

Warwickshire Virtual School Autumn 2024 Report

Part 3, 2023- 24

Summer 2024 updates and 2023-24 Virtual School service delivery
2023-24 provisional 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 structured in three parts, each corresponding to a school term and written retrospectively:

Part 1 – Spring term

Part 2 – Summer term

Part 3 – Autumn term

This report details how the Virtual School promotes the education of CiC. Unvalidated academic outcomes are reported in Part 3; validated outcomes in Part 1.

1.2 Current Context

The Virtual School prides itself on its solution-focused approach, working with service providers and stakeholders to promote the education of Children in Care (CiC), previously in care, and children with a social worker (CWSW) on an Ever 6 model.

The Virtual School continues to:

- Place the needs of the individual child at the centre of all decisions, discussion, and planning.
- Celebrate the educational achievements of all CiC through a very popular annual awards ceremony.
- Ensure all termly PEPs are quality assured, with a focus on supporting designated teachers through training and school visits, to continually improve quality.
- Support the post-16 workforce with training and providing additional and bespoke support to students in care and care leavers via our dedicated Post 16 Education Officers.
- Ensure all Post-16 CiC have termly Personal Education Plan (PEP) reviews, with a focus on supporting those who are Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) to re-engage with education, employment, or training.
- Collaborate with Challenging Education on the Raising Attainment of Disadvantaged Youngsters (RADY) programme, strategically focusing on children with a social worker.
- Provide high-quality, bespoke training for Warwickshire education settings, focusing on understanding attachment and early trauma to best support CiC, previously in care and CWSW.
- Offer the National Tutoring Programme to CiC in Years 1-11, in partnership with Equal Education.
- Deliver the university and aspirations raising programme with partners from Think Higher.
- Develop the West Midlands regional offer of enrichment opportunities, promoting good Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH), a prerequisite to academic success, with Performing Perfectly leading 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.
- Provide 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, consisting of qualified teachers and school leaders, demands positive and inclusive responses.



- Focus on entry to care for all CiC, ensuring prompt conversations with key professionals to implement PEPs, Pupil Premium Plus (PP+), and appropriate educational interventions.
- Challenge and support WCC services regarding the support and prioritisation of CiC and CWSW in our systems.
- Work with Education Services teams and leadership to facilitate quicker identification of SEND provision.
- Collaborate with the Warwickshire Attendance Service to ensure there is an escalation process for CiC and CWSW to identify intervention where attendance is a 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.
- Managing the increasing number of UASC (Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children) with oversubscribed college courses and limited in-year provision for Year 11 students.
- Addressing attendance issues, particularly in Key Stage 4.
- Mitigating the use of suspension and permanent exclusion as sanctions, which continues to increase.
- Handling the mobility of the cohort, which impacts school stability, education continuity and accessibility.

Focus for 2023-24

Updates on specific projects and workstreams for 2023-24:

- **CWSW Pilot Projects:** Two pilot projects focusing on the needs of CWSW will continue into the autumn term 2024. A locality-based focus on improving attendance is proving more challenging to engage partners, but the pilot for including specific education data and targets within initial assessments has been well-received with positive early indications. Final analysis and impact to inform wider roll out is expected by the end of autumn 2024.
- **Arts and Sports Opportunities:** Opportunities in the arts and sports are steadily increasing, focusing on extending the age range of CiC eligible to participate. A comprehensive programme is now in place, and participation is increasing.
- **Formal Kinship Duties:** Planning and preparation have been successfully completed, and the Virtual School service is set to implement the additional formal kinship duties in September. Currently, these duties are integrated within the existing staffing structure. An impact analysis will be conducted to assess the feasibility of this approach moving forward.
- **Leadership and Mentorship:** The VSH has completed the year as lead and chair for the West Midlands VSH Network and the West Midlands Children in Care Foundation Charity. The role proved to be both a challenge and a privilege, increasing knowledge and understanding. For 24-25 the role develops as Past Chair, supporting and mentoring the new Chair.



