



## Children living in Kinship Care

### Frequently Asked Questions

In response to requests from carers, school staff and other professionals, VSK have put together a collection of advice to answer many frequently asked questions regarding the educational support around children living with kinship families. If you have a question which is not answered here, please complete the [Initial Contact Form](#).

#### Frequently Asked Questions regarding children living in Kinship Care arrangements.

##### What is Kinship care?

Kinship care is a term which is used to describe situations where family or connected persons (extended family, family friends etc) look after the child within their own family home. There are two categories of kinship care – those with ‘formal’ arrangements made through the court, and ‘informal’ kinship arrangements.

There are many reasons why a child may be living with someone other than their birth parent/s. These ‘exceptional’ circumstances are often due to incidents that are considered as adverse childhood experiences, which may have the potential to impact the child’s development and learning.

##### What arrangements are classified as Formal Arrangements?

Formal arrangements are agreed through a court of law, awarding the carer either a Special Guardianship Order or a Child Arrangements Order. The child may or may not have been in the care of the local authority prior to this court order.

For information regarding children who were previously in care, prior to a Special Guardianship or Child Arrangements Order, please refer to our Previously Looked After information [Previously Looked After Children \(PLAC\) | Virtual School Kent \(lea.kent.sch.uk\)](#)

##### Can Virtual Schools offer advice to all Kinship Care families?

VSK can only offer advice to carers with formal kinship arrangements. However, if you are caring for a child under an informal arrangement, we would advise you to contact your school and ensure that they are aware of your child’s additional needs which could be linked to your kinship arrangement. The school will be able to contact us for general information regarding trauma, attachment and other needs relating to the possible barriers your child may be experiencing.

We would recommend that you contact the Kinship Compass charity for advice and information. Their website is packed with resources, free webinars and training as well as links to peer support groups and a [Kinship Advice Team](#) who will be able to offer direct advice.

## What can VSK do to help Kinship Carers?

The role of Virtual School for Kinship children is to promote their educational achievement through the provision of information and advice to their carers, educators and others where necessary. VSK will:

- Offer advice and information to carers with children living in Formal Kinship Arrangements and signpost them to other services for advice and support if necessary.
- Offer advice and information to providers of early education, schools and providers of alternative provision in respect of individual children living in Formal Kinship Arrangements.
- Make general advice and information available to early years settings and schools to improve awareness of the vulnerability and needs of children living in Kinship Care. This includes promoting good practice on identifying and meeting children's needs and guidance.

## How are VSK achieving this?

- VSK offer advice to carers and schools via a phone consultation, or email. Using the expertise, local knowledge and skills of the VSK staff across the county, the team are able to offer the correct advice to the local schools and parents within their area.
- VSK are supporting schools through Attachment and Trauma Training and other training opportunities where necessary.
- The Virtual School Website is constantly being updated with relevant information and resources for schools and carers. The aim of this website is to be the 'Go To' site for all Kent Kinship Carers and Schools for information and advice for children living in Kinship arrangements. We welcome your feedback and any other information that you feel would be appropriate for this site.
- VSK signpost schools and carers to the [Kinship Charity](#). Kinship have worked closely with NAVSH (National Association of Virtual School Heads) to create a range of freely available webinars around educational needs of kinship care children.

## Frequently Asked Questions regarding Education Plan for Kinship Children (EPKC) Meetings

*"This is like a like bulb being switched on... we needed something like this in Primary School. There was nothing proactive in place like this: we had to repeat our story every year."* Parent of an adopted secondary pupil.

*"It's time to sit down, reflect and think"* Parent of an adopted primary pupil.

## What is an EPKC Meeting?

Kent's Virtual School is recommending the use of the EPKC (Education Plan for Kinship Children) meeting to help the adults supporting children living under a Kinship Care arrangement, to achieve the best they can. The EPKC form is completed at an EPKC meeting with the school/early year provision, carers and others that carers choose to invite.

## Why was it devised?

EPKC meetings are been adapted from the EPPLAC (Education Plan for Previously Looked After Children) template that has been widely used across all Kent Schools for the last 5 years.

The purpose of the EPKC is to encourage positive collaboration and communication between home and school/early year provision, and to raise awareness of the needs and issues faced by children and their carers. It has been designed to ensure that the child/young person's voice is central to all discussions and decisions made, ensuring a strength based, solution focused framework for the meeting and education plan.

There are many reasons why a child may be living with someone other than their birth parent/s. These 'exceptional' circumstances are often due to incidents that are considered as adverse childhood experiences, which may have the potential to impact the child's development and learning. EPKC meetings help schools and other education settings to be aware how these children and their families are learning to repair from these experiences and what support is needed to overcome barriers to their academic, social and wellbeing development.

There may be certain times of the year, certain topics or events, or contact with birth parents that may be unsettling for the child. These meetings allow time to discuss preventative and supportive strategies to ensure that the child feels safe and contained within the school hours. The meetings can also ensure that the school and carers are working together in support of the child as they move through their school life receiving consistent messages from all adults around them.

