

VSK WEEKLY UPDATE

21 January 2026

Strengthening Our PEPs:

Key Messages for Designated Teachers and Social Workers

High quality Personal Education Plans (PEPs) remain one of the most effective tools we have for improving the educational experiences and outcomes of children in care. Your work in preparing, contributing to, and leading these meetings ensures that every child's needs are understood, planned for, and monitored.

To support a consistent and robust approach across Kent, please keep the following in mind:

✓ **Timeliness matters**

PEPs must take place within statutory timeframes and be uploaded promptly onto Liberi. This ensures that education planning remains current and responsive.

✓ **Strong preparation leads to strong plans**

Designated Teachers should prepare attainment, progress data, attendance, SEND information, and intervention updates in advance. Social Workers should ensure care information is accurate and up to date, including recent changes or factors impacting learning.

✓ **The child's voice must be central**

Please ensure the young person's views are gathered in a way that suits them and are fully represented in the PEP. Their ambitions, worries, and ideas should shape the targets we set.

✓ **PP+ funding requires clear planning and impact tracking**

Requests should outline the rationale for interventions, expected outcomes, and how effectiveness will be measured. Regular review is essential to ensure support remains targeted and meaningful.

✓ **Use the PEP to drive collaboration**

The PEP should reflect the joined up thinking between school, social care, carers, and other professionals. It is the shared roadmap for the term ahead.

Resource to Support High Quality PEPs

We are pleased to share a new resource designed to support Designated Teachers and Social Workers in understanding a child's learning journey across EYFS, primary and secondary phases.

You can access it here:

🔗 [Understanding Your Child's Learning](#)

🔗 [Useful PEP Documents](#)

If you require any assistance, please contact our dedicated Kent PEP Team:

☎ 03000 415353 | ✉ VSKKentPEP@kent.gov.uk



Department
for Education

RISE: Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellence

The DfE has recently announced their RISE Hubs programme which offer schools practical, school-led support to improve attendance and behaviour.

There are two support pathways to this programme.

1. The *Enhanced* Support pathway provides 10 days of tailored, in-depth support to help your school identify priorities, build an improvement plan and embed lasting change.
2. The *Regional* Support pathway offers structured CPD, professional networks and opportunities to share and learn from good practice across a wider group of schools. Both pathways offer opportunities to visit the lead schools.

All schools are invited to express their interest in joining the programme and benefit from this collaborative, evidence-informed approach to improving attendance and behaviour by [completing this form](#)

If you have any questions about RISE, eligibility or its impact on your school or area, contact [your regional director's office](#).

Kent and Medway hateful extremism event

The 2026 hateful extremism event in partnership with Kent Police, Kent and Medway Prevent Team and Counter Terrorism Police Southeast is now live.

Ticket bookings are open.

This online and in-person event will cover a range of relevant and high-profile speakers sharing their expertise and knowledge on the current landscape, issues we have seen throughout 2025, what we can learn, as well as the ongoing threat and risk. We are currently working on a fantastic agenda and will share that in due course.

Do share this with your colleagues and teams.

Numbers in person are limited to 130 and please note there will be a £50 charge for anyone who has booked a ticket but does not attend in person on the day without giving us 24 hours' notice. There is no limit to the online tickets. The teams link to dial in will be shared the week before the event.

Don't miss out - even bigger and better than the last four years!!

How to book:

[In-person booking](#)

[Online booking](#)



The Army Engagement Group
*/army_engagement_group

Chatham—Meet Your Army:

The Army Engagement Group

Hear about the opportunities that exist for young people in the Army and discover why it's been voted the UK's Top Apprenticeship Employer.

This in-person event offers a unique opportunity to engage with the Army and hear about the numerous opportunities that are available to young people in the Army, from the 100+ trades to apprenticeships and bursaries. Whether you're curious about the Army's role or considering a career, this event is perfect for you.

Learn about the Army's youth teams who can offer free, fun but practical activities to young people which aim to develop communication skills, foster teamwork, grow self-confidence and resilience.

How to book:

[Book your place through Eventbrite](#)

Focus on Early Years

Strengthening inclusive practice in early years: why professional conversations matter

Creating strong, inclusive early years provision is key to giving every child the best start. Inclusive practice isn't just about meeting statutory requirements - it's about building environments where all children feel valued, supported and able to thrive.

