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Children with a social worker

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Virtual School extend the support by championing the education attendance, attainment and progress of children with a social worker or previously had a social worker. Virtual School's overall aim is to help produce better educational outcomes, and enhanced personal and social development so that these children have better life chances.

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Vision

At Virtual School, we aim to enable children with a social worker or previously had a social worker to overcome any barrier and become confident individuals, effective communicators, successful and responsible citizens and to achieve the educational and life outcomes that they deserve. Our commitment is to provide support to all professionals involved in the education of those children with a social worker in Blackpool to promote and create a high quality, inclusive and broad range of educational and social opportunities. **We dream big.**

Objectives

We understand that, although we can't work with individual children, we can make a difference by providing support and opportunities that can be used by educational settings and social workers. Our 3 main focuses shape how our support is formed. These are:

1. Make visible to educators the disadvantages children with a social worker experience
2. Promote Practices that support children's engagement in education
3. Improve outcomes and narrowing the attainment gap so every child can achieve their potential

Understanding the barriers

[The Review of Children in need](#) from the DfE showed children in need, on average have poorer outcomes at every stage of education than their peers. They start behind other children in the early years and have a widening attainment gap throughout school. They are also more likely than other children not to be in education, employment or training (NEET) after age 16. Key findings include:

- Children who have needed a social worker have poorer educational outcomes at every stage of education than those who have not, and taking account of other factors associated with attainment, are up to 50% less likely to achieve a strong pass in English and maths GCSEs.
- Children who are living at home with family on a child in need or child protection plan are just as likely to do poorly in education as looked after children.
- Beyond school, those who had needed a social worker in the year of GCSEs are less likely to enter higher education at age 18 and by age 21, half of these young people have still not achieved level 2 qualifications (GCSE or equivalent).

Our support

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Trauma informed training

Due to the increasing recognition of the prevalence and impact of trauma, Blackpool Council have created an opportunity for schools to become trauma informed. A team with a varied background have developed training that is offered in various tiers through staff CPD sessions.

Through participating in this training, staff will be equipped with new knowledge and skills which enable them to apply trauma and attachment aware strategies in school. For further information on the training, please email virtual.school@blackpool.gov.uk

Together programme

The programme offers a range of workshops led in schools as an extra-curricular club for both a child and their significant adult. The range of options schools may currently want to be involved with are:

- KS1 Reading Together
- KS2 Getting Active Together
- KS2/3 Cooking Together

Each workshop has a learning focus in which the child and adult work together to develop academic, social and relationship skills as well as sharing enjoyment through specific hands on learning experiences. The aim is to improve family's engagement into school learning. The Virtual School are committed to supporting schools to deliver these programmes by providing session plans, resources and/or funding towards the running of the club. For further information or to apply for one of the Together offers please email virtual.school@blackpool.gov.uk

Alternative Provision Scholarship

As part of our efforts to support schools to reduce the risk of NEET for children with a social worker or previously had a social worker, we are offering all Blackpool secondary schools part funding for vocational alternative provisions. It is important that schools chose the right setting for the pupil so if you and therefore place much be carefully chosen taking into account the pupil's learning needs, interests and abilities. For further information about this funding email: virtual.school@blackpool.gov.uk

Restorative Practice Training

Many schools are turning to restorative approaches also known as restorative practice to create a harmonious learning environment where pupils are able to self-regulate their own behaviour and learning. Restorative approaches have been found very effective in improving behaviour and learning in both a primary and secondary setting where implemented as a whole school approach.

Virtual School are working with Lancashire Police Restorative Justice Service to offer a 2 day schools training course. The next course is on **11th and 12th March**. If you are interested in attending this course, please contact virtual.school@blackpool.gov.uk. Further details regarding the course include:

- This course is directly linked with the Trauma Informed Schools that is offered through Blackpool Council and Better Start.
- The course focuses on providing structure for teachers, students to heal broken connections, express their feelings, rebuild relationships so they can move forward in a supported and positive way.
- Practitioners of the course will be taught strategies and given a structure to facilitate restorative conversations and meetings in a non-punitive way, giving a voice to both the 'victim and perpetrator'.
- It is designed to support children/young people (and adults) to build empathy, how to resolve issues, how to repair relationships and build skills to resolve issues in a better way in the future, reducing the chance of repeat incidents.
- The 2 day course is a mix of theory, strategies and role plays so practitioners are confident in using this method of restorative practice and understand how the methods make an impact for those involved.

