



Bury Virtual School for Children in Care

Governor Training: 22nd November 2021

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Tonight's Agenda

The educational context of children in care: attachment, trauma and typical barriers to learning

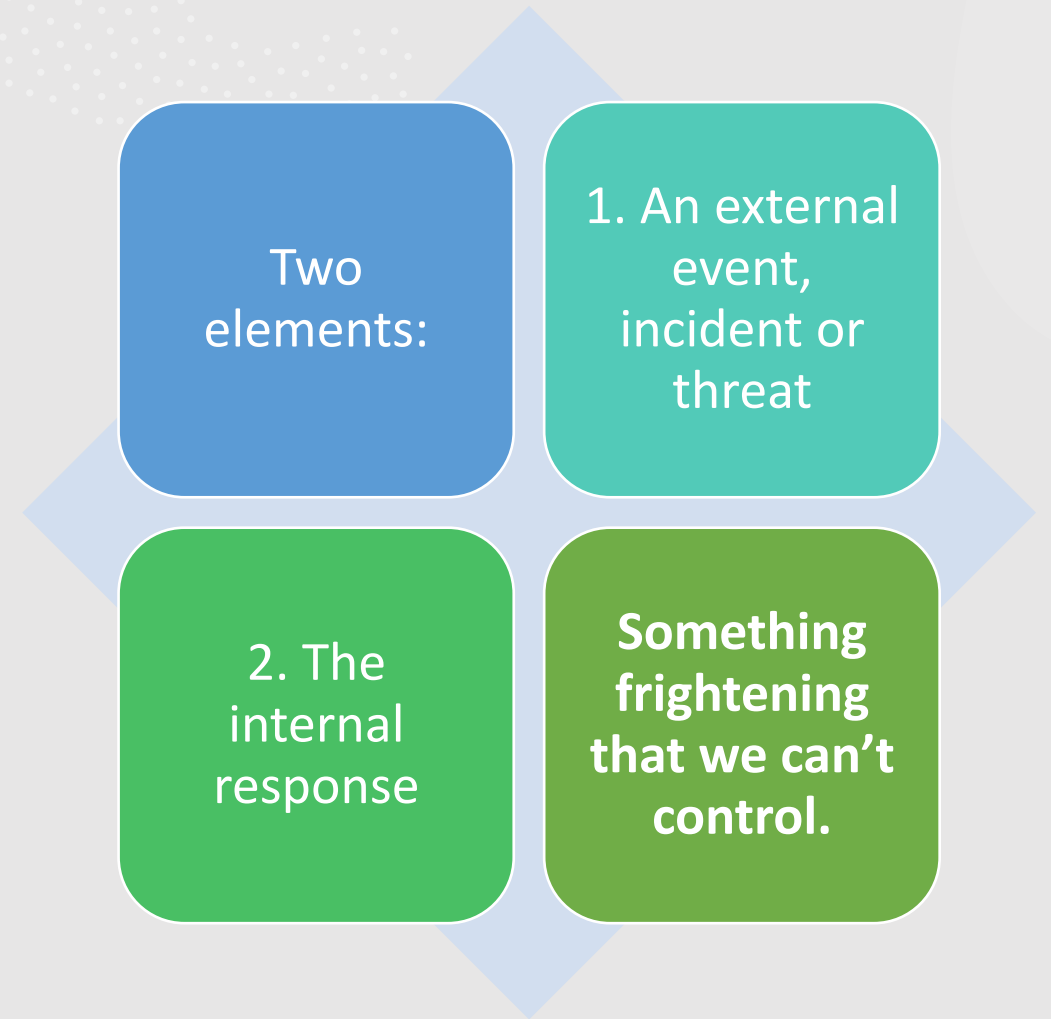
The national context: educational outcomes for children in care

Schools' statutory responsibilities towards children in care: the role of the Virtual School, Designated Teacher for looked after children and the Personal Education Plan (PEP) process

The Pupil Premium Grant for children in care: conditions of allocation, appropriate spending and monitoring the impact

The role of the Virtual School in supporting previously looked-after children and children with a social worker

What is trauma?



What causes trauma?

Abuse and neglect

Living with domestic abuse

Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

Separation from birth mother

Loss of a parent due to abandonment or acrimonious divorce

Multiple home/school moves

Being born prematurely

Poverty

A parent with mental health illness

A parent with addiction to alcohol or drugs

A parent who is/has been in prison

These are known as ACEs: **adverse childhood experiences.**

The impact of trauma...

Impacts on
relationships, self-
esteem and
behaviour

Replaces social
engagement with
defensive
behaviours

**Stops our capacity
to learn**

**Schools can make
trauma worse for
children**

As ACEs increase...

As the number of
ACEs increase, so
does the risk of:

Heart
attack/stroke

Cancer

Type 2 diabetes

COPD

Obesity

Asthma

IBS

Premature death

Childhood ACEs

**Relationship
between early
childhood
trauma and
health and
well-being
problems
later in life.**

Source: World Health
Organization

Death



Birth



Different scores: children

No ACEs:

97% have no learning problems

3 ACEs or more:

3 x as likely to experience academic failure

5 x as likely to have attendance problems

6 x as likely to have behavioural problems

4 ACEs or more:

Over 50% have learning problems

32 x more likely to have behaviour problems

The Bury context

We currently have 341 children in care. The vast majority are in care for the category abuse or neglect.

