



Warwickshire Virtual School

Spring 2024 Report

Part 1, 2023- 24

Autumn 23 updates and 2023-24 Virtual School service delivery
2022-23 final 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

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 (CWSW) as part of the extended duties.

The Virtual School continues to:

- Celebrate the educational achievements of all CiC through an annual awards ceremony.
- Ensure all termly PEPs are quality assured, with a focus on supporting designated teachers to continually improve quality.
- Support the Post 16 workforce with training and providing additional and bespoke support to students in care and care leavers.
- Ensure all Post 16 CiC have termly PEP reviews. Focus remains on those who are NEET to ensure they are supported to understand the best ways they can re-engage.
- Work with Challenging Education on the Raising Attainment of Disadvantaged Youngsters (RADY) programme, with the strategic focus on children with a social worker.
- Provide high quality, bespoke, training for Warwickshire settings, focusing on understanding attachment and early trauma to best support CiC and CWSW.
- Offer the National Tutoring Programme to CiC in Years 1-11 in partnership with Equal Education.
- Grow the university aspirations programme with partners from Think Higher.
- Develop the West Midlands regional offer of enrichment opportunities, key in promoting good SEMH (Social Emotional Mental Health), a prerequisite to academic success. Performing Perfectly will continue to lead on arts and Think Active on sports.
- Monitor settings to support designated teachers and improve their skills and capacity to advocate for CiC and previously in care.
- Offer an exceptionally high level of challenge and support for settings who suspend, reduce the education offer or fail to promote higher outcomes for CiC. The team working directly with schools and settings are all qualified teachers and school leaders who have high expectations and demand positive and inclusive responses.
- Focus on entry to care for all CiC. Prompt conversations with key professionals ensure PEPs, PP+ (Pupil Premium Plus) and appropriate educational interventions are in place.
- Challenge and support WCC services regarding how CiC and CWSW are supported and prioritised in our systems.



- Work with Education Services teams and leadership to facilitate identifying SEND provision more quickly.
- Work with the Warwickshire Attendance Service to ensure there is an escalation process for CiC and CWSW to identify intervention where attendance is causing concern.
- Ensure transition planning remains a key aspect of Virtual School work.



Understanding challenges

The Virtual School works with partners to reduce risk factors, but the biggest challenges are:

- Identifying suitable education placements in a timely manner for CiC with EHCPs, within and outside of Warwickshire, due to high demand for specialist education.
- Increasing number of UASC (Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children) with oversubscribed college courses and limited in-year provision for Year 11 (final year of school) age students.
- Attendance, particularly Key Stage 4.
- Use of suspension and permanent exclusion as a sanction, which continues to increase.
- Mobility of the cohort, which impacts school stability, education continuity and accessibility.

Focus for 2023-24

In addition, there are some specific projects and workstreams planned for 2023-24:

- Developing the CWSW service now that two dedicated Education Advisers have been recruited.
- Growing the arts and sports opportunities now an additional Enrichment Coordinator has been recruited.
- Implementing the kinship revision to CWSW guidance.
- VSH leading, representing, and managing the West Midlands VSH Network and the West Midlands Children in Care Foundation Charity as Chair for the year.
- Engaging with and contributing to local and national research. This includes contributing to the CWSW review, the Post 16 PP+ review and attending the first NAVSH Research Symposium.
- Working with HNC and HND students at Hinckley College to develop materials for training and awareness raising for designated teachers and safeguarding leads.
- Implementing an Outreach Service in the Nuneaton and Bedworth area.
- Including specific education measures in Social Care assessments.
- Promoting attendance of CWSW in the Rugby area.
- Trialling school holiday tuition access for CiC.
- Working with a new partner to extend attachment and trauma training for all Warwickshire settings. This will promote awareness of the CWSW and kinship care cohort, as well as challenging thinking around the increasing use of suspension as a sanction.



ATTAINMENT OF CHILDREN IN CARE

Outcomes have now been validated, with some minor changes since the Autumn report.

2.1 Early Years Foundation Stage

Table A1

2022-23 outcome: 21.7%

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

2.2 Year One Phonics

Table A2

2022-23 outcome: 44.4%

8 out of 18 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 A3

2022-23 outcome: 26.1%

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

2.3 Key Stage Two

Table A4

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 A5,6,7

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)

2.5 Post 16

Table A8

There were 216 CiC in the Post 16 cohort at the end of the Autumn term. A majority of the cohort, 63%, had been in care for less than two years; 35% had been in care for under 12 months; 22% entered care during the autumn term; 20% were NEET on entry to care.

Most of the cohort, 78%, were in Education, Employment or Training (EET), with 22% NEET. Over one third of the NEETs had college places secured for September 2023, but either did not start or decided not to stay on the course.

To note: Of the 216, 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 and both North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College and the Warwickshire College Group, reported positive first terms.

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 all CiC equitably, regardless of their length of time in care. Some CiC require more 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. Support for 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 for 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 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

Raising Aspirations:

- UniGo for a new Year 7 cohort started in October with a scavenger hunt around the Warwick University campus and a masterclass in TV and Film studies where they had to write scripts, have a go at filming, recording and acting.