Schools offering a nursery provision have a unique opportunity to shape inclusive practice early on. Every registered early years provider in Kent, including those within a mainstream school, has an allocated Early Years Quality Advisor, provided by The Education People's Early Years and Childcare Service. By engaging with your allocated Early Years Quality Advisor, you can:

- Reflect on current practice and identify areas for development.
- Access expert guidance tailored to your setting.

Explore practical strategies for supporting children with SEND and diverse needs. These professional conversations are collaborative discussions that help you strengthen provision and share best practice. If you have not yet taken advantage of a professional conversation with your allocated advisor, get in touch by emailing eycquality@theeducationpeople.org.

Starting strong for early years children in Kent

Starting-Strong a guidance document designed to support all early years providers in developing their Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP).

The starting strong guidance refers to the range of experiences, opportunities and strategies ordinarily offered as part of high-quality teaching for all young children. It sets out clear expectations that aim to ensure inclusive provision across the early years sector, which is of a consistently high standard. Our goal for all babies and young children in Kent is to give them the best start in life by supporting them with highly effective, inclusive early years provision to:

- Ensure learning experiences nurture children's holistic development.
- Build a strong foundation for later learning and for life.
- Prepare children for their future educational journey.

This document describes a way of working that will give every child the best chance to succeed. It will support early years practitioners to understand what helps each individual child and to identify any additional needs as soon as possible.

This guidance is underpinned by key legislation, including:

- The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)
- The SEND Code of Practice.



Supervised toothbrushing programme for three- to five-year-olds in targeted early years settings

KCC's supervised toothbrushing programme is supporting targeted early years settings, nurseries and pre-schools, in key areas of Kent who sign up to the programme to set up supervised toothbrushing.

Get in touch to see if you are eligible to be part of the programme: [complete the form](#)

If you have any questions, you can contact KCC's Supervised Toothbrushing Programme Team by emailing oralhealth@kent.gov.uk.



Young Cooks!

Young people are annually invited to take part in our Young Cooks cookery competition with the winners receiving a share of £600!

In addition, a finalist will be selected for a whole days work experience at The Dog at Wingham, cooking at a showcase lunch for specially invited VIP guests.

Other entrants have the opportunity of being invited to attend a master class with Zoe Gill, food and business development chef for Brakes Foodservice, and Great British Bake-Off finalist Jane Beedle. Or a look behind the scenes in the Cook Kitchens.

This is not just a cooking competition but a way for children to develop an understanding of the importance of food, nutrition and budgeting.

This programme is a way to encourage children to try new things and develop a basic life skill and, for some, a future career choice.

We aren't just looking for the next Master Chef, we want all children to understand that being healthy and cooking is something they can all do.

For full details and to enter visit the [Young Cooks website](#)

Building confidence and connections in pupils' mental health and wellbeing

3rd February— A dynamic half-day conference designed to empower Senior Mental Health Leads across Kent.

You'll:

- Attend practical workshops packed with resources and strategies
- Network with fellow school leads
- Hear updates from local leaders on the mental health system
- Meet local services.

Primary schools - 9am to 12:30pm

Secondary schools - 1pm to 4:30pm

This conference is aimed at Senior Mental Health Leads in Kent state-funded schools (statutory age pupils).

Special Schools and Alternative Provisions can attend the session of their choice.

Please [see the poster for further information](#)

Building Confidence and Connections in pupils' mental health and wellbeing conference

3rd February 2026

For the Senior Mental Health leads in Kent state funded schools with pupils of statutory age

Maidstone
9am-12.30pm Primary
1-4.30pm Secondary

You will

- attend workshops to get practical information and resources
- network with other school leads
- hear updates from local leaders about the mental health system
- meet local services in the marketplace

FREE to attend [Book your place with this link](#)

NHS
Kent and Medway



COMING SOON!



