

# Warwickshire Virtual School

## Autumn 2023 Report

### Part 3, 2022-23

Summer 23 updates and 2022-23 Virtual School service delivery  
2022-23 CiC outcomes

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\* Warwickshire uses the term Children in Care in preference to the DfE term Looked-After Children, so the acronym CiC will be used throughout this report

## **1.1 Preface**

Warwickshire Virtual School Head's report is written in three parts, based on one part per school term, written retrospectively:

Part 1 – Spring term

Part 2 – Summer term

Part 3 – Autumn term

The report contains information on the work of the Virtual School, predominantly focussing on how it promotes the education of CiC. Unvalidated academic outcomes for CiC are reported in part 3; validated outcomes in part 1.

## **1.2 Current Context**

### Celebrating Success

The Virtual School prides itself on its solution focussed approach, working with service providers and stakeholders to promote the education of CiC, previously in care and children with a social worker (on an ever six model) as part of the extended duties.

Virtual School successes this year include:

- Seamless change in attendance collection and PEP (Personal Education Plan) recording. Timely training and support for school staff and other professionals ensured Warwickshire's 100% PEP review rate was maintained.
- Training and developing the Post 16 workforce. Warwickshire colleges and a Birmingham college have engaged in comprehensive training to improve and enhance their understanding of working with care experienced students.
- Supporting colleges to increase resources to build capacity and provide an improved level of support for CiC. This is a direct result of the Virtual School promoting their understanding via training.
- A group of eleven settings across Warwickshire have signed up to our RADY project (Raising Attainment of Disadvantaged Youngsters).
- Achieving and maintaining 100% PEP review rate at Post 16. CiC who are NEET (Not in Education, Employment, Training) have additional PEPs to ensure appropriate support.
- Strong partnership with Prospects career service enables CiC who are NEET to have personalised support.
- Resourcing and upskilling secondary settings to improve inclusivity. This work focusses on settings with the highest number of CiC and those issuing the highest number of suspensions.
- Widening the comprehensive, popular, and highly regarded training offer for settings. A partnership with AC Education has facilitated a series of webinars, which any education staff working with CiC, previously in care or with a social worker, can attend.
- Working with Equal Education to deliver the National Tutoring Programme to 40% of the CiC cohort.
- Further developing the university aspirations programme with partners from Think Higher. The programme continues to grow in popularity and has been extended to include Post 16 CiC with the aim of directly impacting post 18 choices.
- New partnerships to extend enrichment opportunities, key in promoting good SEMH (Social Emotional Mental Health), a prerequisite to academic success.

Performing Perfectly lead on arts and Think Active on sports, in conjunction with the West Midlands Children in Care Foundation.

- Key Stage Two outcomes are above the national cohort. Comprehensive work with primary settings, undertaken by Education Advisers, to ensure academic interventions complemented SEMH work.
- Monitoring visits to support designated teachers and improve their skills and capacity to advocate for CiC.
- Successful recruitment of an additional Enrichment Coordinator to facilitate more arts and sports opportunities.
- Successful recruitment of two Education Advisers to develop the service in response to the extended duties.
- Involvement in SEND transformation projects, to influence the educational journey of CiC.
- Exceptionally high level of challenge and support for settings who suspend, reduce the education offer or fail to promote higher outcomes. The team working directly with schools and settings are all qualified teachers and school leaders and they command high expectations and demand positive and inclusive responses.
- Focus on education picture at point of entry to care. Prompt conversations with key professionals ensure PEPs, PP+ (Pupil Premium Plus) and appropriate educational interventions are in place.

#### Understanding challenges

The Virtual School works with partners to reduce risk factors, but the biggest challenges this year have been:

- Difficulty identifying suitable education placements for CiC with EHCPs, particularly within Warwickshire, due to high demand for specialist education.
- Increasing number of UASC (Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children) and oversubscribed college courses.
- Attendance, particularly Key Stage 4. Warwickshire's CiC absence rate has again risen, with 30% CiC being classed as persistent absentees and for CiC in their final year of school, an alarming 57% were persistently absent, significantly impacting on their achievement.
- Use of suspension as a sanction continues to increase and there was one permanent exclusion the Virtual School were unable to convince the school to rescind.
- The EYFS cohort struggled with their first year in school, with most being unable to achieve many of the Early Learning Goals within the Early Years curriculum. For the first time, there were several suspensions within this cohort and all except four experienced placement moves, impacting on their ability to settle and focus on academic milestones.

