pupils placed in Oxfordshire.
- The Virtual School provides up to £2,500 per financial year for pupils placed out of county.

If you are concerned that your child's Pupil Premium allocation has not been fully utilised to support the best possible outcomes, contact your child's Designated Teacher as the allocated money cannot be rolled over to the next financial year. Pupil Premium funding requests will be approved in-line with our PP+ policy on our website:

[Pupil Premium Plus funding | Oxfordshire County Council](#)

Year 10s and 11s with EHCPs

Please contact your child's school if they are in Year 11 and you are concerned about them not having a clear destination named on their EHCP for Post-16 education, employment or training. Due to the lengthy consultation process, there is often a last-minute rush in March to name somewhere, which may end up not being the appropriate destination *or* may not provide the preferred course option which can lead to confusion, disappointment and/or young people becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training).

For those of you with children in Year 10, especially those with EHCPs, it is a good idea to encourage them to attend Open Events this year to start getting an idea about their preferred destination. See p.4 for a list of provisions in or near to Oxfordshire. If your child has an EHCP, they should have their Annual Review at the end of Year 10 or very early in Year 11 to enable those early consultations to take place.

If you have specific questions or concerns regarding Year 11 to Post-16 transition, please contact Izzi Crowther
Isabel.Crowther@oxfordshire.gov.uk

This term is key for Year 11 and Post-16 students

Please build in time to apply to Sixth Forms, universities, colleges and apprenticeships and ask your child's educational setting for support. Try to take a copy of applications and ensure (if they are a Child We Care For) they put their social worker down as one of the key contacts. This makes following up applications much easier – i.e. have they actually applied, have they missed phone calls asking them to interview, etc.

Remember our Year 11 mentor Izzi Crowther is available to support this process, email:
Isabel.Crowther@oxfordshire.gov.uk Alternatively, you can contact our Post-16 Team by emailing our Post-16 Phase Lead: mark.walker@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Safer Internet Day is on Tuesday 6th February - this is highly relevant for vulnerable children. The 2024 theme is: *Inspiring change? Making a difference, managing influence and navigating change online*. There are lots of resources and ideas for parents/carers on the website link [here](#).

[Early Years Oral Health Newsletter](#)

Another Busy Year for the Children in Care Council (CiCC)

What a year it has been for CiCC! We started the year with an art workshop aimed at breaking the stigma of being in care, exhibited around Oxfordshire. Then we sailed at Oxford Sailing Club and asked CiCC members about their health to feed into the health and well-being strategy. Then a MasterChef where wonderful meals were cooked by CiCC members where we asked them about home life feeding into the governments 'stable homes built on love'.



Our highlight of the year is being involved in 'Care to Dance', where children as young as 6 yr. old, learned dance routines weekly and gave 2 huge performances in Oxford, amazing! Over 12's gained a qualification in dance leadership.

To finish the year, we celebrated with a festive event at Hill End, where we discussed the Pledge to children in care and care leavers, danced, flute playing by our talented Sarah, who we just heard passed her grade 6 flute exam, we played games whilst having a lovely dinner and puddings. We then gave gifts to wonderful Chairs of CiCC and the children.



SOME EXITING NEWS: We've been working on a new name and strapline for CiCC so we are more inclusive of all those in care and with the help of Charlotte, our Marketing and Campaigns Manager and Dewi our graphic designer working on what CiCC said it meant to them, we came up with 'YOUTH VOICE - Care for the Future', that's our new name.

Chef Supreme Team 2023



Hollie, Autumn, Fatimah, Sarah.

For more information about the Children in Care Council (CiCC) and joining CiCC, [click here](#).

Upcoming Open Days and Events

City of Oxford College Events

- The City of Oxford College, Activate Rugby Academy, is for 16-18-year-old rugby players who have the ambition and potential to play rugby at the very highest level. The programme integrates both academic and rugby timetables for a developmentally focussed, competition supported programme for highly talented 16-18 year olds. We provide the support for students to pursue their rugby ambitions whilst studying their preferred academic pathway, whether that be through a range of A Levels, BTEC's in Sport, Business or Engineering or other vocational courses.
- [Activate Rugby Academy Girls January Open Event - City of Oxford College \(activatelearning.ac.uk\)](https://activatelearning.ac.uk) – 13/01/24 9:30am – 1pm **Harcourt Hill Campus** Harcourt Hill Oxford OX2 9AT
- [Activate Rugby Academy: Rugby Programme Boys Open Event - City of Oxford College \(activatelearning.ac.uk\)](https://activatelearning.ac.uk)– 13/01/24 9:30am – 2pm **Harcourt Hill Campus** Harcourt Hill Oxford OX2 9AT
- [Blackbird Leys Technology Campus Spring Open Event - City of Oxford College \(activatelearning.ac.uk\)](https://activatelearning.ac.uk) – 21/02/24 4:30pm – 7:30pm – Blackbird Leys Technology Campus, Cuddesdon Way Oxford OX4 6HN
- [City Centre Campus Spring Open Event - City of Oxford College \(activatelearning.ac.uk\)](https://activatelearning.ac.uk) – 06/03/24 4:30pm – 7:30pm – City of Oxford College, Oxpens Road, Oxford OX1 1SA

Banbury & Bicester College

- [Banbury and Bicester College Spring Open Event - Banbury and Bicester College \(activatelearning.ac.uk\)](https://activatelearning.ac.uk) – 07/02/24 4:30pm – 7:30pm Banbury College, Broughton Road Banbury OX16 9QA

Abingdon & Witney College

- [Abingdon Campus Open Day - Abingdon & Witney College \(abingdon-witney.ac.uk\)](https://abingdon-witney.ac.uk) – 07/02/2024 3:30-7pm Abingdon & Witney College, Wootton Road, Abingdon, OX14 1GG

Henley College

- [The Henley College Campus Tour 17th Jan | The Henley College](https://henleycollege.ac.uk) – 17/01/24, 31/01/24, 21/02/24, 20/03/24 10am – 112am
- [Information Event 18th Jan | The Henley College](https://henleycollege.ac.uk)– 18/01/24 5:50pm – 8pm
- Deanfield Avenue, Henley-on-Thames RG9 1UH

New College Swindon

- [Open Evening - North Star Campus - New College Swindon](https://newcollege.ac.uk) 24/01/24 5-7pm North Star Avenue, Swindon SN2 1DY
- [Open Evening - Queens Drive Campus - New College Swindon](https://newcollege.ac.uk) 31/01/24 5-7pm New College Drive, Swindon SN3 1AH

Reading College

- [Reading College Spring Open Event - Reading College \(activatelearning.ac.uk\)](https://activatelearning.ac.uk) 28/02/24 4:30pm – 7:30pm King's Road, Reading RG1 4HJ