- UniGo Year 9s had fun debating in a law session and asked some great questions in a philosophy session discussing whether everyone has a moral duty to vote.

Arts:

- Interactive DJ workshop to learn new skills and gain insight into what being a DJ involves.
- Oliver Twist at The Albany where CiC took part in a drama workshop before watching the show and then went behind the scenes to explore the set and meet the cast afterwards.



3.4 Training

Comprehensive training is delivered for designated teachers, whole settings and for those working directly with CiC.

In the autumn term:

- Annual designated teacher training. Updates and developments were shared and the CPD programme continued with a focus on wider staff approaches to children who have experienced trauma.
- Termly network meeting. Designated teachers come along to share good practice and learn from each other.
- New to role sessions are delivered monthly and supported by in school support from Education Advisers.
- 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.
- Nuneaton schools had the opportunity to attend a whole day interactive event to develop their understanding of children who have social workers and the barriers they may encounter. This program was for delivery in the autumn and spring terms, allowing whole staff groups to attend on school closure days.
- Eleven new settings signed up for a two-day attachment aware trauma informed whole school development programme, with many others expressing interest but not confirming dates.



3.5 Staffing

Table C3

New staff induction started in September. An additional Enrichment Coordinator and two Education Advisers for CWSW joined the team for two years. Recruitment for an additional Post 16 Education Officer was again planned for the autumn term.

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, 8% of Warwickshire CiC were in Inadequate schools, 5% higher than for the national cohort.

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



4.2 Attendance and suspensions

Table D2,3,4,5

Overall attendance for 2022-23 was 86.7%. This was in line with 2021-22, but 3% lower than for the national cohort.

Attendance for the autumn term 2023 was 88.9%. Attendance was highest in Key Stage 2 (7–11-year-olds) and lowest in Key Stage 4 (14–16-year-olds). 123 CiC fell into the Persistent Absence category with under 90% attendance. 30 CiC fell into the Severe Absence category with under 50% attendance.

In 2022-23 79 CiC, 13% of the cohort, were suspended a total of 221 times from 54 provisions. One permanent exclusion was rescinded with Virtual School support.

In the autumn term 2023, 46 CiC, 9.2%, were suspended a total of 91 times from 38 provisions, including 9 which were specialist settings. Two permanent exclusions were rescinded with Virtual School support.

Supporting professionals to improve attendance and working with settings to reduce the use of suspensions remain priorities for the Virtual School.

4.3 Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

In the autumn term 99.1% of CiC had PEP review meetings which were successfully documented.

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

4.4 Pupil Premium Plus (PP+)

Table D8

For 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. The average amount claimed per CiC in autumn 2023 was over £100 higher than that claimed in the summer term. This is a positive indicator, showing that bespoke support and intervention was facilitated at the start of the academic year.

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 D9 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 successful programme as for 22-23.

CHILDREN PREVIOUSLY IN CARE

5.1 Revised duties

Promoting the education of children previously in care (CPIC) is a statutory function for Virtual Schools. Virtual Schools are required to do this by providing information and advice.



Warwickshire Virtual School continues to be viewed as a beacon of very good practice for its service delivery. Close links are maintained with Adoption Central England and social workers of families who have children subject to Special Guardianship Orders. Referrals are made by professionals and those with parental responsibility contact the Virtual School directly. The Virtual School response is comprehensive and often goes above and beyond what is required to ensure the best outcomes for the children involved.



Routine training and monitoring for Warwickshire settings focusses on advocating for CPIC and Education Advisers ensure the needs and vulnerabilities of this cohort are understood and monitored within settings.



CHILDREN WITH A SOCIAL WORKER

6.1 Extended duties

Promoting the education of CWSW remains a non-statutory function for Virtual Schools. Warwickshire Virtual School is keen to provide the strategic oversight that this cohort of children needs. 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 negative gap between both the achievement and the attendance of Warwickshire children compared to the national cohort.

Revised guidance was published in June 2022, with an update in December 2023 to include children in formal kinship arrangements. The Virtual School started developing its service response to this in January 2024, and will implement it in September 2024 in line with the guidance.

For the past three years, awareness of this cohort has been promoted via Virtual School led training and CPD opportunities. An interactive theatre-based conference has been particularly well received and has been delivered to whole cohorts and whole school staff, as well as individual representatives from schools and WCC officers.

RADY, Raising the Attainment of Disadvantaged Youngsters, is an easy-to-use intervention for all types of educational setting. The Virtual School ran one cohort of settings last year and is looking to identify a cohort for this year.

The West Midlands Children in Care Foundation offers access to Thinking Differently, a suite of professional development modules, which can be used alongside or independently to RADY.

The Virtual School Head supported the SEND and Inclusion workstream on EBSA (Emotional Based School Avoidance) and now the CWSW Education Advisers are part of the trial phase.

A few projects are set to improve outcomes and understanding of the CWSW cohort:

- A focus on improving attendance in the Rugby area with a local secondary school.
- Working with two children's teams to include attendance, SDQ and reading age on assessments.
- Access to the Outreach support in the Nuneaton and Bedworth areas. Schools will be able to access bespoke advice and support for CPIC, CWSW or children in

formal kinship arrangements, alongside the Virtual School also advising support for CiC.



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Useful links:

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