

Improving the Educational Outcomes of Children with a Social Worker

Advice for Social Workers and Associated Professionals



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Rationale

The DfE Child in Need Review 2019 highlighted that at least 1.6 million children needed a social worker between 2012 and 2018 – equivalent to 1 in 10 of all children, or 3 children in every classroom.

The review outlined that **these children do significantly worse than others at all stages of education, and that poor educational outcomes persist even after social work involvement ends.**

- Pupils who had a social worker in the year of their GCSEs were around half as likely to achieve a strong pass in English and Maths than their peers
- Children with a social worker are around 3 times more likely to be persistently absent (attendance of less than 90%) from school
- They are between 2 to 4 times more likely to be permanently excluded from school than their peers
- They are over 10 times more likely to attend state-funded alternative provision settings than all other pupils
- Children with a social worker are around 3 times less likely to go on to study A levels at age 16
- They are almost 5 times less likely to enter higher education at age 18



Support from Enfield Virtual School

The DfE review identified Virtual Schools as the strategic lead to work with all partners to promote the education of children with a social worker to provide advice and guidance to professionals on strategies to improve their educational outcomes.

Enfield Virtual School has established the following support throughout Enfield's Children and Family Service.

- **A Child in Need Senior Advisory Teacher (Tuesdays and Wednesdays)** is embedded within the Adolescent Safeguarding Team providing advice and guidance on education to practitioners within the team. Please contact Kazia Fulmyk on Kazia.Fulmyk@enfield.gov.uk or 020 4534 2645 for a case consultation.
- **Welfare Call monitors the attendance and suspensions** of children with a child protection plan, children open to the Youth Justice Service and children on a child in need plan open to the Adolescent Safeguarding Team. Regular emails are circulated informing Social Workers and other professionals of the attendance and suspensions for the above groups of children.
- **The Child in Need/Child Protection Education Panel** is a multi-agency monthly panel attended the Service Manager for Child Protection & Child In Need, the Virtual School, School Admissions, Education Welfare Services, the Special Educational Needs Service, Behaviour Support Services, the Youth Service and the Educational Psychology Service providing oversight, advice and guidance to Social Workers on the education of children with a child protection or child in need plan. Please contact the Virtual School Assistant Head for Vulnerable Children Malaika.Williams@enfield.gov.uk if you would like to nominate a child to be discussed at the above panel.

- **A Youth Justice Service Advisory Teacher** is embedded within the Youth Justice Service and provides advice and guidance on education to practitioners within the team. Please contact Seda.Soylu@enfield.gov.uk or 020 8132 1788 for advice and guidance regarding a child open to the Youth Justice Service.

- **The Youth Justice Service Education Panel** is a multi-agency monthly panel attended by Youth Justice, the Service Manager for Child Protection & Child In Need, the Virtual School, School Admissions, Education Welfare Services, the Special Educational Needs Service and Behaviour Support Services providing oversight, advice and guidance to case managers on the education of children open to Youth Justice. Please contact Gavin.White@enfield.gov.uk and Seda.Soylu@enfield.gov.uk if you would like to nominate a child to be discussed at the above panel.

- **The Provision Map** has been developed and is circulated regularly outlining organisations that can provide support to families on a wide range of challenges. Please contact the Virtual School Assistant Head for Vulnerable Children at Malaika.Williams@enfield.gov.uk if you would like a copy.

- **The Previously Looked After Children and Kinship Care Education Officer** (Monday – Wednesdays) provides education advice and guidance to professionals, and families (with consent) regarding the specific educational needs of previously looked after children and children in formal kinship care arrangements (see related leaflets for further information). Education Coffee mornings have also been established for parents/carers of children with an Adoption Order, and those with a Special Guardianship Order. If you, a family or school would like a consultation with the Previously Looked After Children and Kinship Care Education Officer please contact Jane.Manning@enfield.gov.uk.

- **Precious Moments Therapeutic Mentoring** is offered to children on a child protection plan during their year 6-7 transition to support them during the move from primary to secondary school. There are also a limited number of mentoring slots available for children during the year 6-7 transition with child in need plan. If you would like a child that you work with to be considered for mentoring, please contact Malaika.Williams@enfield.gov.uk

- **The Virtual School Assistant Head for Vulnerable Children** provides advice and guidance to professionals regarding the education of children with a social worker. If you would like a consultation with the Virtual School Assistant Head, particularly if you are working with a child who is **without a school place, at risk of permanent exclusion, persistently absent from school, regularly receiving suspensions, on reduced timetable, or electively home educated**, please contact Malaika.Williams@enfield.gov.uk or 020 8132 1657.

- **The Virtual School training offer** has been extended to include all children's social workers and Youth Justice practitioners and is advertised via i.learn. Look out for training on FASD (Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders), Improving the education outcomes of children with a Social Worker, Trauma Informed Practice PODs and Emotionally Based School Non Attendance (EBSNA).

