

# DESIGNATED TEACHER FOR CHILDREN WE CARE FOR AND PREVIOUSLY CARED FOR CHILDREN UPDATE



**Issue 48**

Term 4  
2024/25



The aim of this publication is to provide some information updates, contacts, useful strategies and ideas to support the work you do with our pupils. Watch out for each edition and do pass on, print and display. The more we can raise awareness, the better equipped schools are to do their best for our children. Please also take time to look at our webpages – [click here](#). If you have any questions/requests for content of upcoming issues, contact [virtualschool@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:virtualschool@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

## CONTACT US

### Website:

[www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/virtualschool](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/virtualschool)

**Direct Line:** 01865 328550

### Email:

[virtualschool@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:virtualschool@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

## Training Programme 2024/25

### \* **BOOK HERE** \*

#### Upcoming training:

**Tues 4<sup>th</sup> March and Tues 29<sup>th</sup> April**

Transition Workshop

**Thurs 6<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> March**

Introduction to Parental Imprisonment

**Weds 19<sup>th</sup> March**

Designated Teacher (DT) Induction

**Tues 25<sup>th</sup> March and Tues 6<sup>th</sup> May**

De-escalation Training

**Tues 1<sup>st</sup> April**

Best practice for schools on working with adoptive and special guardian children and families

## Year 6 to 7 Transition

Secondary school allocations for Year 7 September 2025 entry are due to be announced on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2025 for Children We Care For (CWCF) currently in Year 6 where social worker/carers made an 'on-time' application to the relevant Local Authority by the 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024 deadline.

We are mindful that times of change can be more unsettling for care-experienced young people who have already experienced difficult transitions in their life. It is really helpful if you can check-in with foster families during the first week of March to ensure that they and their primary school teacher are aware of the secondary place allocated and hold the correct information to be able to support with our pupils. Please remind carers to liaise with the child's social worker to ensure that secondary school places are formally accepted within the necessary timescales along with any offers of transport. The deadline for accepting a secondary school place in Oxfordshire is 14<sup>th</sup> March 2025. Please note that CWCF with an EHCP should already have had confirmation of their secondary school place which is typically allocated by the relevant Local Authority SEN Team by 15<sup>th</sup> February 2025. That said, a small number of EHCPs will be named on type (e.g. mainstream / specialist provision), as school consultations remain ongoing.

Allocated Oxfordshire Virtual School Workers are available to support with any problems, e.g. CWCF not being allocated their first preference school. Also, just a friendly reminder to contact the Designated Teacher for CWCF of the receiving secondary school to invite them to any Year 6 PEP meetings between now and the end of the academic year so that we can work together to ensure a smooth transition to the new school. The 'My Transition Page' of the Oxfordshire e-PEP can be used for planning.

In a few cases, where there is an anticipated change of living address, it may not yet be possible to confirm the new secondary school allocated. Virtual School thank you, as always, for your enhanced level of pastoral support for our children currently living with uncertainty.

## Spring Term is a key for Post-16 students

Please build in time to support applications to Sixth Forms, universities, colleges and apprenticeships. Carers and social workers are not always as informed about options so will need support. Try to take a copy of college applications that young people make, and ensure they put their social worker down as one of the key contacts. It 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](mailto:isabel.crowther@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

Alternatively, you can contact our Post-16 Team by emailing the phase lead: [mark.walker@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:mark.walker@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

## Are you an adopter with school-aged children who works in education?

If so, we want to hear from you! Come along to our Adoption Event!

**Date:** Tuesday, 25 March

**Time:** 6 - 7.30pm

**Location:** Westgate Library Collaboration Space (OX1 1PE)

**Hosted by:** Adopt Thames Valley, Oxfordshire Virtual School and ATTACH Team

We are seeking adopters who work in education and have school-aged children attending mainstream and special schools in Oxfordshire. This meeting aims to gather localised feedback on the lived experiences and needs of adoptive families in Oxfordshire, using the 2025 Adoption UK Barometer Survey. Your insights will help us tailor our support to better meet local needs.

**Refreshments:** Tea, coffee, and biscuits will be provided.

**RSVP:** Please email [virtualschool@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:virtualschool@oxfordshire.gov.uk) to request a place **by Monday 10<sup>th</sup> March**.