### **How can I ask for an EPKC meeting with my child's school/early year provision?**

The EPKC meeting can be initiated by either school/early year provision or carers. The EPKC forms explain how to structure the meeting. After the first meeting, carers and school/early year provision set a review date to see how the plans made at the EPKC meeting are going.

### **Who organises the EPKC meeting?**

Carers and the education setting decide together who will chair the meeting and who else to invite.

### **How do school/early year provision or I get the EPKC Forms?**

They are available from Virtual School Kent on the following website address:

[Education Plan for Kinship Care | Virtual School Kent \(lea.kent.sch.uk\)](https://lea.kent.sch.uk/education-plan-for-kinship-care)

### **Does my child have to have an EPKC? Their school/early year provision don't know that they are living under a Kinship arrangement.**

EPKC meetings are a useful way to information share, problem solve and set targets for the future. If this is being achieved through other meetings, or you are happy with the support that your child is getting, then there is no need for further meetings. Alternatively, there may be other meetings already arranged that could be used as the EPKC meeting. In this case, it would be best practice to ensure that the 'kinship element' of their needs are recorded, either as part of the other meeting, or by completing the EPKC form so that outcomes can then be reviewed in the future.

Carers have emphasised that confidentiality is vital. The EPKC will only be used:

- If carers choose to identify their children as living in kinship care.
- And if carers wish an EPKC to be implemented.

### **I'm worried about having an EPKC because information may be shared unnecessarily – What can I do?**

Please discuss your concerns with the education setting. Confidentiality regarding where records are kept will be discussed as part of the EPKC meeting.

### **Does the school/early years provision have to arrange an EPKC meeting if I ask them to?**

It is not statutory; however current evaluations based on meetings for previously looked after children indicate that it is good practice and that schools/early years provisions value them.

### **My child already has a Provision Plan, Individual Education Plan, Education Health and Care Plan or a Pastoral Support Programme. Do we still have to have an EPKC?**

This is for you and the school/early years provision to decide in discussion. Carers and schools/early years provisions have found that EPKC's provide different information which is valuable in understanding the pupil's strengths and needs. There is no reason why the EPKC meeting cannot coincide with the Support Review meetings as information will be relevant for both. By completing the EPKC forms, schools and carers have additional flexibility to review outcomes outside of the timescales of the other meetings.

### **Do Virtual School Kent need to be present at the EPKC Meeting?**

No. VSK are an advisory service for children living in formal kinship arrangements. Often carers and schools do not require additional support during the meeting and prefer a phone consultation prior and post the meeting to discuss issues and outcomes. If you would like to discuss your child's schooling and issues you may be facing, please complete the following referral form [Initial Contact Form](#).

## **Frequently Asked Questions regarding Pupil Premium Plus Funding.**

### **Will the school be getting extra funding for the Kinship cohort?**

The school will not receive additional funding for your child. If your child is eligible for Pupil Premium (free school meals) or was looked after by a local authority prior to them living with you, then they will receive this within their pupil premium grant.

However, it is the school's duty to ensure that your child's needs are met, so will access the support and funding as required.

The extension to VSK's role is a strategic one and it is their duty to ensure that schools understand the additional needs of children who live in kinship arrangements and are actively supporting these additional needs.

### **Is my child eligible for Pupil Premium Plus?**

If your child was previously in care of a local authority, prior to living with you under a Special Guardianship or Child Arrangements Order, then they will be eligible for Pupil Premium for Previously Looked After Children. It is not ring-fenced for them as individuals, but for the cohort of previously looked after children within the school. For more information please visit [Pupil Premium Plus - Kinship Compass](#)

If your child was not previously looked after by the local authority, then they will not be eligible for this.

### **How is Pupil Premium used to support children in kinship care?**

Pupil Premium funding is allocated to eligible schools based on the number of pupils recorded as eligible for free schools meals or have been recorded as eligible in the past 6 years. This is different from the other Pupil Premium Funding (sometimes referred to as Pupil Premium Plus) for previously looked after children, looked after children and service children.

Pupil premium is not a personal budget for individual pupils, and schools do not have to spend pupil premium so it solely benefits pupils who meet the funding criteria. It can be used to support other pupils with identified needs, such as those who have or have had a social worker, or who act as a carer or for whole class interventions which will also benefit non-disadvantaged pupils.

Schools must spend their pupil premium grant on evidence-informed activities in line with the 'menu of approaches' set by the Department of Education (DfE). [Using Pupil Premium: Guidance for School Leaders \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Schools must publish their strategy for pupil premium each year on their website using the DfE template (unless they have less than 5 eligible pupils). School must demonstrate to parents, carers, governors and trustees how the school is using pupil premium to help disadvantaged pupils to raise their attainment. Although multi-agency trusts can pool resources and set a plan for use of pupil premium funding across

their academies, each academy within the trust must publish a separate pupil premium strategy statement each year.