65 have an EHCP.

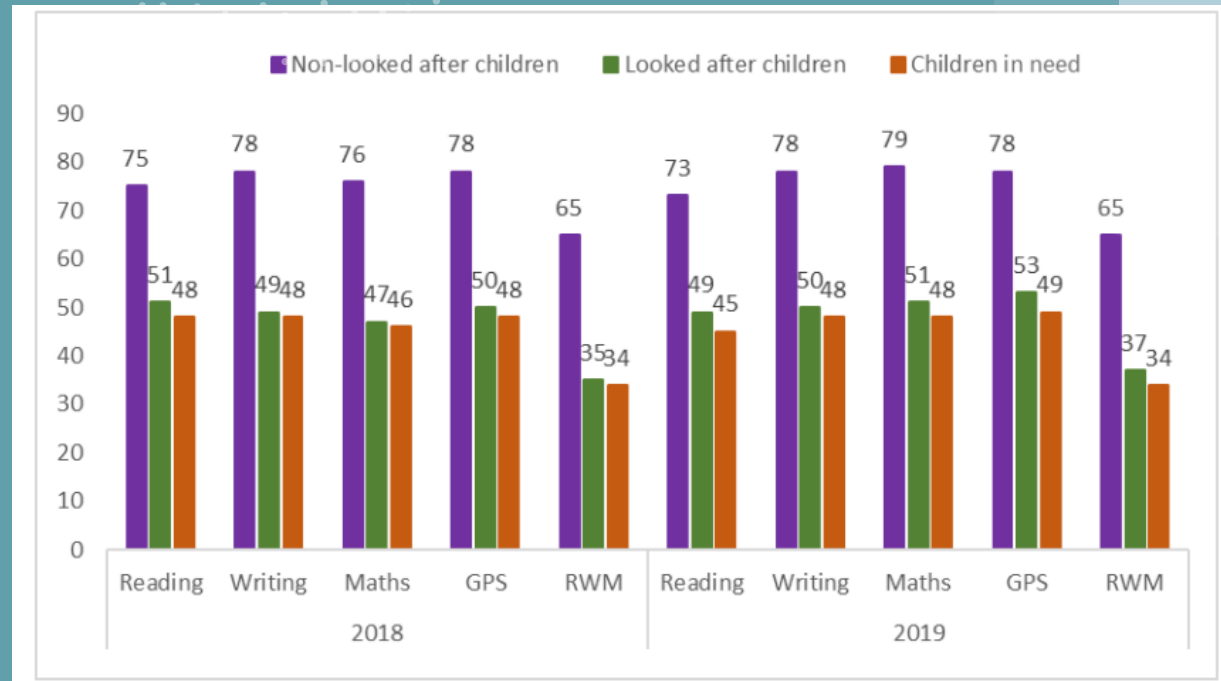
163 have been placed outside Bury.

They live in a mixture of foster placements (short or long-term), children's homes, semi-independent living, residential schools, family members or sometimes they are placed with their parents.

We have approximately 700 children on Child in Need or Child Protection Plans.

