

DURHAM VIRTUAL SCHOOL

*Supporting children in our care in their
Early Years*

2024/25

Early years settings, nursery schools and nursery units in infant and primary schools



Early Years Personal Education Plan (EYPEP) Guidance

EARLY YEARS SEND, EQUALITIES AND INCLUSION TEAM

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Context

Recent statistical information (Ofsted, 2024) shows that there are just under 84,000 children and young people are in care in England. The number of children in care from birth to 19 years old in County Durham changes as some children are in care for a brief time, some for longer periods.

There are many reasons why children and young people are in care, but the highest proportion of children are taken into care because of abuse or neglect.

Every child in the care of the local authority has a social worker and a care plan. Children and family social workers take the lead in providing help, support, and high-quality assessment of family situations, often when families are struggling with a wide range of difficulties.

Social workers bring about lasting behavioural change that delivers safety and stability for children. They intervene at moments of crisis and need within families, where their skills are to manage risk, protect children, provide support, and build relationships to make change happen. Children and family social workers are part of a team around the child that can include police, teachers, health workers, the courts, and others, bringing these professionals together to work in the best interests of children and supporting families.

Improving outcomes for all children in our care in the early years

- A good quality early education provides a secure foundation for transition to a fulfilling and successful adult life.
- Early Years provision provides stability and continuity for children in care.
- It is thought that the earlier support is accessed the more chance we have of influencing children's level of development.
- High quality early years provision for children in care can offer further benefits such as:
 - Opportunities to socialise with other children and be supported by nurturing adults providing (opportunities to make positive relationships) and a sense of belonging.
 - Access to a wide range of learning and experiential opportunities that they may not have previously accessed.
 - A chance to access appropriate support to address any special educational needs prior to accessing Reception (early identification).

What is the Virtual School?

The role of the Virtual School is to promote the educational achievement of children in our care or children previously in our care. They support early years setting, schools and other education providers in ensuring high quality education for children in care and those previously cared for which enables them to achieve their full potential.

The Virtual School ensures that all children in care and those previously cared for:

- are placed in a school or setting which best meets their needs
- have a high-quality plan for their education, known as a Personal Education Plan (PEP) for those who are in care
- make good progress and attainment relevant to their developmental needs
- receive additional support in overcoming any challenges or barriers that impact on progress
- are supported by Early Years Pupil Premium or Pupil Premium Plus
- make a good transition between different phases of education: early years into reception, primary into secondary and secondary into post-16 education or training.

The Early Years SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities), Equalities and Inclusion Team joins Durham Virtual School in providing support to early years providers in meeting the needs of children in care and those previously cared for as well as supporting personal education planning as required.

This guidance relates to Durham's children in our care and schools and settings should follow the equivalent guidance for non-Durham children.

Early Education Entitlement for Children in Our Care

Free education and childcare for families of 2-year-olds receiving additional support

Children in care and some children who have left care are eligible for 15 hours of funded early education from the term after the child's 2nd birthday.

The qualifying criteria are children who:

- are looked after by the council
- have left our care under a special guardianship order, child arrangements order or adoption order

How do I apply?

- During the school term that your child turns two, you can apply for a code to access their 2-year entitlement – contact childcare@durham.gov.uk or TEL: 03000 268913 for a copy of the application form. Once you receive the code, take it to your chosen nursery or childminder who will verify your code and tell you when your child can start.

Universal entitlement (3 & 4 year olds)

All children have an entitlement to 15 hours of nursery education from the term after their 3rd birthday. This can be accessed through day care settings, childminders and/or nursery provision within schools who are registered to provide funded early education.

How do I apply?

Carers should apply follow the school and settings admissions process.

Working parent entitlements

9 months to 2 years old - 15 hours per week of funded childcare

Children in foster care who are aged 9 months to 2-years-old will be able to receive 15 hours free childcare, if the following criteria are met:

- Accessing the extended hours is consistent with the child's care plan; and
- Where there is a single foster parent family, the foster parent is engaging in paid work outside their role as a foster parent; or
- Where there are two foster parents in the same fostering household, both are engaging in paid work outside their role as a foster parent.

3 and 4-year-olds – 30 hours per week of funded childcare

Children in foster care who are aged 3 or 4 years old will be able to receive 30 hours funded childcare, if the following criteria are met:

- Accessing the extended hours is consistent with the child’s care plan; and
- Where there is a single foster parent family, the foster parent is engaging in paid work outside their role as a foster parent; or
- Where there are two foster parents in the same fostering household, both are engaging in paid work outside their role as a foster parent.

For a copy of the application form to request 30 hours for a child who is looked after, contact childcare@durham.gov.uk. The childcare team will process the application and issue the foster carer with an eligibility code which they will then take to their chosen education provider.