We would always recommend that you have hold regular EPKC meetings with the school so that they fully understand the needs of your child. These can then form part of the strategy plans for pupil premium. We would also advise carers to look through the school's pupil premium strategy prior to any meeting and discuss with the school any interventions or support that you feel your child would find beneficial from and if they are able to access this.

## Frequently Asked Questions regarding Education

### **My child is struggling to attend school, what can I do?**

School attendance is a priority for all schools and local authorities across the country.

There are many reasons why young people do not attend school. Although these existed before the pandemic; issues have now become more widespread and are affecting large proportions of pupils and their families. School attendance is everybody's responsibility.

If you are concerned about your child's attendance, please speak to the school about working together to support your child. Access the information regarding [Emotional Based School Avoidance \(EBSA\)](#) and work together with the school using the resources available. It can be helpful to ask for a Breakthrough Meeting, which is a strength-based meeting designed to formalise plans around support of your child's attendance.

VSK's Relational Approaches to [School Belonging and Attendance](#): A Guide a Toolkit, supports schools to understand the importance of school belonging for increased school attendance. We would recommend that you discuss with the school how you can work together in developing these relationships for your children.

If your child is still struggling to attend school, or you have further concerns, please contact us for further advice [Initial Contact Form](#).

### **I am worried about how my child will manage with a change of school. What can I do?**

When children move to a different school, this is known as a school transition. It can be hard for children, particularly those who may have suffered Adverse Childhood Experiences and find saying goodbye difficult. VSK have put together a useful guide to support you the discussions with school around [school transitions](#).

### **Who is the best person in school to speak to about my child?**

#### **Family Liaison Officers**

Family Liaison Officers, particularly in primary schools, are often the person parents and carers have the closest relationship with. It is their role to develop school/home partnerships, working closely with the families to support them and their child within the school community.

They are able to connect you with the right person within the school to have further discussions with regarding support for your child. If you feel uncomfortable with sharing your child's story with other members of the school, it is often useful to complete an EPKC (Education Plan or Kinship Children). This ensures that only the relevant information and the information you are comfortable sharing, is shared with relevant members of the school staff.

#### **Designated Teachers**

Every school has a Designated Teacher for looked after and previously looked after children. If your child was in care, prior to the special guardianship or child arrangements order, then they are known as Previously Looked After Children and as such will be the responsibility of the Designated Teacher in the

school. If you are unsure who this person is in school, please ask in the school office, the Family Liaison Officer or Class Teacher.

More information regarding the role of the Designated Teacher can be found here [The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/612222/Designated_Teacher_role.pdf)

### **SENCO – Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-ordinator**

A SENCO is a qualified teacher who is responsible for leading the school's provision for special educational needs. They work with teachers and support staff to make sure that the right support is put in place for each individual child. This includes monitoring and reviewing provision, working with parents and carers and asking for additional support from other teams (Specialist Teaching and Learning Service, KCC SEN Inclusion Advisors, Health teams etc) when needed.

### **Pastoral Teams**

If you are worried about your child's behaviour in school, you should speak with the class teacher or pastoral team in the first instance. Ensuring that they fully understand the needs of your child and how these may be impacting their behaviour will help them to put the right support in place. We would also recommend that you ask them to consider any impact on past experiences that your child may have been through. Confirm that they are working with the SENCo and Designated Teacher to ensure that they are making reasonable adjustments and working in a trauma informed way in their support of your child.

### **Designated Safeguarding Leads**

Every school has a Designated Safeguarding Lead. It is their job to make sure that the school are adhering to their statutory safeguarding policies and duties. This is a senior role within a school, and they are often supported by a Designated Safeguarding team. If you are unsure who this is, please refer to the school's website or ask in the school office.

### **How can I get extra help for my child at school?**

If you are worried that your child is struggling at school and may need extra help with their learning (sometimes known as Special Educational Needs), please see this [useful guide](#).

All schools in Kent use the Mainstream Core Standards in their support of children who have special educational needs. For further information, please refer to the Parent's guide at the bottom of this webpage [SEND Mainstream Core Standards - Kent County Council](#).

### **Do I have to tell the school about our kinship arrangements?**

No. Although you do not have to tell schools regarding any kinship arrangements, it is advisable that you are able to share with them information that you are comfortable with, so that the school can put the necessary support in for your child.

There are exceptional reasons why a child does not live with their birth parents. The journey to you, may have been due to experiences known as an Adverse Childhood Experiences. The associated trauma that this had on them does not simply go away because they are living in your safe and loving home. Contact with birth parents, school topics such as family, genetics or PHSE lessons covering aspects that remind them of the time when they were living with their birth parents can all be triggering for the child. You also need support at times, if the school understand your personal situation and journey to becoming a carer, they are better placed to signpost you to the right support if needed.

By working with the school to support your child to repair from these experiences, and by being in regular contact with them regarding home and school life can allow the school to put in place additional support during potentially difficult moments in school and ensure that your child reaches their academic potential.

VSK continually review this document. If you have any further questions regarding children living in Kinship Arrangements, please email [VSKAdvisoryTeam@kent.gov.uk](mailto:VSKAdvisoryTeam@kent.gov.uk).