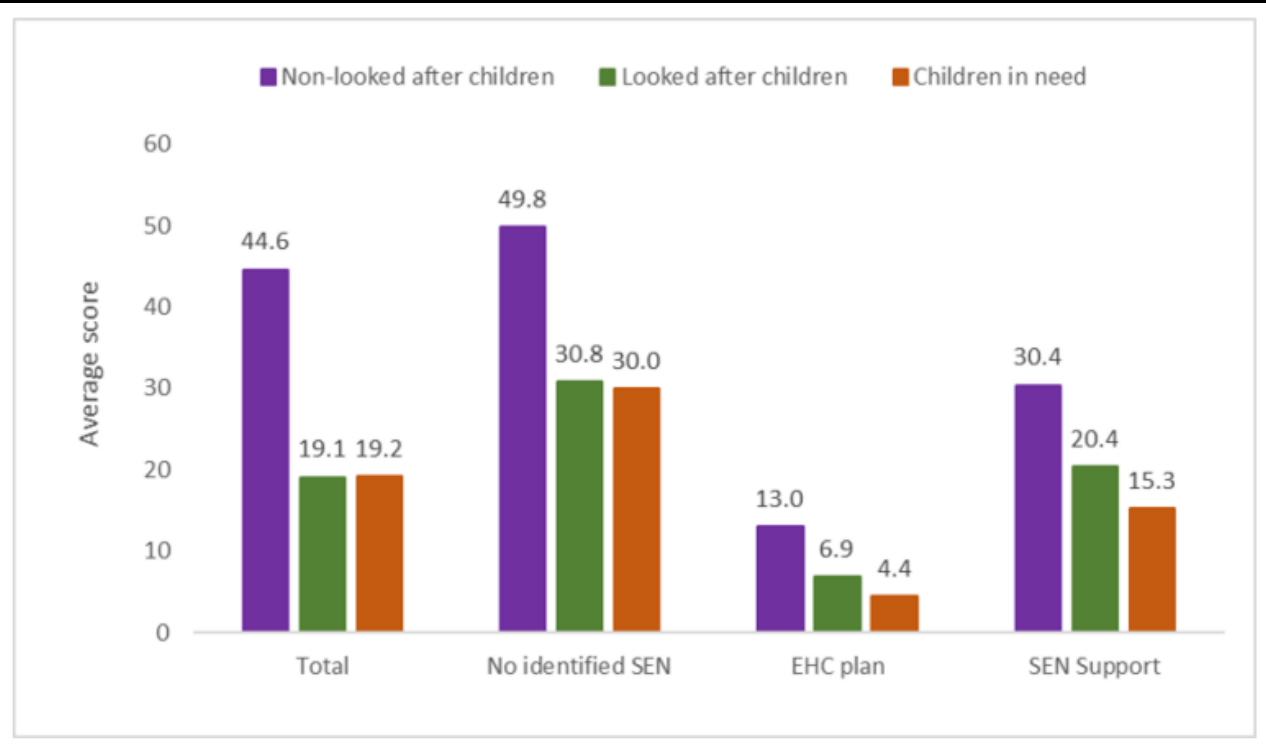
Outcomes for Children

- : PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN REACHING THE EXPECTED STANDARD AT KEY STAGE 2 ACROSS ALL SUBJECTS



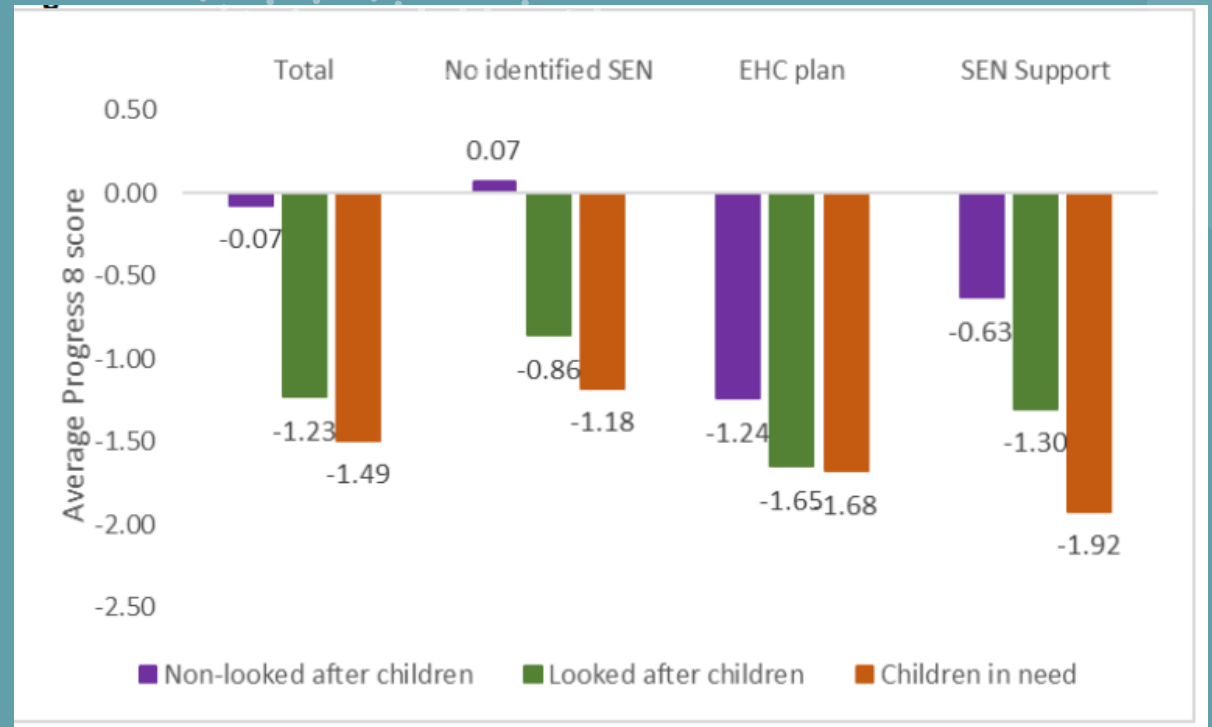
Outcomes for Children

- : 2019 ATTAINMENT 8 OUTCOMES



Outcomes for Children

- : 2019 PROGRESS 8 OUTCOMES



What is Attachment?

- This is a healthy attachment that develops in the first year of life.
- The baby has a need, communicates it and the need is met.
- The baby learns trust. It is able to calm down, feel regulated and feel safe.



Disturbed attachment

- In this cycle, the baby's needs are not met consistently.
- The baby then feels rage instead of trust.
- He begins to feel unsafe and cannot self-regulate as a result.
- Parents may say that their baby rarely cries; this is because the child has learnt that his needs won't be met, so he gives up.



Why does this matter for schools?

Insecure attachment causes permanent changes to the wiring in a baby's brain.



These changes can have **life-long effects** and certainly persist to secondary school age.



Children with insecure attachments present with significant emotional needs, which can manifest as challenging behaviours in the classroom.

Types of attachment

Secure attachment: children can build relationships, connect with the world around them and feel safe.