We would love to see you! **Please spread the word – [see attached](#) flyer for sharing.**

## Year 10s and 11s with EHCPs

Please let us know if you are concerned about any Year 11s with EHCPs who do not have a clear destination named on their plan 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 a young person becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training).

For those with Children We Care For 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.3 for a list of provisions in or near to Oxfordshire. Those with EHCPs 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](mailto:isabel.crowther@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

**Have you any children  
with a parent in  
prison?**

If so, you must [click here](#)



## Coram Voice - Bright Spots Survey in Oxfordshire

### What is Bright Spots?

In 2024, you may have been asked to support CWCF you work with to complete a survey called 'Your Life, Your Care'.

This was a 'Bright Spots' survey and it was organised by Coram Voice. Coram Voice is a large organisation in England who ensure they promote children and young people's rights to be listened to.

Children and young people who are cared for shared information on the things that were going well for them, but also the things that some were worried about.

For your consideration and actions, see below for some key findings that relate, perhaps, to education or school:

#### What's good about being in care?

4-7yrs:

- All of you have a good friend

8-11yrs:

- All of you said that the adults you live with show an interest in your education.

11-17yrs:

- Almost all of you said that you were taught independence skills 'all/ most of the time' or 'sometimes'.
- Most of you that said you worried, reported that an adult was helping you with it.

#### What's bad about being in care?

4-7yrs:

- Some of you don't like school very much.

8-11yrs:

- Some of you do not have a really good friend.
- Almost half of you say that you are afraid to go to school because of bullying.

11-17yrs:

- More than 1 in 10 of you did not have a really good friend.

bright spots

### Bright Spots Well-Being Indicators: Your Life, Your Care



## Oxfordshire Coram Voice Survey results

**[\\*\\* CLICK HERE \\*\\*](#)**





## Oxfordshire's commitment to children we care for and care experienced young people

**A corporate parent is the name given to an organisation or person who has special responsibilities to children we care for and care experienced young people.**

A corporate parent is intended to carry out many of the roles a parent should. While you or your organisation may not be able to provide everything a parent can, you should still be able to provide the children and young people you're responsible for with the best possible support and care.

Corporate parent responsibilities are intended to encourage people and organisations to do as much as they can towards improving the lives of children we care for and care experienced young people, so they feel in control of their lives and are able to overcome the barriers they may face.

As corporate parents in Oxfordshire we are ambitious for our children we care for and care experienced young people. We are committed to

working together to help children, young people, and families to thrive.

**We want Oxfordshire to be a great place to grow up and for any Oxfordshire child or young person to have the opportunity to become everything they want to be.**

To achieve this vision for children and young people we have a focus on all children and young people being successful, safe, healthy, and supported.

Some of our children we care for and care experienced young people have told us what they need from their corporate parents and how we can best support them to help them thrive.



### **\*\* IMPORTANT \*\***

## **Protocol for term-time leave of absence applications in exceptional circumstances for Children We Care For (CWCF)**

As the **Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill** emphasises, schools have a responsibility to act as corporate parents, ensuring that these children receive the necessary support and guidance to thrive academically and personally. We are seeking your support, as we share parental responsibility for children we care for.

In August 2024, we reviewed the above policy with senior colleagues and shared it in the Autumn 1 copy of this newsletter. [Click here](#) to view our policy.

Our position regarding children we care for is that, in 'exceptional circumstances', requests need to be made for a leave of absence during term-time and approval must be sought from both the Assistant Director for Corporate Parenting and the Virtual School Head. The Virtual School will always consult with the child's school (headteacher) before any final decision is made and communicated to all parties.

Requests for 'exceptional' leave of absence regarding CWCF must be sent in good time to the Assistant Director for Corporate Parenting and the Virtual School Head. If you have been approached directly by a foster carer or social worker regarding term-time leave of absence, please do check with the Virtual School first that this protocol has been followed. In some cases, what has been observed is that requests are not being sent or are being sent near to when a holiday is being booked or in some instances after a holiday has been booked. As you know, a holiday does not constitute exceptional circumstances and we need to work together on this.

Do contact us if you have any questions. We appreciate your support with this.