- **The Enfield Virtual School App** has been developed providing access to short courses for Social Workers and Schools in Understanding Autism, Understanding ADHD, Understanding Dyslexia, Attachment, for Social Workers and Schools, etc. Go to the website enfield.nimbl.uk/enfi/register and use code **bc6hfvds8** then download the free VS App to your phone. There is also a version of the app for looked after children and care leavers (which includes revision guides and education advice). Please contact Malaika.Williams@enfield.gov.uk for further information.

Useful Information for Social Workers

Attendance



The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.”

Working together to improve school attendance Sept 2022, DfE

There is a correlation between excellent school attendance and improved school attainment.

**100-96%
attendance**

is considered to be excellent attendance

**95-91%
attendance**

the child's attendance needs to improve

**90%
attendance
or less**

children are considered persistently absent

**50%
attendance
or less**

children are considered to be severely absent

For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and offers the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided.

School Admissions

Many families of children open to Children and Family Services experience issues with housing and have moved home on a number of occasions. When the family move to their new home it is important that an application for a new school (should the child require one) is made swiftly to the new Local Authority Admissions Service. It is often helpful to contact admissions prior to this to explore which schools may have spaces available (to accelerate the process).

To avoid drift and delay in receiving a new school place, the following groups can be considered under 'Fair Access Protocol's' (see point 3.14 - 3.22 of the DfE School Admissions Code).

- a) children either subject to a Child in Need Plan or a Child Protection Plan, or having had a Child in Need Plan or a Child Protection Plan within 12 months at the point of being referred to the Protocol;
- b) children living in a refuge or in other Relevant Accommodation at the point of being referred to the Protocol;
- c) children from the criminal justice system;
- d) children in alternative provision who need to be reintegrated into mainstream education or who have been permanently excluded but are deemed suitable for mainstream education;
- e) children with special educational needs (but without an Education, Health and Care plan), disabilities or medical conditions;
- f) children who are carers;
- g) children who are homeless;
- h) children in formal kinship care arrangements;
- i) children of, or who are, Gypsies, Roma, Travellers, refugees, and asylum seekers;
- j) children who have been refused a school place on the grounds of their challenging behaviour and referred to the Protocol in accordance with paragraph 3.10 of the School Admissions Code;
- k) children for whom a place has not been sought due to exceptional circumstances;

- l) children who have been out of education for four or more weeks where it can be demonstrated that there are no places available at any school within a reasonable distance of their home. This does not include circumstances where a suitable place has been offered to a child and this has not been accepted; and
- m) previously looked after children for whom the local authority has been unable to promptly secure a school place.

Where it has been agreed that a child will be considered under the Fair Access Protocol, a school place must be allocated for that child within 20 school days. Once they have been allocated a school place via the Fair Access Protocol, arrangements should be made for the child to start at the school as soon as possible. There is no duty for local authorities or admission authorities to comply with parental preference when allocating places through the Fair Access Protocol, but parents' views should be taken into account.

Looked after children and previously looked after children (who have left care with an adoption order, special guardianship order or child arrangement order) receive priority admission to their school of choice and as such there should be no delay in them receiving a school place.

If a child has an EHCP parents must contact the Local Authority SEN Service, provide proof of the new address, request that the EHCP is transferred and request that SEN begin consulting with new schools (if needed).



What can you do to help?

- Encourage and support families to make applications for new schools as soon as they move into their new home.
- Contact admissions to find out which schools have school places available.
- Ensure admissions are aware of Children and Family Service involvement and find out if the child is being considered under 'Fair Access Protocols'.
- If you have concerns regarding a delay in a child receiving a school place, please contact the relevant admissions service to discuss.
- If you have concerns regarding a delay with a previously looked after child receiving a school place, please contact the Previously Looked After Children and Kinship Care Education Officer (details above) to discuss.
- If you have concerns regarding a delay with a looked after child receiving a school place, please contact Enfield Virtual School to discuss VirtualSchool@Enfield365.onmicrosoft.com



Persistent and Severely absent pupils

Children who are persistently/severely absent will have missed a month or more of school by the end of each academic year

- 90% of young offenders had been persistently absent
- 83% of knife possession offenders had been persistently absent in at least 1 of the 5 years of study

What can you do?

