

Somerset's Virtual School



Somerset
Council

NEWSLETTER TO SCHOOLS

SUMMER TERM 2023

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SCHEDULED MEETINGS/TRAINING FOR SUMMER 2023

DT network meeting

25.5.23 2.00 - 4.30 - Dillington

DT workshop

27.6.23 Online 2.00 - 4.00

New to the role of Designated Teacher

23.5.23 9.00 - 4.00 - Dillington

Working with the Traumatized Child

NB This training requires attendance at all three sessions

15.6.23 9.30 - 12.30

22.6.23 9.30 - 12.30

29.6.23 9.30 - 12.30

We hope the summer term has started well for you all. It's always a busy one and 2023 is unlikely to be any different! Although the Council's organisation has changed during the Easter break, Somerset's Virtual School remains the same this term and details of who we are and how to get in touch can be found later in this newsletter.

You may remember that Pupil Premium for Children Looked After also known as Pupil Premium+ is paid into schools directly from the LA at three funding points in the school year. Completed PEPs approved by the Advisory Teacher team before these points mean funding reaches schools pretty swiftly but for those PEPs finalised after the payment deadline, PPG+ is not allocated until the next payment point, usually the following term.

We do ask that completed PEPs are submitted within 10 school days of the meeting taking place and our team then has 10 days to turn around the final document. There can be delays if PEPs are submitted incomplete or without sufficient detail. However, if the PEP is not approved ahead of the funding deadline, please be assured that once the Pupil Premium Funding has been agreed by the Advisory Teacher it will be paid to your school. The finalised PEP document is the record of that agreement and the amount of funding that has been approved.

Creating Accessible Learning with Trauma-Informed Classrooms

Here are some things to remember to make your classroom friendlier to care-experienced children:

- Adopted children may be anxious when dealing with new experiences or people. Inform parents of changes to routine in advance so they can help prepare the child.**
- Attachment-seeking behaviours are common in adopted children. Create regular slot each day for them to tell you one thing.**
- Adopted children often have difficulty regulating emotions. They might need extra support and environmental adjustments to help them to meet behavioural expectations and strengthen healthy relationships.**
- Avoid being punitive in your approach to discipline. Think of boundaries more as a way to help the child learn to trust that adults are competent.**

To book places please visit the SSE website

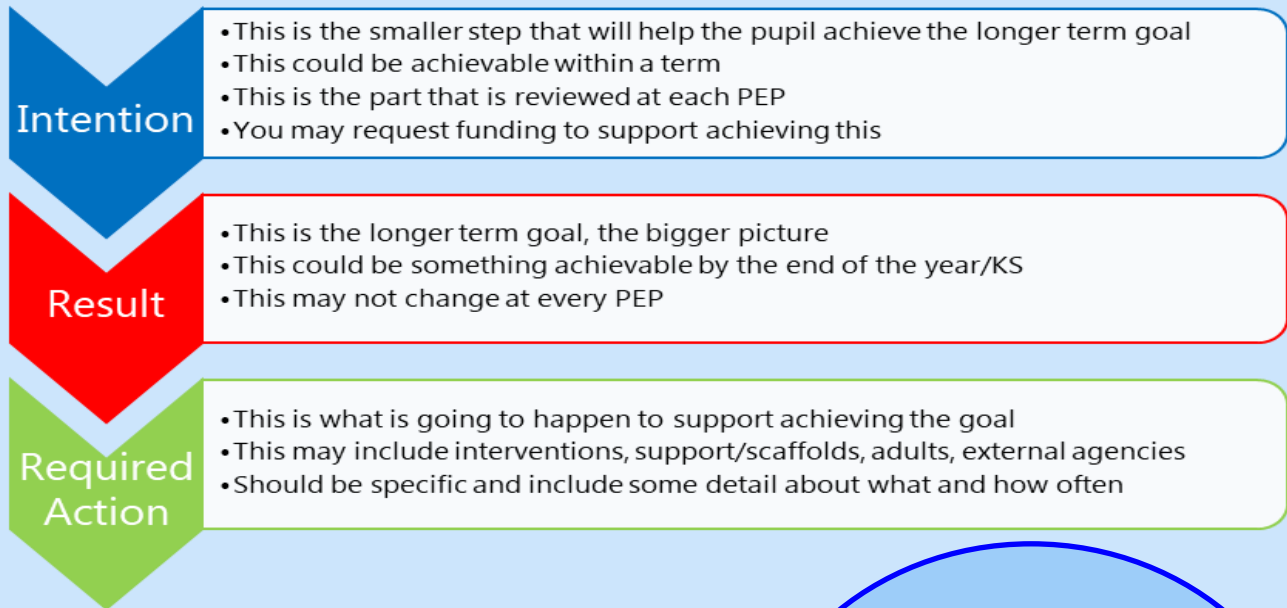
[Support Services for Education](#) and search for the event

thevirtualschool@somerset.gov.uk



SMART Targets and Producing High Quality Personal Education Plans

At the Spring DT Network Meeting we discussed SMART targets and what they should look like, if you weren't able to make it here is a snap-shot of the key information. We have also developed a help sheet with more information to support SMART Target writing which is available [here](#) and copied (very small!) below.