**YOUTH VOICES**  
OXFORDSHIRE

CARE FOR THE FUTURE

Youth Voices is a forum for Children We Care For (CWCF) and Care Leavers. Youth Voices help the Local Authority achieve our commitment to CWCF and care-experienced young people in Oxfordshire. Youth Voices have regular meetings, run surveys and access a range of enrichment activities that support OCC in working alongside them to better understand their needs and aspirations. Youth Voices hold OCC, as Corporate Parent, to account against its commitment.

Should you know a child or young person who might like to join Youth Voices, please contact James Collins (Youth Voices Engagement Officer) on 07803287813, [james.collins@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:james.collins@oxfordshire.gov.uk) or visit [Children in Care Council | OXME.INFO](#)

# Designated Teacher Practice Day

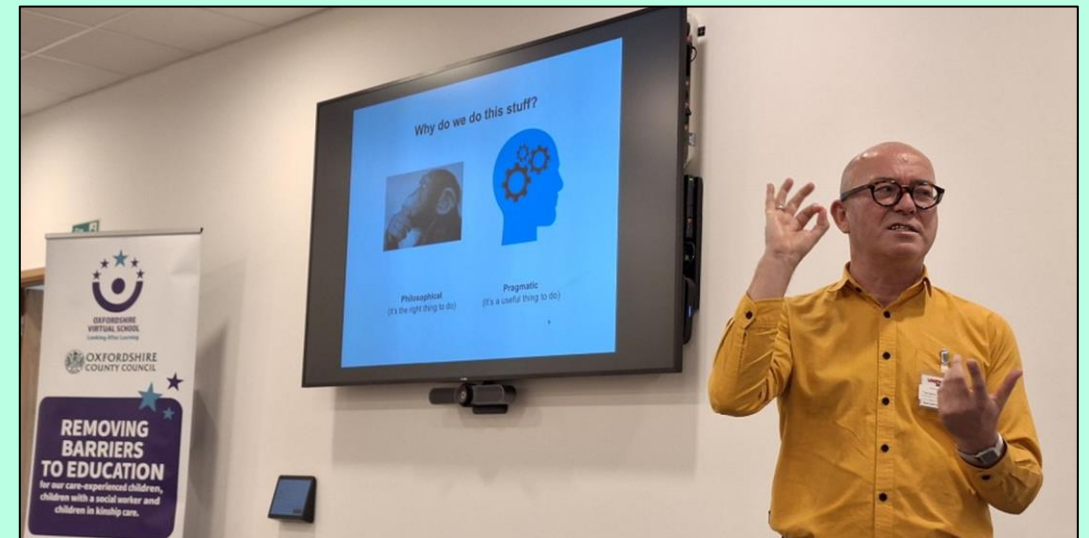
On Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> January, Oxfordshire Virtual School caseworkers came together with many of you (partners from various educational settings, both in- and out-of-county), ranging from Early Years to Further Education. A total of 50 professionals in-person at Unipart House. Our goal was to build and strengthen relationships, explore the nature of relationships in our roles, identify our relational assets, identify some challenges and engage in some shared problem solving. Termly online network meetings were not meeting a need - the intention was to begin the process of building a meaningful community of support and practice.

The highlight of the day was a relational and restorative workshop facilitated by our friends at The Restorative Lab. This workshop allowed us to learn together and experience some impactful practices firsthand. Working in a relational and restorative way will support in preventing, managing and repairing relationships where they are put under strain.

By engaging in these activities, we aim to practice more effectively and promote best practices that ultimately improve the educational experiences and outcomes for our most vulnerable children and young people. Care-experienced children in Oxfordshire are experiencing too many suspensions and we are hoping, as one of by-products of this day, that we will see a decrease in suspensions as a result of more reflective, human-centred practice.

The day was well received and something we very much hope to repeat in the future. Here are some of people's reflections:

- ✚ "The management of the day and the group was outstanding - the best training I have been to since teacher training in terms of building useful relationships."
- ✚ "Thank you for inspiring and reigniting that flame!"
- ✚ "I think this sort of day would be great to repeat in the future."
- ✚ "The first thing I will do is rebuild a relationship with one particular CWCF at my school."
- ✚ "I really valued the opportunity to speak to other colleagues in the same role."
- ✚ "I need to take the time to step back and reflect, connect and listen to colleagues."
- ✚ "I am not alone."