National Careers Week
NCW

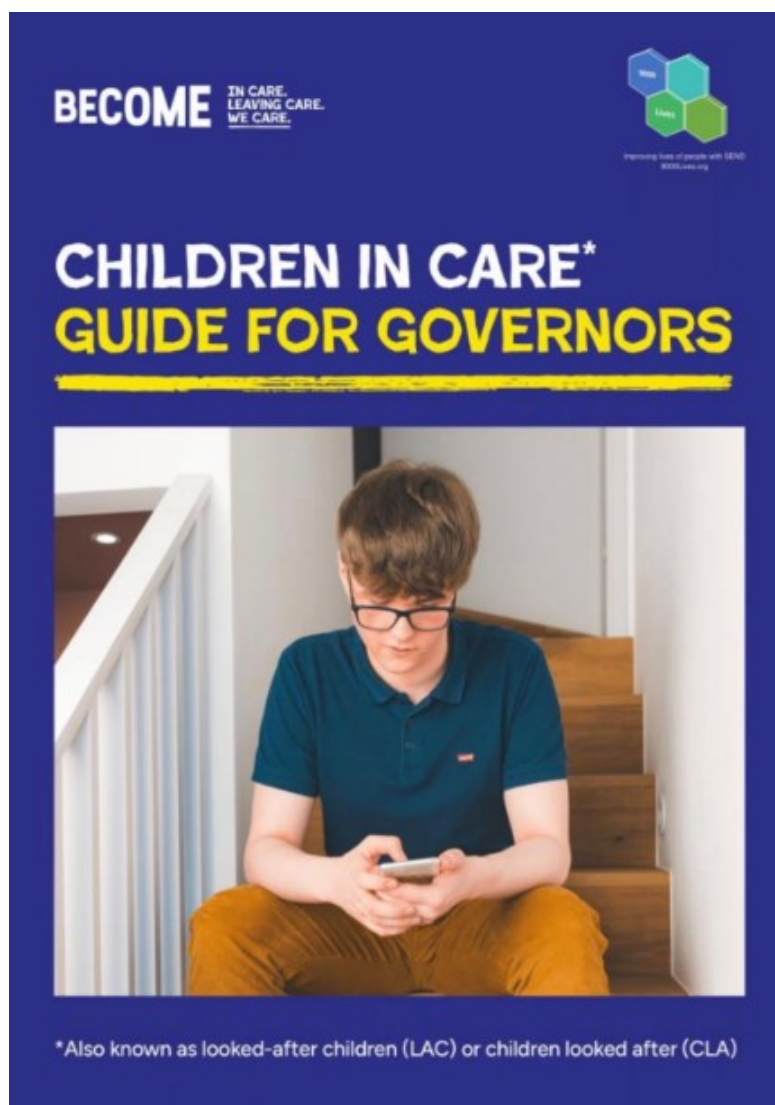
SAVE THE DATE
FOR #NCW2026

Support for Governors

Virtual schools link to DTs...who link to governors.

The more governors this reaches, the more lives of children we are able to transform.

This guide provides key information, practical questions to ask and links to the 2025 Ofsted toolkit.



Governors and trustees are a small but an important piece of the jigsaw puzzle. This gives them the relevant knowledge to do their job really well.

It's recommended by trusted organisations, including the DfE governance guide and National Governance Association (NGA) who said:

"An important and accessible document for all involved in school governance on how you and school leaders can have the vital conversations about children in care"

BECO Children in Care Guide for Governors

Gaming and Gambling Harm Awareness session



Free introductory session about gaming and gambling harms.

Medway and Swale Health Care Partnership, in partnership with [Ygam](#), a national charity that aims to safeguard children against gaming and gambling harms are inviting professionals to a gaming and gambling harm awareness workshop .

The collaboration is part of the self-harm programme workstream, which drew on engagement with children, young people, the public and professionals highlighted the impact of excessive participation in addictive behaviours such as gaming, social media and gambling.

During the introductory workshop you will find out more about:

- How and why children and young people game and gamble
- The blurred lines between gaming and gambling
- How to spot the signs of harm
- Where to signpost for further support

Following this workshop, delegates and their teams can sign-up for accredited free City and Guilds certification and access to Ygam's online resources hub.

This insight session is aimed for Managers, Team Leaders from education, youth services, sports clubs, voluntary sector, faith sector and healthcare.