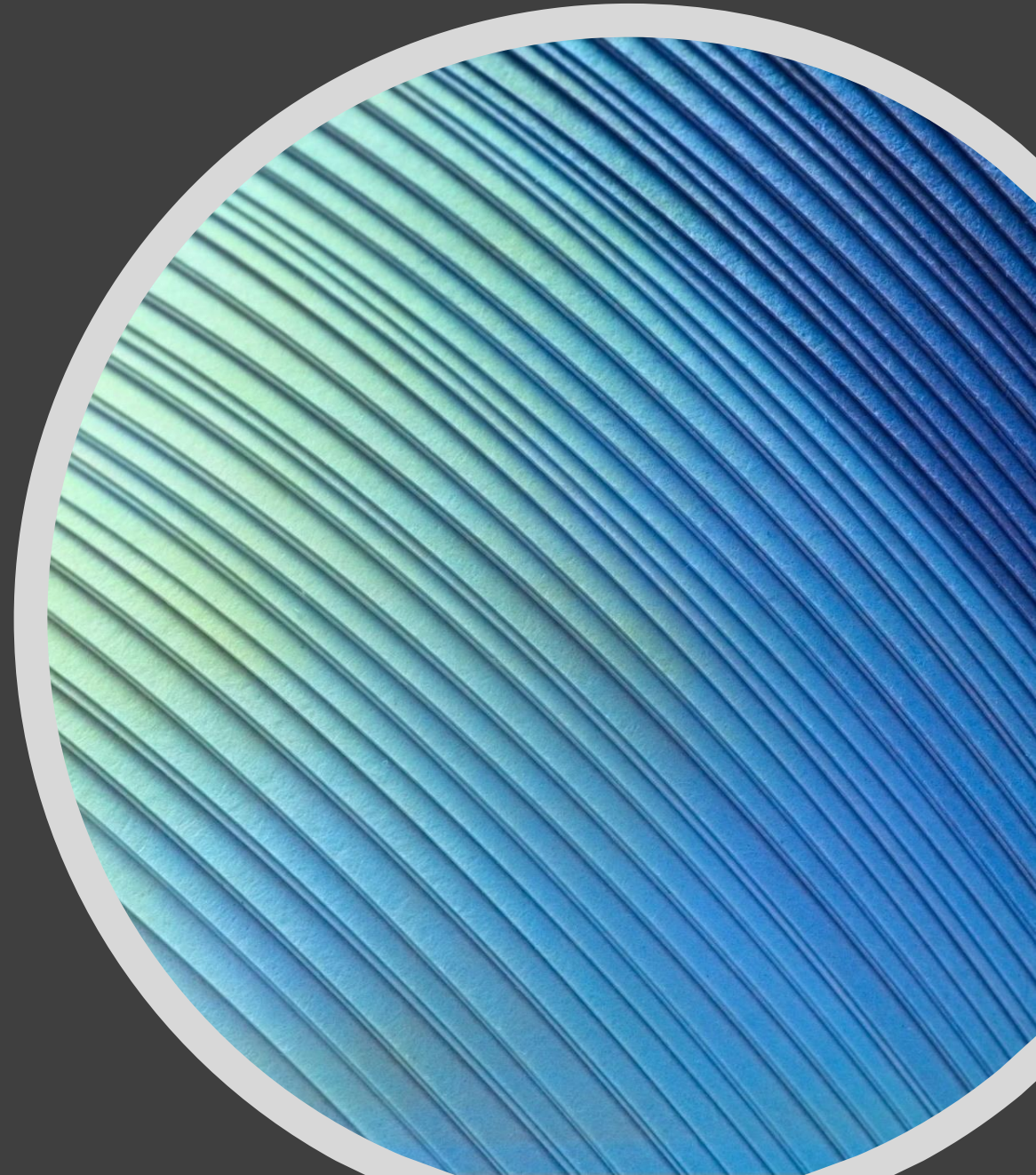
Avoidant attachment: these children have learnt that staying below the radar keeps them safe. They have learnt phrases to make you think they're OK, but they're really hurting and anxious.

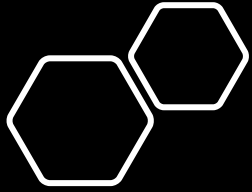
Types of attachment

Ambivalent attachment: this child is in your face, demanding constant attention. She can be charming and helpful but also aggressive and confrontational.