Accessing the working parent entitlements as a prospective adoptive parent

When a child in our care has been placed with their prospective adoptive parent(s) under adoption regulations, but the adoption order has not yet been granted by the courts, the prospective adoptive parent(s) should not be considered to be foster parents in relation to applying for the working parents entitlement

The adoption agency (i.e. the relevant local authority) notify the prospective adopter(s) in writing of the date on which the child is placed for adoption with them (this is the Placement Order).

Once a Placement Order is issued, prospective adoptive parents wishing to apply for the working parent entitlements (as listed above: 15 hours for children 9 months to 2 years, and 30 hours for 3 and 4 years olds), must apply through the [Childcare Choices](#) website rather than via foster carer route administered by the local authority Childcare team. If they do not hold the child’s birth certificate, they can provide HMRC with the adoption placement order from the adoption agency during the application process.

As with other parents, they must meet the eligibility criteria for the working parent entitlements, including the minimum income requirement and the requirement to reconfirm via the Childcare Service every 3 months. This remains the same when the adoption order is granted by the court.

How do I apply for a nursery or childminder place?

All early years education providers manage their own admissions. Contact the school or setting you would like your child to attend, and they will advise you of their availability of places. You will be asked to complete an application form and provide proof of 2 year, or 30-hour entitlement eligibility as outlined earlier in the document.

All local authorities provide details of early education providers within your local community through their Families Information Service:

[County Durham's Families Information Service | County Durham's Families Information Service](#)

Our ambition is for all children in care to attend settings with an Ofsted judgement of 'Good' or better.

Advice and support with regards to choosing the right provision for your child can be offered through the Virtual School.

The Early Years Personal Education Plan (EYPEP) is a vital part of a child's care plan and records information about a child in care who attends your setting; particularly relevant to their education alongside identifying outcomes and aspirations to support children's learning.

Expectations of early years settings, maintained nursery schools and nursery units within an infant or primary school or academy

Early Years professionals play a pivotal role in supporting and encouraging a child's development and education. This is particularly important for those children in care and enables them to get support to meet their needs as early as possible.

In September 2020 we implemented the Early Years PEP for children accessing their nursery education entitlement (3- and 4-year-olds) and in September 2021 we introduced the EYPEP to children accessing their 2-year-old nursery education entitlement: children are eligible for this entitlement from the term after their 2nd birthday.

The role of the Designated Teacher/Person

All schools including nursery schools are required to have a designated teacher for children in care. The designated teacher should consult with the child's class teacher and/or keyperson and should work with the child's social worker in completing the child's EYPEP where they attend a nursery school or nursery unit within an infant or primary school.

Early years settings should identify a senior member of staff to be the designated teacher for children in our care who attend their setting. The designated teacher should consult with the child's key person and work with the child's social worker in completing the child's EYPEP.

The designated teacher/person should:

- access regular training to ensure they are familiar with their role, responsibilities and procedures that need to be followed.

- make sure all information relating to the child is relevant and up to date. This would include any changes in circumstances and ensuring that the EYPEP is regularly reviewed, and deadlines met.
- gather appropriate assessment information to inform the EYPEP.
- share any concerns about any emerging or identified special educational needs with all relevant people as early as possible and work with the SENCo (special educational needs coordinators) to ensure appropriate support is in place to address the child's needs.
- discuss any SEND needs within the PEP meeting and ensure they are reflected in the EYPEP through appropriate SMART outcomes.

What is an EYPEP?

The Early Years Personal Education Plan (EYPEP) records information about a child in care who attends your setting. It allows the designated teacher, the child's caregiver, social worker, and any other professionals involved in the child's life to come together to discuss the child's achievements, interests and review short and long-term goals. It should set high expectations of rapid progress and put in additional support the child needs to succeed.

The key mechanism for identifying and addressing the needs of the child and improving their attainment is the PEP (personal education plan).

The Early Years PEP is used to:

- ensure active involvement from different professionals and guarantees they are working together for the best outcomes for the child.
- gives an overview of the child's life and helps with transition if placement is changed.
- enables the Virtual School opportunity to monitor progress and maintain oversight of issues allowing them to plan for transition into Reception.

Who needs an EYPEP?

All children in care who are accessing their funded early education entitlement should have an EY PEP.

When should a PEP be completed?

New academic year - 2-year-olds should have PEP by October half term.

New to care

The initial PEP should be completed within 3 weeks (15 working days) of the child coming into care. The PEP should then be reviewed a further 2 times within the academic year, typically on a termly basis.