#### Ongoing projects and service delivery

- Challenge and support for WCC services regarding how CiC and CWSW are supported and prioritised in our systems.
- Working within Education Services teams and leadership to facilitate identifying SEND provision more quickly.
- Escalation process for CiC to identify intervention where attendance is causing concern.

- Specific focus on the attendance of the extended cohort with Warwickshire Attendance Service.
- Research into improving the attendance of children with a social worker in Warwickshire secondary schools on behalf of the Virtual School has begun. This work largely started in the summer and will finish in the spring term 2024, with the intention of providing evidence-based solutions to support all our schools.
- Warwickshire is leading on establishing a Virtual School Deputies' Network to grow expertise, promote future leaders and develop Virtual School policy and practice.
- With a focus on bringing together designated teachers and safeguarding leads, the training event 'Understanding Children with a Social Worker' has proved overwhelmingly popular, and the final performances are taking place over the coming months.
- Transition planning as always, was a key aspect of Virtual School work in the summer term.

## **ATTAINMENT OF CHILDREN IN CARE**

*NB All data is provisional and unvalidated. Validated data will be in the Spring 24 report.*

### **2.1 Early Years Foundation Stage**

*Table A1, 2*

2022-23 outcome: 21.7%

5 out of 23 achieved a Good Level of Development (GLD)

17% were not CiC at the end of term.

### **2.2 Year One Phonics**

*Table A3,4*

2022-23 outcome: 42%

8 out of 19 achieved the expected standard in the phonics test.

This is particularly positive: at the end of 21-22, the end of the EYFS, only 22% were working at the expected standard, so 78% started Year 1 working below the expected standard.

### **2.2 Key Stage One**

*Table A5,6*

2022-23 outcome: 26.1%

6 out of 23 achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and maths.

There are no recorded EYFS outcomes for this cohort (Covid).

9% were not CiC at the end of term.

### **2.3 Key Stage Two**

*Table A7,8*

2022-23 outcome: 46.4%

13 out of 28 achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and maths.

This is particularly pleasing as it is 10% higher than the national cohort.

### **2.4 Key Stage Four**

*Table A9,10,11,12*

2022-23 outcomes: 11% achieved a standard pass in the basics.

17% achieved a standard pass in English (grade 4 and above)  
6.5% achieved a strong pass in English (grade 5 and above)

22% achieved a standard pass in maths (grade 4 and above)  
4.3% achieved a strong pass in maths (grade 5 and above)

7% were not CiC at the end of term.

## **2.5 Post 16**

*Table A13*

There were 154 CiC in the Post 16 cohort at the end of the summer term. Half of the cohort entered care in the past two years, 30% within the last twelve months; 20% were NEET on entry to care.

Most of the cohort, 72%, were in Education, Employment or Training (EET), with 28% NEET. Over one third of the NEETs had college places secured for September 2023.

Of the 154, 85% sustained their EET status across the year, 5% higher than the national cohort.

The Virtual School continues to focus on supporting colleges to improve retention rates for CiC. Unless starting college courses in the first half of the Autumn term, it is more difficult to remain in a positive destination. Most courses run to an academic year with just one entry point. Provisions such as the Prince's Trust are great for developing employability skills and supporting re-engagement, but are short term only, leaving large parts of the academic year with limited options. Working with Prospects and other careers advisers is crucial in such instances. The Virtual School promotes and prompts early identification and referral to the Prospects service.

## **3.1 Cohort overview**

*Table B1,2*

Cohorts vary from month to month, but the Virtual School work with each CiC equitably, regardless of their length of time in care. Some CiC require much Virtual School resource, the impact of which is not necessarily captured via nationally reported measures.

Prompt and comprehensive actions are taken by the Virtual School when a child enters care. Transitions out of care are determined according to individual needs.