- **Research Engagement:** VSH engagement with and contribution to local and national research continues. The Phase Two evaluation of the extension of duties was published in April. The next phase of the evaluation of the Post-16 Pupil Premium Pilot includes work with VSH in September.
- **Creative Projects:** Work with HNC and HND students at Hinckley College completed, resulting in the completion of a film focusing on one adverse childhood experience, bereavement. Training and awareness raising materials to be developed with the use of the film in due course.
- **Outreach Service:** Outreach Service delivery in the Nuneaton and Bedworth area began and had an incredibly successful inaugural term. Planning for extending across the whole of the region took place and preparatory work will begin in the autumn term.
- **Group Tuition Sessions:** Group tuition sessions focusing on upskilling carers to support CiC at home were successfully delivered to a group of Year 5 CiC. A Year 9 pilot project is being developed for the autumn.
- **Attachment and Trauma Training:** Take-up from schools and settings for attachment and trauma training was extremely positive, with over 90 settings booking sessions. This will raise understanding of all cohorts of children in the Virtual School remit, whilst challenging thinking around the increasing use of suspension as a sanction.

Moving into 2024-25

Focus will include much of the above and additionally:

- Ensuring designated teachers focus on supporting CiC to develop skills and aspirations that are future focused.
- Designing a new university and aspirations raising programme.
- Emphasising engaging partners to improve attendance for CiC from age 2 to 18.
- Working with Education Services SLT to highlight all Virtual School cohorts within services delivery.
- Developing a co-located Plan Co-ordinator role to mitigate challenges in finding provision for CiC with EHCPs who require specialist provision.
- Working with EMTAS to develop assessments to support new arrivals, thereby aiding settings in providing appropriate education packages and reducing the time UASC spend out of provision or working with curricular that do not meet their needs.
- Working with partners to understand how the arts can help care experienced young people to build social bonds in new places.

ATTAINMENT OF CHILDREN IN CARE

2.1 Early Years Foundation Stage

Table A1

2023-24 outcome: 31.8%

- 7 out of 22 achieved a Good Level of Development (GLD)

The 2023-24 outcomes show a significant improvement and narrowing of the gap with the national CiC rate, with 31.8% achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD) compared to 21.7% in 2022-23.

Of note:



- National CiC rates showed a slight decrease in 2024, whilst Warwickshire improved.
- Warwickshire's SEN rate, 40.9%, is notably higher than the national average of 27.5%.

2.2 Year One Phonics

Table A2

2023-24 outcome: 43.5%

- 10 out of 23 achieved the expected standard in the phonics test.

This represents substantial progress and is a significant achievement, considering only 17.4% of the cohort were initially working at the expected standard.

Of note:

- Warwickshire exceeded the national cohort in terms of children achieving the top scores.
- Warwickshire's percentage of children who were academically unable to access the test was higher than for the national cohort.

As of 2024, Key Stage One outcomes are no longer reported by schools.

2.3 Key Stage Two

Table A3

2023-24 outcome: 42.3%

- 11 out of 26 achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and maths.

This is particularly positive as, for the second consecutive year, over 40% has been maintained. Additionally, this year's performance is above the national average by 8.3%.

2.4 Key Stage Four

Table A4,5,6

NB GCSE outcomes for English and Maths, called The Basics, are reported as standard and strong passes for schools, LAs, and nationally. For CiC, only strong passes are reported via NEXUS. Standard pass statistics can be found the following year from the Office of Statistics.

2023-24 outcome: Grade 4 – 12.7%, Grade 5 - 3.2%

There was an increase in both standard and strong passes:

- 2 out of 63 achieved a strong pass in the basics compared to 0/46 last year.
- 8 out of 63, 12.7%, achieved a standard pass in the basics compared to 5/46, 10.9% last year.

Of note:

- 27 CiC did not study for GCSEs.
- Standardised scores suggest those who met the expected standard in reading, writing and maths at the end of KS2 were more likely to achieve a standard pass (grade 4) rather than a strong pass.
- 5 CiC achieved grade 5+ in English and 3 in maths, demonstrating good progress.



2.5 Post-16

Table A7

At the end of the autumn term, there were 216 CiC in the Post-16 cohort. The majority, 63%, had been in care for less than two years, with 35% in care for under 12 months. Notably, 22% entered care during the autumn term, and 20% were NEET upon entry. By the end of the spring term, the number of CiC had decreased to 173. Of these, 137 (79%) were EET, while 36 (21%) were NEET, aligning with the national average for CiC aged 17.