The Virtual School will notify schools and settings when a child comes into care. However, settings may become aware of a child entering care prior to the Virtual School's notification. If this happens the school or setting should contact the EY SEND & equalities team who will then confirm the child's care status.

Who is responsible for the EYPEP?

When a child is accessing their early years education the Social Worker should notify the setting that the child is in care and should work with the provider to arrange the EYPEP meeting.

It is the responsibility of the designated teacher and the social worker to update the EYPEP as and when necessary.

How is the EYPEP meeting organised?

The setting and the social worker determine a date for the initial EYPEP meeting. The educational setting will chair and host the meeting using the different headings within the PEP to guide the discussions.

Who should be invited:

- Caregiver
- Parent if appropriate
- Appropriate education colleagues involved.
- Other professionals involved such as Health colleagues.
- If a child is due to transition to another setting, then it would be appropriate to invite a designated teacher from the new setting / school.
- If required a member of the EY SEND, Equalities and Inclusion Team can attend the first PEP meeting to support the designated teacher.

The child could be invited to attend but it is more appropriate for a key worker/carer to gather their input prior to the meeting and an appropriate member of staff helps to gather the views of the child.

Designated teachers/ key person might find it helpful to gather information which would support the different sections prior to the meeting. Such information might include information around the progress the child has made, how the child presents in nursery, any support plans already in place.

How is the EYPEP completed?

Durham Virtual School EYPEPs are online and are accessed through WelfareCall. The first time you are notified of a child who is in our care that is attending your setting we will add your setting details to WelfareCall.

The designated teacher/person will be issued with a secure login by email. **Look out as this email may land in your junk folder!**

If you already have an account with WelfareCall a new child's details will appear on your list of children when you log in.

If settings require further support and advice with regards to organising and completing an EYPEP please contact EY SEND, Equalities and Inclusion team on earlyyearsend@durham.gov.uk

If settings need to change the name or details of their designated teacher/ person, they should email earlyyearssend@durham.gov.uk with the new details.

Initial PEP set up

The screenshot shows the WelfareCloud EPEP Extranet interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with options like LOGOUT, Home, MyChildren, Attendance, A2(beta), Portal, Mail (193), EPEP (74), VirtualSchool, and Reports. A support helpline number (01226 716333) and the number of EPEPs generated today (27) are also visible. The main content area displays a message about GDPR updates and a section for 'Durham Early Years for Bobby Test-Child (Early Years)'. A button labeled 'SET INITIAL PEP DATE' is highlighted. Below this, a table lists personal details: Last PEP, Last Doc Gen, SWIFT/ICI (112233), UPN (WFC1122334455), NHS, and DOB (08-10-2017). A note states 'There is NO PEP date set.' To the right, there are buttons for 'Child menu options' and 'Download options'. At the bottom, a 'DURHAM EY TEST TEMPLATE' section lists the Virtual School Head as Melanie Stubbs and provides dates for the Autumn Term (Friday 28th November 2021) and Spring Term (Friday 11th March 2022).

Once a meeting date has been confirmed the designated teacher or social worker should log on to WelfareCall select the child's PEP and SET INITIAL PEP DATE

The screenshot shows the WelfareCloud EPEP Extranet interface with a modal window titled 'Changing Next PEP Date for Bobby Test-Child'. The modal contains a note: 'NOTE: This should only be used to set the initial pep date or to re-arrange a previously set meeting date.' Below the note are three input fields: 'Enter the PEP date:', 'Time of meeting:', and 'Venue of meeting:'. A text area for 'Reason for change (Mandatory):' is also present, with a note: 'If this is the child's first PEP, please enter "First PEP" as reason'. A 'Change' button is located at the bottom of the modal. In the background, a progress bar shows steps from 1. Introduction to 10. Evaluation QA feedback, with step 2. Education highlighted. The page title 'Education' is visible at the bottom.

What happens during the meeting?

All appropriate people attending the meeting will discuss the child and relevant progress.

There are 10 sections included in the EYPEP document. These should be discussed during the meeting to enable everyone to understand the child's holistic development and identify any additional support required for the child.

1. Introduction

This section gives a synopsis of what a PEP is. It also includes key dates and time frames for you to consider when planning PEP dates, reviews and completing documentation.

When completing or updating the individual sections of the plan don't forget to SAVE the changes. There should be a reminder pop up every time you move onto another section.

2. Education

This page asks for information from the current early years / education setting. Up to date contact details and information about the child's pattern of attendance is required.

Additional information regarding how the child presents in the early years setting, emotional resilience and strategies that have been implemented to support the child are included in this section.

It is important to include up to date information about any other professionals involved with the child.

Historical information regarding previous schools, settings or childminders can be added here along with outcomes from 2-year progress check if applicable.