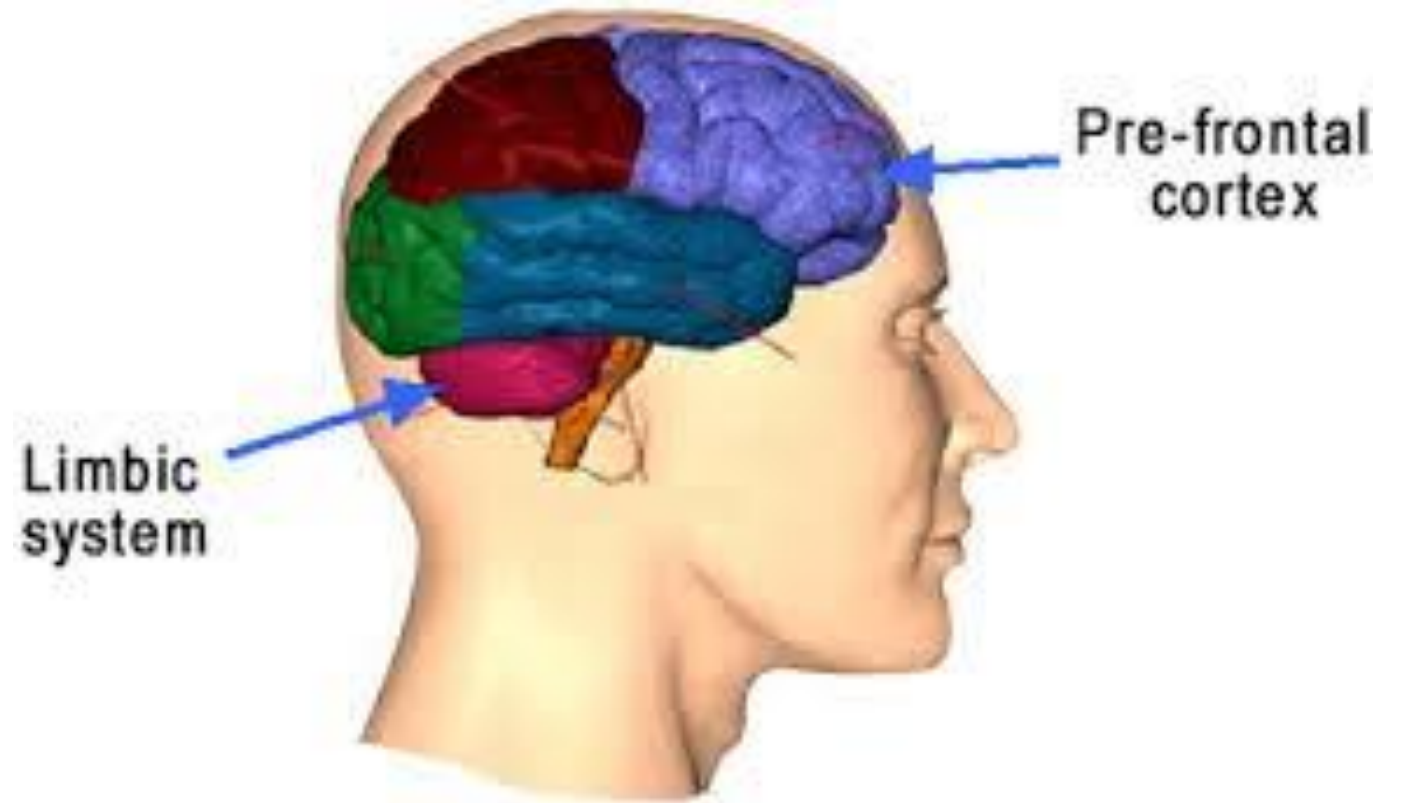
She will believe something is wrong if she is not being noticed by others, so she works very hard to be noticed – by any means possible.

Disorganised attachment: this child hasn't worked out a strategy to cope with his pain, so he flips in and out of needing you, not wanting you, then needing you again. He can be quiet and withdrawn, or attention seeking.





The impact of trauma on the brain



How does this manifest in school?

- **ACE brain trauma and insecure attachment affect....**
- Ability to concentrate: children are constantly on edge and are hyper-alert
- Impulse control: high levels of arousal due to high cortisol levels
- Emotional regulation: they don't have the self-help strategies to do this as they didn't form those neural connections properly as infants
- Lack of ability to reflect on their actions
- Inappropriate sexualised behaviour
- Poor memory and organisational difficulties
- Friendships
- **Ability to listen to the teacher and to learn**
- **The common feature of all mental ill-health is a failure of the top-down inhibitory functions in the frontal lobes.**

These may be children who...

Fly off the handle at the slightest provocation

Lie about their behaviour even when they know they will be found out

Act in an over-familiar way

Over-react to minor incidents – minor stresses become major emergencies

Tip chairs over

Swear at staff/storm out of the room

Struggle to make friends

Can't cope with change

Find it hard to describe their feelings

Don't pay attention or listen

Forget their books and equipment or don't do homework

Struggle to empathise with others

Steal

Hide behind their hair and totally withdraw

Don't respond to rewards or sanctions

There is good news!

Not all adults with high ACE scores or insecure attachments develop serious problems.

The common factor they have is one trusted, emotionally available adult before the age of 18.

What if they have several empathetic adults?

What if our school environments are as attachment-friendly as possible?