- Discuss the importance of school attendance with families.
- Discourage holidays during term time.
- Explore the reasons behind poor school attendance with families during visits, Core and Network Meetings and work with schools to identify appropriate support (see provision map).
- Look at the schools Attendance Policy (this should be online). Is there any further support that can be considered?
- Ask schools for their attendance support plan and explore how the poor attendance is being challenged and addressed.
- Consider how well the child's needs are being met in school (does school need to explore possible SEN needs or alternative provision).
- Encourage schools to involve their Education Welfare Officers (where appropriate).
- Request a consultation with the **Virtual School Assistant Head for Vulnerable Children for advice and guidance.**
- Request that the child is discussed at **the Child in Need/Child Protection Education Panel or the Youth Justice Education Panel (where appropriate).**

Reduced Timetables

All compulsory school age pupils (age 5-16) are entitled to a full-time education, however in exceptional circumstances which are considered in the 'best interest of the child,' a temporary reduced timetable may be agreed however **this should be time limited, in place for the shortest time possible and reviewed regularly.**

If evidence suggests that the child will be exposed to significant risk if not in school, then a reduced timetable should not be considered an option.

Any reduction in timetables should be agreed with the family, Social Worker and associated professionals. Support and care arrangements should be agreed and recorded. Enfield's Schools are required to complete a 'Reduced School Timetable Guidance for Schools and Colleges' and return the completed document to the Local Authority (EnfieldPartTimeTimetables@enfield.gov.uk). This should also be shared with the Social Worker and the Virtual School (if the child is LAC). **The Headteacher of the Virtual School must be involved with a decision about a reduced timetable for a Looked After Child (LAC).**



Elective Home Education

Elective home education is a term used to describe a choice by parents to provide education for their children at home – or at home and in some other way which they choose – instead of sending them to school full-time. This is different to education provided by a Local Authority otherwise than at a school (EOTAS).

Enfield's Children and Family Service recognises that "There is no proven correlation between home education and safeguarding risk." However "...it is important to bear in mind that unsuitable or inadequate education can also impair a child's intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development, and may therefore bring child protection duties into play." Therefore Enfield's Children and Family Services supported by Enfield Virtual School and Enfield's Admissions and Attendance Service ensure that education is scrutinised and incorporated within all assessments for all children, including those who are electively home educated.

If you are working with a child who is being electively home educated please contact the Elective Home Education Team (EHE.Team@enfield.gov.uk) to ensure that they are aware.

If you have concerns that an electively home educated child open to Enfield's Children and Family Service is not receiving an "efficient" full-time education for their child, suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and meeting any special educational needs they may have." Please contact the EHE Team to notify them of your concerns along with the Virtual School Assistant Head for advice. You can also request that the child is discussed at the Child in Need/Child Protection or the Youth Justice Education Panel.

Where a school is made aware that a family is considering elective home education and a child has a Social Worker or other Children and Family Service lead professional (such as Early Help or Youth Justice), a multi-agency meeting should be called (with the Social Worker/lead professional in attendance). Where a child has an EHCP, an emergency review must be called and the Social Worker/Children and Family Service lead professional invited. **All schools must notify the Local Authority when a family request that their child is electively home educated.**

Suspensions and Permanent Exclusions

When children are not in school, they miss the protection and opportunities it can provide, and become more vulnerable to harm. Headteachers should balance this important reality with the need to ensure calm and safe environments for all pupils and staff, so should devise strategies that take both of these aspects into account.

DfE guidance on suspensions and permanent exclusions states that Social Workers should be informed if schools are concerned that a child or young person is at risk of suspension or permanent exclusion and should discuss their concerns in advance of school's decision to suspend or permanently exclude.

When Headteachers suspend or permanently exclude a pupil they must 'without delay,' notify parents. Legislative changes mean that **if a pupil has a social worker, or if a pupil is looked-after, the Headteacher must, without delay, also notify the Social Worker and/or Virtual School Headteacher, as applicable.** Schools must ensure they have a formal process in place for informing Social Workers, clearly setting out all reasons for the suspension or permanent exclusion.

In the case of a looked after child or child with a social worker, the school and the Local Authority should work together to **arrange alternative provision from the first day following the suspension or permanent exclusion.**

Both the Social Worker and/or the Virtual School Headteacher, must be informed and invited when a governing board meeting is taking place, in order to share information.

Social Workers should be invited to attend return from suspension/reintegration meetings to discuss support moving forwards.

What can you do?

- Social Workers should contact schools when they have been made aware of suspensions and permanent exclusion to request copies of the paperwork related to the suspension/permanent exclusion and to discuss whether alternatives have been explored by school (internal exclusion, campus swaps/school swaps, restorative actions or meetings, class changes).