Oxfordshire Virtual School presents:

## 2025 Annual Conference

### Transforming Lives Through Human Connection: Empowering Care-Experienced Children to Achieve Their Dreams



Join Oxfordshire Virtual School and contributors for our 2025 Annual Conference - a day of connection, learning and sharing of best practice.

This conference is dedicated to exploring the transformative power of human connection in the lives of care-experienced children.

When people feel truly seen and supported, extraordinary things happen.

With insights from a guest keynote speaker, along with practice activities and collaborative discussions, we will explore the vital roles that educators, caregivers and community members play in nurturing the holistic growth and development of children in need and those with care experience. Our focus will be on practical strategies and innovative approaches that empower these young people to overcome challenges, build resilience and confidently pursue their aspirations.

#### Keynote speaker:



Ashley John-Baptiste is a BBC reporter, presenter (The One Show / BBC News / Con Or Cure / Expert Witness / For Love Or Money) and author of 'Looked After: A Childhood in Care'.

From the age of two until he was 18, Ashley grew up in four foster families and spent two years in a residential care home. He was suspended several times from secondary school, and had already been issued a final warning when the opportunity arose to visit a summer school organised by the Sutton Trust at Cambridge University. This was when he realised that he would have to take responsibility for himself and that he had the potential to succeed.



Transforming Lives  
Through Human  
Connection: Empowering  
Care-Experienced Children  
to Achieve Their Dreams

Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> October  
09:00 -15:30

Unipart House  
Garsington Road  
Cowley  
Oxford  
OX4 2PG

Join us as we come together to share insights, celebrate successes and commit to making a lasting impact on the lives of children in need and care-experienced children through the power of human connection.

Together, we can create a supportive environment where every child is encouraged to dream big and achieve their best outcomes.

#### Book here

[Oxfordshire | Education Services](#)

Tel: 03300 249046

#### Email:

[OxfordshireEducationServices@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:OxfordshireEducationServices@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

## **\*\* BOOKINGS NOW OPEN \*\***

Our 2025 Annual Conference will be taking place on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> October at Unipart House. We understand that this is a change from the date promoted in the previous newsletter. The change is due to the availability of our keynote speaker, Ashley John-Baptiste.

Open the email attachment that accompanies this newsletter to view a clear copy of the poster on the left.

Primary settings will be entitled to 1 free space for their DT on a first-come-first-served basis. Secondary and FE settings will be entitled to up to 2 free spaces on a first-come-first-served basis.

Go to: [Oxfordshire Virtual School Conference 2025 | Oxfordshire | Education Services](#)

## Glossary

As a DT you become very familiar with abbreviations and terminology connected to the care system. Here is a useful summary to help inform other school staff. Children and young people prefer that we use more everyday language to describe their situation e.g. family, my meeting, home, my worker, etc. See [The language that cares](#) report 2020 for young people's views about words they prefer.

**Child We Care For** – child in the care system with a care order - interim or full care order. This can be alongside or instead of being cared for by parents.

**Care Order** – legal order made by court that gives social care permission to care for children.

**Accommodated** – cared for by social care.

**Permanent placement** – a foster placement that is long term.

**Supervising social worker** – assists the foster carer in providing good quality care. Some SSW are employed by the local authority and some work for fostering agencies.

**IRO** – the Independent Reviewing Officer is an experienced social worker who scrutinises the care plans to ensure they serve the child's best interest. Chairs the CWCF review.

**SGO** – A Special Guardianship Order is a private law order giving a guardian responsibility for caring for a child until they are 18.

**Previously Cared For** – a child adopted from care of the local authority, or under an SGO or child arrangements order.

**Contact** – describes when and how a child sees their family and relatives.

**Reunification plan** – describes a plan to return a child to live with their parents.

**Kinship care** - being cared for by other relatives. This can be an informal arrangement (so child is NOT under a care order) or can be formalised under a legal order.

**PP+ funding** – Pupil Premium Plus fund held by Virtual Schools and distributed to schools via the Personal Education Plan (PEP).

**Care leavers** (care experienced adults) – describes young people who have moved on from being cared for.

**Supported living** – supported housing for young people post 16 which provides independence with adult support.

**Corporate parent** – when a child is cared for, the local authority becomes the corporate parent e.g. has collective responsibility for providing the best possible care and safeguarding for the child.

**Life story work** – carried out by social worker with child and aims to help them understand and accept their own personal history.