

Somerset Virtual School

NEWSLETTER TO SCHOOLS

SPRING TERM 2023

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SCHEDULED MEETINGS/TRAINING FOR SPRING 2023

DT network meetings

9.2.2023 2:00-4:30 Dillington

DT workshops

16.3.2023 2:00-4:00 virtual

Working with the Traumatized Child

27.2.23 (9.30-12.30) Dillington

6.3.23 (9.30-12.30) Dillington

13.3.23 (9.30-1.30) Dillington

Sensory Processing

6.2.23 Dillington

Attend Today, Achieve Tomorrow

Attendance Issues impacting our Vulnerable Learners.

A webinar 21.3.23 3.00 - 4.30

Happy New Year. Hopefully the spring term has got off to a good start for everyone.

The new year begins with some changes for our team. Following the Education and Inclusion Re-Design at the Local Authority which took place at the end of autumn term, the Virtual School in Somerset is now part of the Vulnerable Learners team, working alongside the new Area Inclusion Partnerships. We have learned lots from our close work with colleagues from the Learning Support Team, and will continue to link with them in our work supporting children and young people. The LST are now linked directly with Special educational needs.

The new Virtual School Head (VSH), is Julia Ridge as the strategic lead for this whole Vulnerable Learners area. Julia will be making contact with school groups over the coming weeks to introduce herself and her role, and the Area Inclusion Team. In the coming months the VS will be reviewing ways of working with all partners as we seize the opportunities presented by a re-design to streamline processes and refocus practice.

Our new team structure is provided for you in this newsletter. Some schools will notice a change in their linked Advisory Teacher for Children Looked After and we will be prioritising the Personal Education Planning meetings for our most vulnerable young people as we have in the past. However, we have planned our reorganisation to minimise changes for schools and our revised ways of working for the remainder of this academic year are set out for you overleaf.

We look forward to continuing our work with you and encourage you to contact us with any questions or queries. Your Advisory Teacher will always be happy to talk with you. If you are unsure who this is please email

thevirtualschool@somerset.gov.uk

To book places please visit the SSE website

[Support Services for Education](#) and search for the event



VIRTUAL SCHOOL STAFF (UPDATED JANUARY 2023)

Virtual School Head - Julia Ridge

Deputy - Helen Readman

Lead Advisory Teacher - Early Years - Lucy Herring

Early Years Support Worker - Lucy Tope

Lead Advisory Teachers - SSA - Claire Eastwood, Jackie Jones

Advisory Teachers - Cassie Jones, Julie Hunt, Louise Conway-Byron

Specialist Teacher - Graham Anderson

Learning Mentors - Ali Lewis, Catherine Steadman, Ella Kusiak, Kerry Ashworth, Polly Slade

Lead Advisory Teacher - Post 16 - Elizabeth Fox

Post 16 Education Officer - Gary Roper

Post 16 Tutor - Laura Parsons



GETTING IN TOUCH WITH THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL

If you are not sure who you need to contact about a particular CLA, please email

[**thevirtualschool@somerset.gov.uk**](mailto:thevirtualschool@somerset.gov.uk)

and your query will be directed to the right person. This mailbox is staffed year round although much of the advisory team works during school term time.

If you have a query about Previously Looked After Children, we have a dedicated mailbox for these questions [**PLACSomersetInclusion@somerset.gov.uk**](mailto:PLACSomersetInclusion@somerset.gov.uk)

The Virtual School website remains a source of information and provides links to a range of resources and guidance including support for completing PEPs, Education Plans for Previously Looked After Chil-

WORKING TOGETHER January 2023

What Education Providers can ask of Somerset Virtual School

That we will:

- Be available for support and guidance during term-time in relation to the education of Children Looked After and Previously Looked After Children
- Staff email mailboxes (CLA/PLAC/Post 16) to receive and forward queries and requests
- Acknowledge queries within 2 working days
- Focus time and resources on those Children and Young People (CYP) who are
 - Without education provision
 - At risk of Permanent Exclusion
 - Attending RI or Inadequate schools
 - Persistently Absent
 - New into care
 - Facing Transition
- Not routinely attend all Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings for SSA CLA but provide advice and guidance if requested to support the process to ensure a quality PEP is in place for every Somerset CLA
- Provide advice and guidance to support the effective use of Pupil Premium+ and the Vulnerable Learners' 16-19 Bursary
- QA all PEPs providing support and guidance to improve the production and quality of all plans
- Provide a named contact for each Somerset CLA
- Offer a comprehensive training package outlined via the Virtual School website and termly newsletters
- Encourage the early identification of obstacles to progress and help schools manage provision of support to overcome these
- Challenge and advocate on behalf of CYP to support progression and achievement of the best possible education outcomes
- Offer scheduled support to Designated Teachers through a programme of Workshop and Network meetings
- Signpost to other services, opportunities, and agencies as appropriate
- Work in a multi-agency way that secures co-ordinated approaches to complex situations for CYP
- Provide support from our Learning Mentor team for CLA meeting specific criteria
- Maintain and update the Virtual School website as a platform for information

What the Virtual School asks of education providers

- ***A named Designated Teacher (DT) – or CLA lead in post 16 settings - who is fully aware of and leading on the [statutory elements of the role in their school](#)***
- Support for colleagues to understand the needs of CLA and look towards trauma informed and attachment aware, relational practice to meet these
- Up to date contact details for the DT/CLA lead
- Awareness of the Advisory Teacher linked to the CLA in the school/setting
- Focus on raising the profile of and championing the CLA cohort within the school/setting
- Attendance at DT workshops, or network meetings each term
- Awareness of training available for DTs
- Effective engagement with the SENCo and other key school staff to secure access to successful learning
- Effective preparation for PEP meetings
- Combination of the PEP meeting and the annual review meeting for those CLA with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
- Engagement with the Welfare Call (WFC) platform to monitor and interact with the PEP document between meetings
- Desire to produce a high-quality PEP for every CLA on role
- Attendance and chairing at PEP meetings and sharing of key information in relation to the reviewing and preparation of plans
- A focus on ensuring the pupil's voice is present in PEP meetings and the documents
- Commitment to making PEP targets SMART
- That where alternative provision has been agreed via the PEP that the appropriate checks have been conducted (see appendix 2 in the ePEP)
- Timely completion and submission (within 10 working days of the meeting) of the completed PEP
- Appropriate requests for PPG that takes account of the PPG policy, is outcome led and clearly linked to targets
- Timely communication with the VS, Children's Social Care and carers when there are issues or concerns or moments to celebrate

PERSONAL EDUCATION PLANS (PEPs) UPDATE - QUALITY ASSURANCE OF PLANS

We RAG rate all PEPs received and provide some detail behind the rating given. Our process was shared with schools in May 2021 but has been revised January 2023. Full details of the process and the RAG rating criteria can be found on the VS website www.somersetvirtualschool.co.uk

A copy of the completed RAG rating grid will be uploaded to the 'Documents' section of the ePEP accessed via the Welfare Call platform. Setting leads/DTs will receive notification of a message in the 'Notes' section of the ePEP when there is feedback in relation to the RAG rating.

Please feel able to talk to your advisory Teacher to develop your practice around PEP completion. If this would be helpful.

For details about all aspects of the ePEP including accessing funding please visit www.somersetvirtualschool.co.uk

ATTENDANCE MONITORING FOR SOMERSET CLA

We are sure you are aware of our need to carefully monitor and support the attendance of our Children looked After and, under the extension of duties remit, to also work with schools to improve the attendance of all children and young people with a social worker. From 25th April the attendance of all Somerset's Statutory School Age CLA has been collected by Welfare Call, the same organisation that manages our ePEP. This change is our attempt to ensure the attendance data collection and management makes as few demands on very busy education settings.

A letter went into all schools at the end of the spring term outlining this change and any implications for schools. You can find a copy of this letter here

[WFC Attendance monitoring intro letter.doc](#)

If you have any questions about our attendance monitoring please email thevirtualschool@somerset.gov.uk

Quick Checker

Quick Checker for Social, Emotional and Mental Health

There are concerns about the child or young person's:	Y/N
Ability to plan, attend, organise, regulate themselves and manage change.	
Level of hyper vigilance and their disproportionate 'fight, flight, freeze' response.	
Attendance at school.	
Maintaining healthy peer relationships and friendships.	
Behaviour at home that may not be seen at school.	
Engagement with the curriculum.	
Changes in demeanour and/or appearance.	
Unpredictability of behaviour with lack of obvious triggers.	
Low confidence and/or self-esteem.	
Failure to make anticipated progress across many areas of the curriculum.	