- Ask if the school have engaged in Enfield Trauma Informed Practice (ETIPs) and how this approach has been applied when supporting the child.
- Ensure that schools are fully aware of the child's experiences, safeguarding concerns and ask how school has taken this into account when making their decision to suspend or permanently exclude. Ask how school can mitigate any potential risks.
- Attend return from suspension meetings and support schools to explore what the child's behaviour might be communicating, consider whether the child's needs are being appropriately met and whether any additional support may need to be put in place (consider mentoring, an Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA's), time out cards, mental health support, any possible underlying Special Educational Need).
- Are there any additional agencies that might be able to support the child and family (see provision map).
- Have the school engaged with SWERRL (the Primary Behaviour Support Service) or the Secondary Behaviour Support Service?
- Ask to see the schools pastoral support plan or behaviour support plan.
- Ask to see the schools Behaviour Policy.
- If a child is at risk of permanent exclusion, have school considered a managed move or alternative provision.
- If the child is receiving repeated suspensions or school informs you that they are at risk of permanent exclusion, request a consultation with the **Virtual School Assistant Head for Vulnerable Children for advice and guidance.**
- Request for the child to be discussed at **the Child in Need/Child Protection Education Panel or the Youth Justice Education Panel (where appropriate).**

Managed Moves (Secondary)

Enfield Schools can approach Enfield's Fair Access Panel to consider a 'managed move' of a child considered at risk of permanent exclusion to have a 'fresh start' at another Enfield School. There is a review period of 8 weeks in which the new school may end the managed move placement due to significant concerns regarding the child's behaviour. After the review period is complete the child will remain at the new school.

While children may benefit from a 'fresh start', many children who have experienced trauma find transitions very challenging. Schools should hold a meeting with the family, Social Worker and any other professionals involved to discuss the suitability of a managed move to another school prior to bringing the child to Fair Access for consideration.

Families cannot be compelled to accept a managed move.

Special Educational Needs

DfE guidance highlights that the majority of children with a social worker have special education needs (particularly Social Emotional and Mental Health Needs). The Equality Act 2010 requires schools to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils. Under the Children and Families Act 2014, governing boards of relevant settings must use their 'best endeavours' to ensure the appropriate special educational provision is made for pupils with SEN. Concerns around possible additional needs should be addressed swiftly by schools and additional support put in place. Many of these needs can be effectively met within the mainstream school environment.

What can you do?

- If you are concerned that the child that you are working with may have an additional need, encourage the family to discuss this with the Schools SENCO and explore what support is being put in place. Be sure to revisit this during your regular meetings with school.
- Ask the school if the child is marked as SEN or SEN support (or has an EHCP) on the schools Management Information System (MIS) and ask what support is being put in place (this should also be reflected within liquid logic).
- Ask school if they have used the Progression Tool to screen any possible speech, language and communication needs of the child and what adjustments are being made following this.
- Ask school (where appropriate) if they have an ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant), have they engaged with EASA (Enfield's Advisory Service for Autism) and or have they consulted with their Educational Psychologist.
- If school are expressing that they have exhausted all possible resources to support a child and their concerns continue, ask if they have considered making an application for Statutory Assessment of Special Educational Needs.
- If the child has an EHCP attend the Annual Reviews.
- If a child has an EHCP and has received a suspension, ask the school whether they have notified the SEN caseworker.
- If a child has an EHCP and there are concerns regarding repeated suspensions, school feel they are at risk of permanent exclusion or they persistently or severely absent, speak to school about who the SEN caseworker is and ask school to consider calling an emergency review/placement review. Please also contact the Virtual School Assistant Head for advice (details above).

Off Rolling and Illegal exclusions

Telling or forcing a pupil to leave school, or not allowing them to attend school, is a suspension (if temporary) or permanent exclusion (if permanent). Whenever a pupil is made to leave school, or forbidden from attending school, on disciplinary grounds, this must be done in accordance with the School Discipline (Pupil Exclusions and Reviews) (England) Regulations 2012 and with regard to relevant parts of [Department for Education's Suspension and Permanent Exclusion guidance](#).

It would also be unlawful to exclude a pupil simply because they have SEN or a disability that the school feels it is unable to meet, or for a reason such as, academic attainment/ability; or the failure of a pupil to meet specific conditions before they are reinstated, such as to attend a reintegration meeting.

If any of these unlawful exclusions are carried out and lead to the deletion of a pupil's name from the register, this is known as 'off-rolling'. An informal or unofficial exclusion, such as sending a pupil home 'to cool off', is unlawful when it does not follow the formal school exclusion process and regardless of whether it occurs with the agreement of parents.

A further example of off-rolling would be exercising undue influence over a parent to remove their child from the school under the threat of a permanent exclusion and encouraging them to choose elective home education or to find another school place.

If a parent is concerned that their child has been suspended or permanently excluded and the correct procedures have not been followed, or that their child has been 'off rolled' this needs to be raised with the school following the schools/governing body's complaints procedures and the Local Authority (in the case of a maintained school).

Further Information

- [Review of children in need – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- [Promoting the education of children with a social worker and children in kinship care arrangements: virtual school head role extension – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- [Suspension and permanent exclusion guidance – September 2023 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)
- [Working together to improve school attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)
- [Elective home education: departmental guidance for local authorities \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)



**Virtual School for LAC, HEART Team
Children and Family Services
People Department**

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