As the summer term concluded, the numbers continued to decline due to Year 13s reaching age 18, leaving 134 CiC. Of these, 76% were EET and 24% NEET, although the actual number of NEET CiC had decreased.

The Virtual School remains committed to supporting colleges in improving retention rates for CiC. Both North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College and the Warwickshire College Group have seen significant success in this area.

3.1 Cohort overview

Table B1,2

Cohorts fluctuate monthly, but the Virtual School ensures equitable support for all Children in Care (CiC), regardless of their duration in care. Some CiC require more resources from the Virtual School, and the impact of this support may not always be reflected in national metrics.

The Virtual School takes prompt and comprehensive actions when a child enters care, tailoring support to meet individual needs. Support for transitions out of care is also individually determined.

Cohort Information for 2023-24:

- Preschool: 93 CiC in total; 23 new to care; 31 left care.
- Statutory School Age: 597 CiC in total; 140 new to care; 85 left care.
- Post-16: 302 CiC in total; 63 new to care; 178 left care.

3.2 SEND

Table B3,4,5,6

Many children enter care with unmet and unidentified Special Educational Needs. The Virtual School collaborates with partners to ensure prompt identification of these needs and to provide appropriate support. The impact of Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) needs is particularly significant for Children in Care (CiC).

The Virtual School supports educational settings in identifying and addressing SEMH needs while maintaining a strong focus on academic progress. At times, CiC must transition to specialist settings as their SEMH needs intensify.

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.

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

3.3 Enrichment

Table C1,2

Raising Aspirations:

- In April and May, Year 6 University Explorers had their sessions, offering them their first glimpse into university life.
- The UniGo! programme for all cohorts concluded with fun celebratory activities, including a trip to Alton Towers for the Year 8s.



- Students in the UNlty programme had their final session at Coventry University, which included a tour of the accommodation and workshops on student finance and budgeting.

Unfortunately, the successful university aspiration programmes ended abruptly in the summer term due to funding and staffing reductions at the universities. However, the Virtual School Head has already begun planning a replacement programme. The University of Warwick is keen to remain a partner, and the group of Birmingham universities has extended their outreach to include Warwickshire CiC. All opportunities to engage CiC in thinking about their future will form part of a comprehensive programme.

Arts and Sports Activities:

- Our sports opportunities were diverse and exciting, offering CiC the chance to try archery and explore gymnastics. June's 'Paddlefest' was a highlight, where CiC experienced the thrill of paddle boarding, kayaking, and canoeing.
- In May, we ran the two-day multi-skills qualification in Sports Leadership once again. This program not only builds on the qualifications achieved by our CiC, raising their self-esteem and awareness, but also provides the first steps into a career within the sports and leisure industry. With the Level 1 qualification, CiC can become volunteer sports assistants at future events, helping to lead games and activities and building valuable experience.
- For those with a passion for the arts, we offered three fantastic opportunities: a chance to see a professional performance of Roald Dahl's Matilda at the Cambridge Theatre; another opportunity to see Hamilton, this time at the Birmingham Hippodrome; and the chance to participate in a commercial dance workshop at the Albany Theatre.
- Year 11 and 12 CiC had the opportunity to participate in a workshop led by Geese Theatre, focusing on gaining pupil voice to inform a regional conference for designated teachers in the autumn term.

3.4 Training

Comprehensive training is delivered for designated teachers, entire settings and those working directly with CiC. Overwhelmingly positive reviews ensure that settings within and outside of Warwickshire take advantage of our sessions.

In the summer term:

- **Termly network meeting:** Very well attended by designated teachers representing early years, primary, secondary, post-16, and specialist provisions.
- **New to role session:** Delivered twice for staff new in the summer term and for those taking over designated teacher responsibility in the autumn.
- **Trauma Informed Attachment Aware Schools network meeting:** Focussed on updates and a problem-solving approach to challenges identified in settings. The group has expressed a desire for this to continue for another year.
- **Six webinars were hosted by AC Education:** Aimed at all staff working with CiC, previously in care, or other children with a social worker. These webinars aim to enhance knowledge and understanding while challenging policy and practice within settings.
- **AYSE training:** Provided to understand education and the role of the Virtual School, as well as sessions bespoke to individual teams, delivered by CiC and CWSW Education Advisers.