The role of the Virtual School

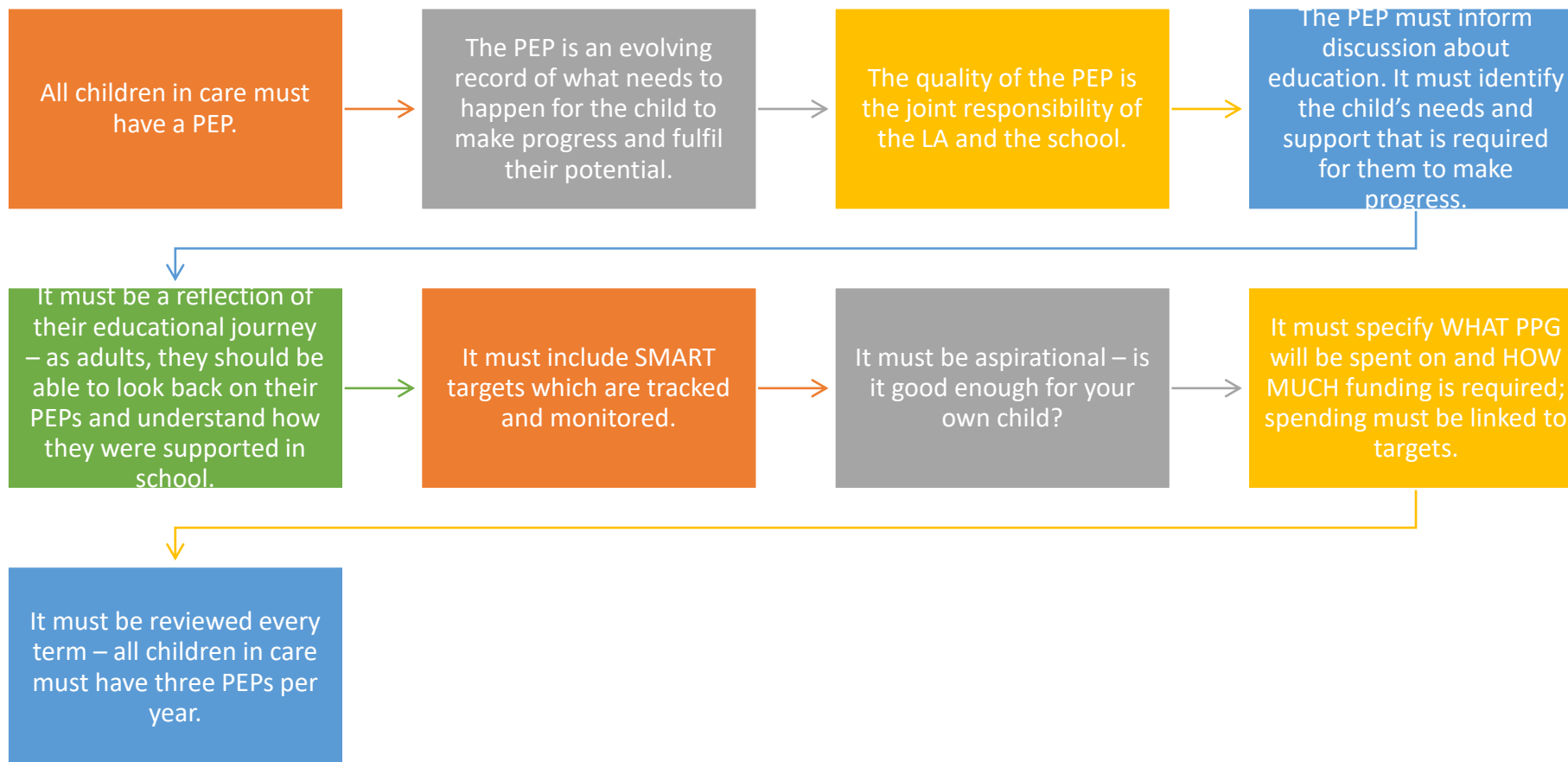
All children in care are part of the Virtual School – we are to treat them as if they are in one school, under the care of the Virtual Headteacher.

The Virtual School must work together with the schools the children are in to closely monitor attendance, attainment and progress and to ensure their needs are met.

The Virtual Head is responsible for spending the pupil premium plus grant (PPG) to benefit these children.

The VSH should be the advocate for these children that parents are for others – we are all corporate parents.

The Personal Education Plan (PEP)



The Designated Teacher

All maintained schools and academies must have a Designated Teacher who leads on educational provision for Children in Care and Previously Looked After Children.

This person must be appropriately trained and have sufficient time to carry out their duties.

It is highly recommended that the DT is on SLT.

The Designated Teacher

The DT must ensure that all staff have high aspirations for these children.

They must ensure PEPs are completed to a high quality, including a record of planned actions, the child's needs, targets, information on how progress will be monitored and details of specific interventions and support.

They should have an understanding of trauma and attachment.

They must ensure that school policies do not disadvantage children in care – eg “zero tolerance” behaviour policies.

They must ensure the wishes and feelings of children are taken into account – particularly via the PEP process.

They must ensure that children in care can take part in the full life of the school – for example, ensuring they can access trips.

PPG Funding

The DfE allocates £2345 per child in care to the Local Authority responsible for that child. This money is managed by the Virtual School Headteacher who must spend it for the benefit of the child's education.

Most Virtual Schools “top-slice” some of this funding which is used centrally, and allocate the rest to the school where the child is on roll.

Effective PPG Spending

Bury Virtual School will award up to £500 per term to schools on completion of a satisfactory PEP.

Targets must be SMART.
Spending must be costed and interventions linked to targets.

We are always here to advise schools of appropriate use of this funding.

Effective PPG spending

Approaches which
emphasise...