- The train the trainer element is an 'after school' session for 2 hours and is offered to those who have completed the 2 day course and been a practitioner of Restorative Practice within their setting for about a term. This will give them that experience needed to lead a shorter inset/twilight/staff meeting on the key concepts of restorative practice

Vulnerable pupils information

Virtual school are committed to keep schools up to date with which pupils currently receive support from children's social services. Each half term school's DSLs will receive and email with information regarding pupils current support and who their allocated worker is.

If you would also like to be included in these emails, please message virtual.school@blackpool.gov.uk stating your school and the position you hold that setting.

Attendance support For Schools

Along with the vulnerable pupils information schools receive at the start of each half term, individual schools gets an updated attendance tracker for their setting. This tracker shows the attendance for children whilst they have been on a CP or CIN plan that academic year. Comparison data is also shared with the previous term and year's attendance for this cohort of young people.

The information should be used by schools to then to set aspirational targets for their setting and use appropriate support where needed. This data is updated half termly along with information from the 2022/23 academic year to be used as a comparison. If you have any questions regarding this or need navigating through the spreadsheet, please do not hesitate to contact virtual school via the email address virtual.school@blackpool.gov.uk

Attendance Support for Social Workers

Virtual School offer a weekly drop in service for all Social Workers every Friday morning to discuss concerns regarding individual children/young person's attendance. This may include:

- Persistent absence
- Falling attendance
- Pupil/ family disengagement in school activities
- Persistent lateness
- Student distress/phobias about school

Early intervention is so important to improve increasing / persistence absence and increasing suspensions so don't delay getting in touch at virtual.school@blackpool.gov.uk

Inclusion Clusters for Secondary Schools

Virtual School host half termly inclusion cluster meetings for secondary schools. Schools have the opportunity to:

- Discuss inclusion opportunities
- Share good practice
- Access CPD opportunities

If you would like to be included in these cluster meetings please contact virtual.school@blackpool.gov.uk

Aim High Primary Schools

Attendance support (AIM High) - Virtual School are working directly with the Education Psychologist Service and PWOs to deliver a bespoke attendance tool to identify key barriers to attendance for CP/CIN families.

If you would like to be part in any further interventions to support children with a social worker please get in touch with virtual.school@blackpool.gov.uk.

Further Training opportunities

Blackpool Virtual School work closely in developing training opportunities for school staff and social workers around safeguarding children, inclusive practices, attainment and the curriculum, SEN processes, interventions known to make the biggest impact for vulnerable children including children with a social worker. To access the range of training courses on offer visit [Blackpool's PSHE website](#).

Along side many of these courses are a range of resources for schools and social workers and planning support. To access these resources follow [this link](#) and click on the side toolbar on the PSHE website.

The Bridge

The Bridge Event is a termly online training event available to social workers, schools and other education services linked to Blackpool. Various 30 minute sessions are run throughout the day for professionals to access.

The next 'The Bridge' event is on **Tuesday 27th February**. Sessions will include:

- Life Story Work
- Safer Streets initiative from BFCCT
- Speech and Language Support
- Private Fostering
- Virtual School Support
- SEND Local Offer
- Early Help and Family Hubs

For more details or to book on any sessions please contact virtual.school@blackpool.gov.uk

Useful links

[Blackpool PSHE website](#) - Latest information about local training courses for schools.

[The Platform](#) - The Platform is a new service for 16 to 24 year olds to help them find a job, access training or education.

[FYI Directory](#) - Website designed to help you find local support services in the Blackpool area.

[SEN Graduated approach](#) - Webpages that provide support and resources to aid the process of meeting the individual needs of all children and young people with special educational needs.

[Safe 4 me](#) - The website provides educators, service providers and parents with information and resources to help educate, guide and support children and young people to keeping safe.

Additional information

[Blackpool Virtual School](#)

[What Works for Children with a Social Worker](#)

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