Cohort info for 2022-23

Preschool: 98 CiC in total; 17 new to care; 28 left care

Statutory school age: 603 CiC in total; 142 new to care; 89 left care

Post 16: 295 CiC in total; 63 new to care; 140 left care

## **3.2 SEND**

*Table B3,4,5,6*

Many children enter care with unmet and unidentified Special Educational Needs. The Virtual School works with partners to ensure prompt identification of needs and ensure appropriate support is in place. The impact of SEMH needs is particularly significant with CiC: achievement at the end of one Key Stage does not correspond with

achievement at the end of the next where SEMH needs are high or have increased. The Virtual School supports educational settings to determine and address SEMH needs, whilst ensuring resulting strong focus on academic progress. At times, CiC must move to specialist settings as their level of SEMH needs increase. Where SEMH needs are the most significant area of need, academic achievement is often consequently very low. Levels of attendance and the use of suspensions also significantly impact on CiC with such needs.

Levels of CiC with identified SEND are significantly higher than the levels for all children; this is in turn reflected in their levels of academic achievement.

Statutory school age CiC with recorded SEND 2022-23 increased by 3.8% to 24.1%, 11% higher than for the whole of Warwickshire.

Statutory school age CiC with EHCPs 2022-23 increased by 2% to 30.3%, 26% higher than the rate for all children in Warwickshire.

All EHCP provision is the responsibility of the SEND services where the young person resides. However, the Virtual School works closely with all professionals to ensure termly PEPs track and support EHCP targets.

### **3.3 Enrichment**

*Table C1,2*

A visit to the West End and a theatre day made up the arts enrichment offer. Key Stages 4 and 5 were invited on a day trip to watch the multi-award-winning musical Hamilton. A workshop afterwards included a competitive timed costume change for the cast members and an insight into the many careers that are related to theatre. Hosted by Women and Theatre, Years 5-9 had a day of creativity to help develop skills, have fun, and make new friends.

The high-quality university programme continued. Year 7 celebrated their final sessions at the Thinktank, Birmingham. The interactive science museum offered a huge scope of activities and exhibits, and the cohort took part in a Forensics Workshop and an Energy Show. For Year 8, the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences put on a Sports Science session which raised the debate 'What is Physical Fitness and how do we measure it?' For the last session everyone was entertained by the 'Comedy at Work' team allowing the cohort to get involved in confidence boosting workshops. Year 9's penultimate session was Disaster and Emergency Management delivered by a specialist academic. The final celebration session was hosted at the Warwick University Sports Hall, with everyone playing a variety of sports and afterwards receiving goody bags, which are always a winner!

For the UNlty cohorts, the last two masterclasses of the year were Fashion and Cyber Security/Ethical Hacking at Coventry University. The year concluded with a two-night residential in Scarborough which included paddle boarding, a boat cruise and a visit to the Sea Life Centre, as well as visiting Scarborough University to participate in masterclasses.

In addition, all cohorts had the opportunity to attend a two-night residential at Whitemoor Lakes, an outdoor activity centre. There were over 20 different indoor and outdoor activities with plenty of opportunities to learn new skills, conquer fears and have lots of fun!

### 3.4 Training

A comprehensive training package continued to be delivered, with in person whole and half days, webinars and online learning opportunities. In the summer term:

- Designated teacher network meetings. Teachers come along to share good practice and learn from each other.
- The RADY approach. Challenging Education presented their attainment raising program for disadvantaged youngsters. A group of eleven schools have signed up to work on this project in the Autumn term. Schools will be supported through a series of modules, focussing on different aspects of RADY. Impact is measurable from the very beginning of the program.
- Trauma Informed Attachment Aware Schools network meeting to focus on updates and a problem-solving approach to challenges identified in settings.
- Five webinars were hosted by AC Education, aimed at all staff working with CiC, previously in care, or other children with a social worker. These aim to inform knowledge and understanding, whilst challenging policy and practice within settings.

### 3.5 Staffing

*Table C3*

Recruitment for the four new posts took place, with three leading to successful appointments for the autumn term:

- An additional Post 16 Education Officer – vacant post  
The Post 16 cohort is very challenging: the cohort is huge; the impact of Covid is very evident in retention rates; there are a large variety of options and pathways open to 16–18-year-olds, each of which are navigated quite differently.
- An additional Enrichment Coordinator – post filled  
This will enable the Virtual School to participate in a much wider range of arts and sports activities organised across the West Midlands.
- Two new Education Advisers for Children With a Social Worker – both posts filled  
This will allow for dedicated, full-service development in response to the extended duties.

