



One minute guide

Personal education plans (PEPs) and the Pupil Premium Plus

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What are personal education plans (PEPs)?

The Personal Education Plan (PEP) should be initiated as part of a looked after child looked after's care plan. It is a statutory requirement for all children looked after, from age 3 to 18, regardless of whether they are attending school, to have a PEP. It is an evolving record outlining the steps to support children, who are looked after, in their education, helping them achieve outcomes comparable to their non-looked after peers and fulfil their potential.

The PEP should reflect the importance of a personalised approach to learning that meets the child's identified educational needs, raises aspirations, and builds life chances. The school, other professionals and the child's carers should use the PEP to help achieve these goals. The local authority that looks after the child and the school share responsibility for the quality of the PEP. The [Virtual School](#) ensures that PEPs are up to date, effective and of high quality.

PEPs must include aspirational and SMART targets for the child's learning progress and identify the additional support and resources needed to achieve them. A good PEP ensures that teachers, social workers, carers, other practitioners and the young people themselves have a clear plan, implemented through the graduated approach, about what is needed to ensure that child is doing well in their learning and shows clearly if they are not.

How are PEPs produced?

The PEP is completed following a PEP meeting, which must be arranged by the child's social worker. Attendees must include the Designated Teacher or a relevant school staff member, the carer, and other practitioners supporting the child's educational progress and aspirations. All adult participants are responsible for providing the necessary information to create a high-quality plan. The child's views must be incorporated in a way that suits them best.

For a first PEP, completion is required within 20 days of the child entering care, with Virtual School PEP Coordinators available to offer guidance or facilitate the initial meeting if needed. In emergency placements, a PEP should be initiated within 10 working days. PEPs must be reviewed termly—three times a year—but may be scheduled more frequently if necessary for the child's needs.

What information goes into a PEP?

A PEP includes basic personal details to identify the child, along with information about their care placement and legal status—key factors that influence school decisions and the young person's current education setting.

It must capture details on attainment, attendance, emotional well-being, and their impact on learning. PEPs should be an integral part of the school's overall provision, aligning with the graduated approach and the plan-do-review cycle. If the child has an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP), their specific learning needs should also be addressed in the PEP. Additionally, it is important to document the child's interests and highlight opportunities to celebrate their achievements.

The central focus of the PEP meeting is to ensure the child is progressing at least as well as their non-looked-after peers. Clear, measurable targets must be agreed upon, following the SMART criteria (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound). This discussion also helps determine how Pupil Premium Plus funding can best support the child in reaching these goals.

What is Pupil Premium Plus, and how does it relate to PEPs?

Schools receive Pupil Premium funding to support children and young people at risk of poorer educational outcomes. Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) is specifically allocated for children looked after. Schools can also claim funding for previously looked after children, although these children do not have a PEP and this grant is not overseen by the Virtual School.

The Head of the Virtual School manages the Pupil Premium Grant for children currently looked after and determines each school's allocation. To ensure the funding is used effectively to raise the educational attainment of eligible pupils, schools must spend their PP+ grant in line with the Department for Education's (DfE) 'menu of approaches'. The 'menu of approaches' is in '[Using pupil premium: Guidance for school leaders](#)' document.

In Leeds, schools receive a fixed amount per pupil, distributed in three termly payments. The remaining funds are held centrally to support extra services and allow schools to apply for further funding for those in greatest need. The PEP review each term provides an opportunity to explore how effectively this additional grant is supporting the child's progress.

The Virtual School collects data from completed PEPs to track children's learning progress and how PP+ funds are used. This helps identify students at risk of falling behind and allows collaboration with Designated Teachers, social workers, and carers to address barriers to learning. Whilst schools are best placed to determine the most effective use of the PP+, it must clearly and directly support the targets or outcomes as set out in the PEP, so that progress and impact can be measured.

Previously Children Looked After (PCLA)

Mainstream and maintained special schools can access PP+ funding for previously looked-after children (PCLA) by recording eligible students in the October school census.

Eligible children are those who were looked after by a local authority or other state care immediately before being adopted, or who left local authority care on a special guardianship order or child arrangement order (formerly a residence order). Each child captured on the census and meeting those criteria is currently eligible for £2570. For PCLA, schools are responsible for ensuring PP+ is used for evidence-informed interventions, aligned with the 'menu of approaches', to meet the specific educational needs of PCLA attending the school.

Further information and support can be found on the [Virtual School Leeds for Learning](#) page.

Who are the key contacts?

If you are working with a child looked after or care leaver and would like to speak to someone about their educational attainment, either to raise concerns about their education or to request additional support, you can contact the Virtual School team. In addition, if you would like to request help for yourself or your team in supporting children's education, the Virtual School can provide information, advice, and guidance, as well as training on the role of corporate parents and championing the educational attainment of children looked after and care leavers.

Jancis Andrew is the Head of the Virtual School for Children Looked After in Leeds. Jancis and her team can be contacted on 0113 37 81469 where you can leave a voicemail, or via email at virtualschool@leeds.gov.uk. This email address is for general enquiries only so please do not send personal or sensitive information about individual children and young people.