Relationship-building,
both with
appropriate adults
and peers

Increasing children's
understanding of
their own emotions
and identity

Positive
reinforcement

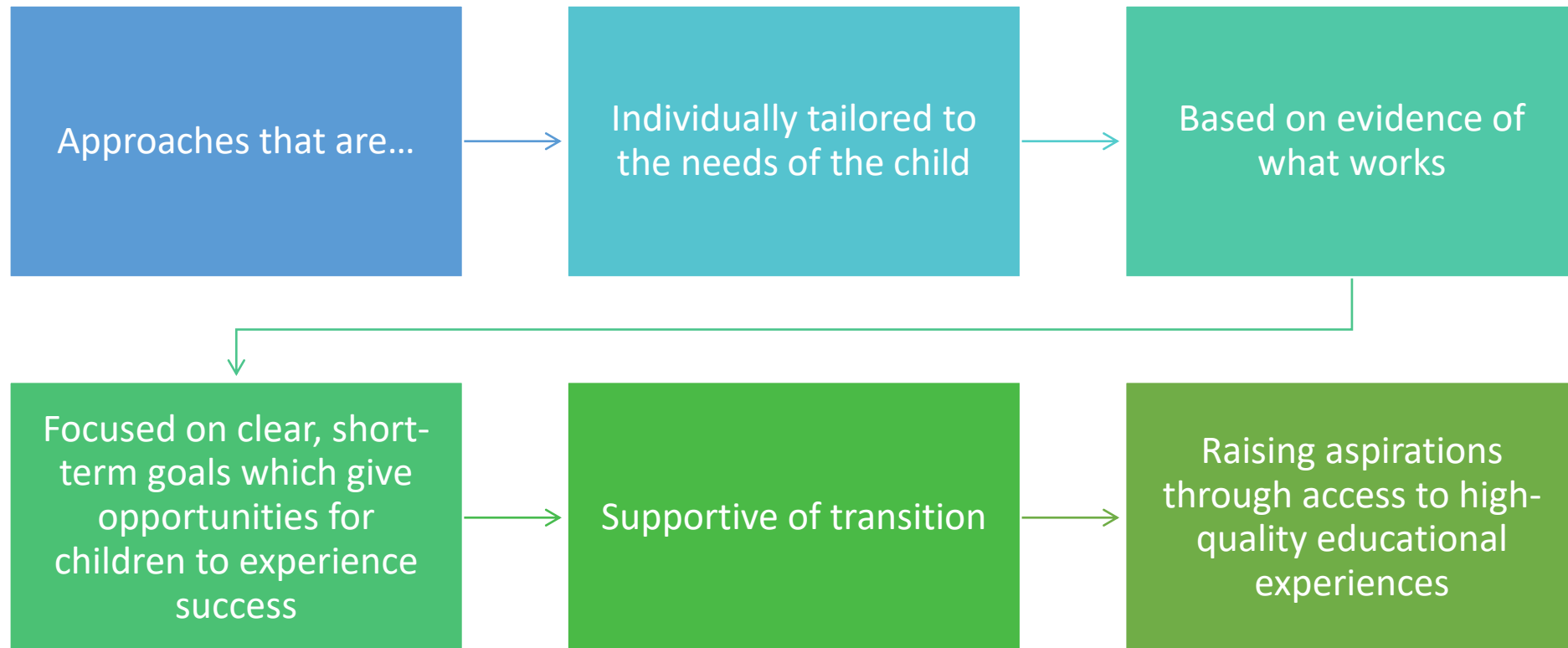
Building self-esteem

Relevance to the
learner – relate to
children's interests
where possible

A child-centred
approach

A joined-up approach
involving social
worker, school, carer
and Virtual School

Effective PPG spending



Spending Ideas

- Tuition: individual or small group
- Mental health support/counselling
- Music lessons
- Academic resources to stretch and challenge
- Laptop or other equipment
- Extra-curricular opportunities linked to a SMART target
- **But not:**
- Anything a parent would normally pay for, eg transport or uniform
- Anything in your standard offer to all children: this should be something extra to help close the gap
- Paying for hobbies not linked to the targets in the PEP.

Previously Looked After Children

- These are children who are no longer in care because one of the following has been granted:
- Adoption order
- Child Arrangements Order
- Special Guardianship Order
- These children also receive PPG funding, but the full £2345 is paid directly to their school.
- It is vital that their legal status is recorded on the school's census in order for the school to receive the funding!
- The role of the VS is to support, advise and guide schools and families in accessing appropriate support.

Extension to role: supporting children with a social worker

We know that at least 1.6 million children have had a social worker, the equivalent to 1 in 10 children or 3 children in every classroom. They fall behind their peers at every stage of their education, and poor outcomes persist even after social work involvement ends.

- Most commonly, children with a social worker **experience abuse and neglect, often due to domestic abuse and mental ill-health.**
- They are in 98% of state schools, are almost 3 times more likely to be persistently absent, 3 times as likely to **have SEN**, almost 4 times as likely to be **claiming FSM**, nearly 6 times **as likely to have both FSM and SEN**
- They are **25% - 50% less likely to achieve a strong pass in English and Maths** (even after accounting for other factors e.g. SEND)
- In 19/20, CIN had **average attainment 8 scores of just 21**, compared to 50 for all pupils.



2018: DfE Children in Need Review launches

- A manifesto commitment, the review includes new analysis of CSC and education data.
- A literature review and call for evidence.
- Visits to schools and LAs to understand why poor outcomes persist.