How to book:

[Register for free by completing this form](#)

This guide and toolkit was initially developed by the Virtual School Kent and the Kent Educational Psychology Service. Its aim is to support schools in their understanding of the importance of promoting relational approaches to create a sense of connection, school belonging and with trauma informed practices supporting all vulnerable children, particularly those who may struggle to attend school.

Relational Approaches to support School Belonging and Attendance: A Guide and Toolkit

Kent County Council
April 2025



[Click here](#)

We'd love to hear from you!



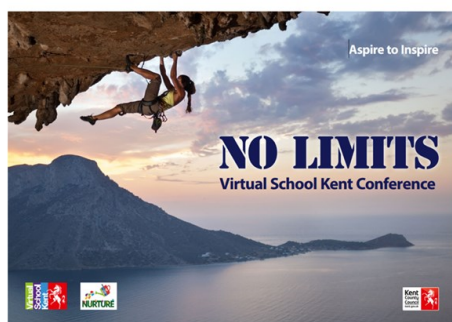
How have VSK supported you or your team recently? Please take a moment to let us know by clicking the link below:

[Feedback Form: Share how VSK supported you](#)



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

22.01.26	County Wide Designated Teacher Update 8am, 12pm and 15:45pm online Book here: VSK - Designated Teacher Briefing - 22 January 2026 - Term 3 – Fill in form
11.03.26	North Kent Designated Teacher Update 13:30 @ Riverside Community Centre Book here: VSK - Designated Teacher 11th March 2026 Term 4 – Fill in form
12.03.26	West Kent Designated Teacher Update 1pm @ Homewood School Book here: VSK WK Designated Teacher Update 12/03/2026 – Fill in form
20.03.26	Kent Designated Teacher Network Update @ Riverside Church, Whitstable
30.04.26	East Kent Designated Teacher Forum @ Venue TBC in Thanet Book here: East Kent Designated Teachers Forum - Booking Form 30th April 2026
12.05.26	County Wide Designated Teacher Update 12:30 & 15:45 Online Book here: Countywide Virtual Designated Teacher Updates – Fill in form
13.05.26	County Wide Designated Teacher Update 8:00 Online Book here: Countywide Virtual Designated Teacher Updates – Fill in form
30.06.26	East Kent Designated Teacher Forum 13:30 @ Whitstable Youth Hub Book here: East Kent Designated Teachers Forum - Booking Form 30th June 2026
01.07.26	North Kent Designated Teacher Update 13:30 @ Book here: North Team - Virtual DT briefing - 01 July 2026 -Term 6 – Fill in form
02.07.26	West Kent Designated Teacher Induction 13:00 Online Book here: Countywide Virtual Designated Teacher Updates – Fill in form
07.07.26	South Kent Designated Teacher Update / Induction 13:30 @ Smile Centre Whitfield Primary Book here: South Kent Designated Teachers Forum - Booking Form Tuesday 7th July 2026 – Fill out form



SAVE THE DATE
Wednesday
7th October
2026
10am til 2pm

DETUNG SHOWGROUND
GUEST SPEAKER: ALFIE WATTS –
Winner of Race Across the World
This event is for Designated
Teachers, Senior Leadership
Teams and the young people they
support



Who To Contact



North Kent Assistant Head: Jo Hayes - northvsk@kent.gov.uk

West Kent Assistant Head: Jen Kemp - westvsk@kent.gov.uk

South Kent Assistant Head: Carole Bailey - southvsk@kent.gov.uk

East Kent Assistant Head: Simon Fosse-Collins - eastvsk@kent.gov.uk

Advisory Team Assistant Head: Emma Wills - vskadvisoryteam@kent.gov.uk

Post 16 Assistant Head: Catherine Thompson - 16plusvirtualschoolskent@kent.gov.uk

Post 16 NEET Team Lead: Samantha Perrin - 16plusvirtualschoolskent@kent.gov.uk

Out of County Team Lead: Amanda Ormond - virtualsschoolkentocc@kent.gov.uk



Instagram [participation_team](#)



Facebook [VSK Participation Team](#)



X [@VirtSchl_Kent](#)



[Home | Virtual School Kent \(lea.kent.sch.uk\)](http://lea.kent.sch.uk)

<http://kentcarestown.lea.kent.sch.uk>