At the Spring DT network meeting—March 9th 2023, we worked through all the different aspects that ensure the production of a high quality PEP. A link to the presentation materials is [here](#). If you were unable to attend or would like to guidance with PEP completion, do have a look.

Target Setting –Creating Meaningful Targets in Personal Education Plans(PEPs)

Key components to agreeing a good PEP target

- Linked to the aspiration/longer term outcomes
- Places the YP at the heart of the process
- Written in the 1st person – person centered
- Shared with all key people involved with the CYP
- Written using the **SMART** model
- Based on agreed priorities

S Specific

M Measurable

A Attainable

R Relevant

T Time-Bound

Top Tips for the target setting process

- Do – give parents/carers time to consider and think about what they might want to say ahead of being invited to the meeting
- Do – expect the young person to contribute in a way that is appropriate but also meaningful at the PEP review
- Do - be prepared to re-think targets if they have not been achievable in the timeframe
- Do think about how staff can evidence and contribute to the review
- Don't – allow unachieved targets to be rolled forward for another term – make a change!
- Think – if the target was not achieved what needs to be different?
- Do come prepared with some ideas for targets based on what you know about the young person

e PEP Target setting language – What goes where, which words mean what?

Intention - What is the intended Outcome? (What do you want to achieve?)

This is the smaller step that will help the young person to achieve the bigger goal outlined in the Result. **This is where you set out the measurable bits that you will review in the next PEP**

Example

I can read the tricky words 'the', 'my' and 'said' by sight I can wait for my turn without hitting other players when I play snakes and ladders at lunchtime games club

Intention at is the Intended Outcome (What do you want to achieve?)

Intention category

Result - What is the target? (What, as a result of specific actions, will you see that is different and measurable?)

This is the big picture, achieving change that will address those barriers to success already in the classroom or the wider school environment and talked about in the meeting

Example

I am developing my word recognition skills so I can read blue books more fluently. I am developing my turn taking skills so I can join in with my peers at playtime.

Required Action - What are the planned strategies/support/interventions?(What needs to happen?)

Actions – what are all the planned strategies/support/interventions (what needs to happen). Specific activities detailed and possibly linked to Pupil Premium Grant expenditure

Example

2 x extra 15 minute reading intervention sessions with BD on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons this term

Invitation to Games Club every Wednesday lunchtime this term

One 30 minute ELSA session with Miss Gatsby each Friday this term



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

YOUTH FORUM

Last month Somerset Youth Forum looked at positive emotional health, what young people need to achieve this and what the barriers are.

Youth Forum gave some incredible responses, highlighting things that we would never have thought of, where potential gaps are in services.

Youth Forum is an excellent way for young people to get involved and make real change and have their voice heard in the matters that affect them and other young people in Somerset. It's also a great way to meet other young people, learn new skills and have a bit of fun at the same time.

We're always looking for new members, so if you know a young person that would like to join and have their voice heard, visit: <https://forms.office.com/e/BvRrsv2JG>



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](#)

The document and supporting information is now live and available on the Local Offer here:

[What to expect from education \(somerset.gov.uk\)](https://www.somerset.gov.uk/what-to-expect-from-education)





SEMHS SNAPSHOTS

Look out for our **SEMHS updates** 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 SEMHS Snapshots, 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 SEMHS resources, ideas and practical suggestions to help support vulnerable learners.

Don't forget the *SEMHS Toolkit for Schools* written by the Somerset Educational Psychology Service which has lots of useful strategies and approaches. **[SEMHS Toolkit](#)**

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>



Kinship Care

Online Groups

Wednesdays 8pm-9pm

3rd May, 17th May,
7th June & 21st June

In Person Groups

10am-12pm

Junction 24, Market
Way, North Petherton,
TA6 6DF

24th April, 12th June,
10th July

Lunchtime Groups

Online 12-1pm

6th May, 6th June,
11th July

Do you have any members of your school community who are Special Guardians? If so please let them know about the Kinship Team at Somerset Council.

The Team offers a range of support including both face to face and online groups.

To receive reminders and invitations to these groups please contact the Kinship Team

Kinship@somerset.gov.uk or call their duty line on 01823 358222.

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 Officers - Gary Roper, Chloe Davis

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