2019: DfE Children in Need Review concludes

- DfE commits to ensuring children are seen, safe and able to succeed so that all children can reach their potential.
- The Review highlights the leadership and impact that VSHs have had for looked-after and previously looked-after children.

2020: the pandemic closes schools

- Plans for a VSH pathfinder are paused.
- Children with a social worker are able to attend schools, but generally only a minority take up this offer. Since schools have reopened, attendance for children with a social worker remains below levels seen pre-pandemic and below that of their peers.
- The impact of the pandemic is likely to have disadvantaged children further, adding to education barriers identified in the Children in Need review.

Scope: Extending the role of Virtual School Heads

On Wednesday 16 June 2021 the Department for Education announced more than £16m to extend the role of Virtual School Heads from September 2021.

What is in scope of the extended Virtual School Head role

As strategic leaders who champion children with a social worker, Virtual School Heads should create a culture of high aspirations and drive improved outcomes. They will:

- ① **enhance partnerships between education settings and the local authority** so agencies can work together
- ② **identify the cohort's needs and intervene** to overcome barriers to poor educational outcomes and ensure pupils reach their potential
- ③ **support and advise key professionals** to help children make progress, including through increasing their confidence in using **evidence-based interventions**

What is not in scope of the extended Virtual School Head role

- Work with individual children and their families - including tracking and monitoring educational progress of individual children.
- Responding to requests from parents or carers to offer advice and support in relation to individual children with a social worker.
- Responsibility for children with Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) who do not require or need a social worker, as defined above.

Purpose: Aim of the Virtual School Head role extension

The Children in Need review saw how **effective support for these children relies on this cohort being seen and professionals being able to work together** to help them achieve.

From **September 2021**, Virtual School Heads will be able to use their knowledge and expertise to champion children with a social worker and address the barriers to good educational outcomes.

A

Make the disadvantage of children in need visible and strengthen relationships between education settings and local authorities to ensure all hold **high ambitions** for these children.

B

Promote **engagement in education**, including as a means of keeping children **safe**.

C

Level up outcomes and narrow the attainment gap so children reach their potential. Ensure **education recovery** activity reaches children in need.

Expectations for the Virtual School Head role extension are described in:

- The Grant Determination Letter
- Memorandum of Understanding
- Non-statutory guidance: Promoting the education of children with a social worker

We have appointed a research partner to learn about good practice and work with NAVSH and ADCS to encourage sharing ideas over 21-22.

Key activities: Promoting the education of children with a social worker

We expect that some activities will be critical to championing children with a social worker, but there will not be a single delivery model. We want Virtual School Heads to develop and share good practice to support one another.

1 Enhance partnerships with education settings



Work with education settings to encourage anyone supporting children with a social worker to hold high **aspirations** for this cohort of children.



Convene education and LA leaders to develop shared goals and set direction for improving outcomes, including **addressing links with other strategic priorities** e.g. working with Violence Reduction Units to tackle serious violence



Clarify VSH role and communicate offer of support to education settings and others in LA so everyone has clear expectations of the VSH and what help is available.

2 Identify needs and intervene



Use data and analysis to understand and monitor local trends in accordance with strategic priorities, e.g. safeguarding trends, attendance rates



Promote evidence and good practice that prioritises consistency, high support and high standards for children with a social worker, and recognises the importance of stability and strong information sharing.



Share knowledge and training to strengthen how education settings and social are understand the impact of adversity on education (newsletters, webinars and workshops)

3 Support and advise key professionals



Engage and support key professionals and local services including social workers and school staff to promote improved outcomes for children.



Advise on evidence-based interventions and strengthen links with research organisations to participate in work that will build a stronger evidence base for what works for children.



Encourage schools and social care to be creative and thoughtful in communicating with children and families, including taking account of children's wishes and feelings.



Making a difference:

What could this mean for social workers and/or those who work in a school?

The Children in Need review was a call to action to everyone who works with children with a social worker. Virtual School Heads will advocate for this cohort, making sure everyone has high aspirations for what they can achieve.

How will the extended Virtual School Head role make a difference to you?

- Virtual School Heads will be looking to enhance partnerships between schools and social care – that means **more communication and more opportunities to work together** on shared problems e.g. how to improve pupil attendance.
- For teachers and school leaders, social workers and managers, Virtual School Heads will be thinking about how best to **offer advice and support**. This might mean being at the end of the phone, making data, research and information available or providing training opportunities.
- Virtual School Heads will be **working with leaders** to help everyone understand how promoting the education of children with a social worker **links to other local priorities**, including helping keep children safe e.g. helping to access and make use of education recovery programmes like the National Tutoring Programme, or considering how to work across agencies to tackle serious youth violence.

Further Reading

- Books: any by Louise Bomber, Jarlath O'Brien
- The role of the Designated Teacher:
- [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683561/The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683561/The_designated_teacher_for_looked-after_and_previously_looked-after_children.pdf)
- What Works for Children with a social worker:
- https://whatworks-csc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/WWCSC_what_works_education_children_SWs_Feb_20.pdf
- Improving attainment of looked after children in primary school:
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-the-attainment-of-looked-after-children-in-primary-schools-guidance-for-schools>
- Improving attainment of looked after children in secondary school:
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-the-attainment-of-looked-after-children-in-secondary-schools-guidance-for-schools>

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