Somerset's Graduated Response Tool

Somerset's Graduated Response Tool guides users through how barriers to learning could be identified, and the strategies that might support children and young people with SEN in overcoming barriers.

In our work supporting CLA, PLAC and those children with a social worker, we have found the SEMH section of this document particularly useful. The SEMH quick checker for example offers a really effective way of scaffolding conversations with parents, carers and staff and considering needs and suitable next steps.

Within the revised ePEP we ask schools to focus more closely on the support mechanisms in place for CLA and refer to the Graduated Response tool in outlining what has already been put in place and what might be considered next. Do familiarise yourself with the framework which is available here:

[Graduated Response Tool](#)



SEMHSNAPSHOTS

Look out for our **SEMHSNAPSHOTS** being sent out to schools each term. If you do not appear to be receiving the Snapshot email, please check that we have your details on file by emailing thevirtualschool@somerset.gov.uk You can also use this email address to share any ideas you have for inclusion in future SEMHSNAPSHOTS, or any feedback about this developing resource. Links to all editions of the Snapshot are available on the resources page of our website in case you missed them **Resources – Somerset Virtual School**. Each edition has links to SEMHSNAPSHOTS resources, ideas and practical suggestions to help support vulnerable learners.

Don't forget the *SEMHSNAPSHOTS Toolkit for Schools* written by the Somerset Educational Psychology Service which has lots of useful strategies and approaches. **SEMHSNAPSHOTS Toolkit**

New Virtual School Training Offer to support SEMHSNAPSHOTS

We are offering an enhanced range of awareness raising and staff development opportunities linked to Social Emotional and Mental Health needs this academic year. Details of all available sessions, intended outcomes and audiences and the booking information is in the Virtual School & Learning Support Team offer which all schools received at the start of this academic year, but these are the sessions available to schools this year:

Understanding Trauma and Developing Trauma Awareness

How to be the rainbow in a vulnerable child's cloud
Roots to Shoots - Growing Trauma Informed Practice - Supporting the SEMHSNAPSHOTS Needs of Care experienced Young People - Secondary

Roots to Shoots - Growing Trauma Informed Practice - Supporting the SEMHSNAPSHOTS Needs of Care experienced Children - Primary

Pathways to positivity: Top tips to supporting vulnerable children with SEMHSNAPSHOTS in the Early Years and Yr 1.

Resilience: Having it, Losing it and Teaching it
Regulate, Relate, Reason

The Window of Tolerance – Understanding Trauma and Supporting Self-regulation

KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH YAMMER

Many of you will be familiar with Yammer as a collaboration tool that helps you connect with colleagues, start conversations, share knowledge, and build communities.

There is an Inclusion network you can join which may provide space for useful discussion or links to interesting articles etc. Once logged in you can ask questions, respond to those of others, post thoughts or suggestions or useful resources etc.

If you have not yet checked out Yammer, you can request an invitation to access this inclusion Network by clicking on the link below and following the single instruction.

<https://www.yammer.com/sendnetworkcollaboration/#/threads/company?type=general>



Southwest Universities Care: Exploring University for students in Year 10 and 11

14th and 22nd March 2023

A group of Southwest Universities are running an exciting Spring event. The event is designed to support young people explore their options, make plans for their next steps and experience a University Campus. The day ensures that young people have the opportunity to:

- Have a look around a university campus
- Meet care-experienced students currently studying at Uni in the Southwest – and ask them lots of questions!
- Experience subject taster sessions and learn what student life is really like
- Find out about all the support available to you as a care leaver at university
- Ask questions, have fun, and start considering your options!

The universities planning to attend includes The University of Bath, University of Bristol, Bournemouth University, UWE and the Royal Agricultural University, University of Exeter, and the University of Plymouth. If you would like more information or to nominate a care experienced year 10 or 11 to attend then please contact Elizabeth.fox@somerset.gov.uk