3.5 Staffing

Table C3

The addition of a new Post-16 Education Officer has significantly increased our capacity and allowed for renewed focus on key improvement areas. For example, three weekly attendance monitoring to engage professionals and increase EET retention rates will begin in the new term.

One of our CWSW Education Advisers has taken a permanent role in another Virtual School. Despite this change, the remaining adviser has worked exceptionally hard, making a substantial impact in this area of work.

SCHOOL INFORMATION

4.1 Ofsted Grading 2023-34

Table D1

At the end of the year, 87.2% of Warwickshire CiC attended Good or Outstanding schools, which is slightly below the national cohort where 88.6% attended schools with these ratings. Due to changing inspection judgements, 4.7% of Warwickshire CiC were in Inadequate schools. All these CiC are closely monitored to ensure this grading does not adversely affect their expected progress.

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 2023-24 was 86.2%, remaining stable for three years. Early comparisons from NEXUS suggest there could be a small improvement with the statistical cohort.

Attendance remains highest in KS2, and end of Key Stage attainment reflects this. There is also strong engagement in the Early Years and KS1.

Persistent absence was in-line with last year, and severe absence slightly lower than last year. From Year 9 onwards there is an increase in levels of absenteeism which mirrors national trends. These students are carefully monitored and receive bespoke support to help them return to achieving good levels of attendance.

In 2023-24 94 CiC were suspended, representing 15.7% of the cohort, which is 2.7% higher than in 2022-23. However, the Virtual School team successfully rescinded two permanent exclusions in the autumn term and prevented eight further permanent exclusions over the year.

Unfortunately, one permanent exclusion was issued and upheld at the Governor Panel stage. An Independent Review Panel will make the final decision in September. Notably, this exclusion occurred in a school outside Warwickshire. All rescinded and prevented exclusions have been in Warwickshire settings, demonstrating the positive relationships and effective interventions developed by the Virtual School team.

Supporting professionals to improve attendance and working with settings to reduce the use of suspensions remain priorities for the Virtual School. This includes providing bespoke support for designated teachers, offering staff training, and challenging professionals to reflect on how policy and practice work together in their settings, alongside support and expertise from the Warwickshire Attendance Service.



4.3 Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

In each of the three terms, over 99% of PEP review meetings took place and were successfully documented. This remains exceptionally high and is something to celebrate.

The Virtual School has highly effective systems in place to ensure professionals are aware of their roles in initiating, developing, and reviewing PEPs each term. These systems ensure that all preschool (from age 2), school age and Post-16 CiC have PEP reviews every term. They also ensure that all new to care PEPs take place in accordance with guidance.

4.4 Pupil Premium Plus (PP+)

Table D7

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. In the summer term, a higher amount of funding was paid directly to settings to support interventions detailed in PEPs.

In addition to the funding claimed via PEPS, CiC benefitted from specialist tuition and localised projects developed with individual schools. This is a positive indicator, showing that bespoke support and intervention continue to be facilitated.

The Virtual School closely monitors PP+ spend and impact to advocate and promote best practices and early identification of needs, ensuring the best outcomes.

The final term of one-to-one tuition from a specialist tutoring company again proved successful and had a high take up. 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.

CHILDREN PREVIOUSLY IN CARE (CPiC)

5.1 Revised duties

Promoting the education of CPiC is a statutory function for Virtual Schools, which are required to provide information and advice.

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

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

In September, this service will also include professional and carers of children in formal kinship arrangements.

CHILDREN WITH A SOCIAL WORKER (CWSW)

6.1 Extended duties

Promoting the education of CWSW Ever 6 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 positive impact on the educational journey and achievements of this cohort could reduce the number of children entering care and improve outcomes for those who do enter care, as they may have better starting points.

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.

During this academic year, with dedicated postholders, the strategic promotion has accelerated, with an emphasis on empowering educational and other professionals working with families to advocate for the importance of education when planning and delivering support for CWSW.

The successful set up of an Outreach Service in Nuneaton and Bedworth encompasses CWSW. This service is being developed to cover the whole of Warwickshire and to include support for school staff supporting children in formal kinship arrangements.

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For questions or further information email: deenamoorey@warwickshire.gov.uk

Useful links:

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

<https://www.wmvscicfoundation.org.uk>