It should be completed by the designated teacher (DT) alongside the key person if different from DT.

3. Social Worker

This section is highlighted in blue. It is the only section that does not need to be completed by the designated teacher.

The child's social worker will complete and update all relevant information in this part.

4. SEND

If the child does not have SEND choose no SEND in the first drop down box, then move onto section 5.

If the child does have SEND, please indicate which part of the Code of Practice best reflects the stage they are at (SEN Support or EHCP).

You can upload a copy of the child's SEN support plan by selecting the child menu option in the top right corner of the page, select documents and then upload the relevant information.

5. Progress and Attainment

This section helps us to track the progress a child has made over the academic year.

GLD only needs to be completed for those children currently in Reception.

The child's learning profile is broken down into different areas relating to the EYFS. Each section allows you to select a 'best fit' in terms of where the child currently is developmentally in that area of development.

Although this may not reflect the current assessment tools early years providers use, we would expect practitioners to know developmentally where a child is working.

Additional notes can be added to the relevant term information which might give a more personal view of the child's holistic development and progress.

6. Child's voice

It's important that we capture the child's views.

This section can be completed with the child and the practitioner who knows them best. If this is not possible the child's key person might complete these using observations and their knowledge of the child.

7. The PEP Meeting

Details of all relevant people who attended the PEP can be recorded here.

Using the previous sections as points to reflect on and discuss you can gather information regarding thoughts of all involved and record in this section.

Think about what's going well for the child and any achievements. Extra-curricular activities such as dance classes, forest school sessions, swimming might be things the child enjoys and can also be added to this part of the document.

Pupil premium decisions (EYPP) should be recorded here and the impact of what it has been spent on. This should be in line with any outcomes you've identified and should support the child's progress.

During the meeting you might agree some actions that need to be completed before the next PEP meeting. This might include arranging transitions to another provider, making a referral to another professional. This detail allows you to record who is responsible and a realistic timescale agreed between all parties.

The date and time of the next PEP meeting must be agreed and recorded at this point.

Sections highlighted in orange are mandatory fields and must be completed. You will not be able to complete the PEP unless these sections are finished.

8. Outcomes

If this is the initial PEP, then at the end of the meeting outcomes will be agreed. They need to be SMART and relevant to the child. Think about the progress and attainment section. Are there any areas the child finds challenging and might need extra support?

If this is a review, then the previous outcomes should be evaluated and new ones agreed.

9. Other information

This allows you to record any additional information you feel might be significant.

10. Evaluation and Quality Assurance

All outcomes should be SMART (sections 6 and 7) which are:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Realistic
- Time related

Targets should be reviewed at the next EYPEP meeting.

A child's emotional wellbeing is supported and promoted through high quality early education. Whilst observations of the child may reflect that they are typically developing a target should always be considered to support emotional wellbeing and resilience. This may reflect some of the measures or appropriate interventions the setting uses to support wellbeing or a 'next step' for the child in terms of their emotional resilience.

At the end of the meeting each person should be clear about their role and actions in ensuring the EYPEP is implemented. It is the responsibility of the designated teacher to make sure appropriate provision is in place in line with the agreed outcomes.

What happens after the meeting?

Both the designated teacher and the social worker should complete the relevant sections of the EYPEP on Welfare Call within **10** working days of the PEP meeting.

Once your section is finalised you must check either the designated teacher or social worker button on the front of the EPEP. This will notify the Virtual School that the PEP is completed.

The EYPEP is then quality assured by the Virtual School within **10** working days. Once quality assurance is completed the final PEP is available to download and circulate by the social worker to the child's carer and other meeting attendees where appropriate.

What happens if a child is moving settings?

For children moving settings a review of the EYPEP should be completed ideally within 10 days, that details the transition plan and the identified school or setting.

It is important that all sections of the child's current EYPEP are reviewed and that they reflect the new provision. Any transition plans should be referenced.

Starting school

For those children starting school for the first time the local authority will offer all children a full-time school place from the September following their fourth birthday. Children must be receiving full-time education by the start of the term following their fifth birthday.

Carers should follow their local authorities school admission procedures which will be found on the website of the local authority in which they currently live and complete an application form by **January 15th** in the academic year in which the child turns 4.

Social workers must ensure that an application has been made for a school place.

Primary school places are allocated in line with published admissions criteria. If your preferred school has too many applications for the number of available school places, it is considered oversubscribed. In this instance the admissions authority uses previously agreed criteria to allocate school places in order. The first criteria identify that:

*Children who are 'looked after' or a child who was previously looked after but immediately after being looked after became subject to an adoption, child arrangements, or special guardianship order** **should be prioritised for a school place.**

Parents and carers are informed of place by National Offer Day (April) following application.