## SCHOOL INFORMATION

### 4.1 Ofsted Grading 2022-23

*Table D1*

69% of Warwickshire CiC attended Good or Outstanding schools at the end of the year, in line with the national cohort. Due to changing inspection judgements, 7% of Warwickshire CiC were in Inadequate schools, with 6% of these being Warwickshire settings.

One CiC was placed in an Ofsted Inadequate school during the autumn term 2022 at the request of parents as the child was returning to their care. The Virtual School liaised with the host local authority and was satisfied that the school would be able to support the child appropriately.

Virtual School policy remains that when moving schools Good or Outstanding schools are always prioritised.

## **4.2 Attendance and suspensions**

*Table D2,3,4*

Overall attendance for 2022-23 was 88.4%.

Attendance for primary school CiC was 95.5% (+0.7% from last year).

Attendance for secondary school CiC was 83.1% (- 3.5% from last year).

Attendance for Reception to Year 8 was above 90%, with four of the year groups above 95%. The attendance of CiC in Years 9-11 was especially low. Over half of Year 11 were persistent absentees, with 8% having not attended at all.

A new local authority focus group has been established to ensure timely interventions to support improving attendance. The Virtual School will highlight CiC where attendance is classed as 'severely persistent' and these CiC will be discussed individually, with actions recorded, until all professionals are satisfied they may be removed from the meeting.

Reducing suspensions remain a priority for the Virtual School. The latest recorded suspension rate was in-line with national at 9.43% (number of Warwickshire CiC receiving at least one suspension).

Whilst the Virtual School successfully supported settings to rescind two permanent exclusions, one CiC was permanently excluded from a secondary school, outside of Warwickshire. Despite the many hours of work that Virtual School staff and the child's social worker dedicated to this, the acting headteacher went ahead with the permanent exclusion. The CiC did not need to be permanently excluded, but the school did not respond to advice and support from the Virtual School. When the headteacher finally did try to rescind the exclusion, due to the impact on the child, the Independent Review Panel (IRP) declared it too late. Both this and the governors panel focus only on process and consequently they upheld the exclusion.

## **4.3 Personal Education Plans (PEPs)**

The Virtual School has very effective systems in place to ensure professionals are aware of their role in initiating, developing, reviewing and updating PEPs each term. These systems ensured that **all** preschool, school age and Post 16 CiC had PEPs every term.

## **4.4 Pupil Premium Plus (PP+)**

*Table D7,8*

For the termly PEPs, schools select the funding allocation required for the planned interventions within that term. Schools can access up to £1500 per child per term. Higher amounts of PP+ per CiC were requested in each of the three terms, compared to 2021-22.



The Virtual School closely monitors PP+ spend and impact, to advocate and facilitate bespoke support and intervention and promote the best outcomes.

One-to-one tuition was commissioned from a specialist tutoring company. Table D8 details the programme delivered and the numbers of CiC benefitting. In addition, several CiC, across the age ranges, benefitted from additional blocks of tuition, which are not detailed in the table. Funding will continue for one more year and the Virtual School has committed to offering the same programme as for 22-23.

## **CHILDREN PREVIOUSLY IN CARE**

### **5.1 Revised duties**

Warwickshire Virtual School continues to be viewed as a beacon of good practice for its service delivery to promote the educational achievement of children previously in care through the provision of information and advice.

The success of the service delivery is evident:

- Referrals remain high across all key stages, from parents and carers, Social Care colleagues and education settings.
- Information sessions for parents and carers were well attended and received very positive feedback.

## **CHILDREN WITH A SOCIAL WORKER**

### **6.1 Extended duties**

Revised guidance was published in June 2022. This remains a non-statutory duty, but Warwickshire Virtual School is keen to provide the strategic oversight that this cohort of children needs. Intentionally, any impact of the educational journey and achievements of this cohort, could reduce the number of children entering care, and for those that do enter care, improve their outcomes as they may have better starting points.

Provisional data available to the Virtual School highlights a gap between both the achievement and the attendance of Warwickshire children compared to the national cohort.

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For questions or further information email: [deenamoorey@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:deenamoorey@warwickshire.gov.uk)

Useful links:

<https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/virtualschool> <https://www.wmvscicfoundation.org.uk>