

Walsall Virtual School

Specialist Support Team Handbook



Educational Psychology, Speech and Language Therapy
and CAMHS Education Service



Walsall Council





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General Introduction

This Specialist Support Team Handbook is designed for those who work closely with looked after and previously looked after children and young people who are currently in the care of Walsall Local Authority or have left care but still attend a Walsall school, such as:

- Designated Teachers for Looked After Children
- Teaching staff
- Foster carers
- Social Workers
- Head Teachers
- SENDCos

The Walsall Virtual School aims to bring about positive change for Looked After children and young people where there are concerns about their learning, behaviour, emotional well-being or mental health. We do this by working with the people who know children best – their parents and carers, their teachers and other professionals who are involved. Central to this is the involvement of a Specialist Support Team, who can consult, advise and direct in complex cases. The Specialist Support Team (SST) is made up of Educational Psychologists, CAHMS practitioners and Speech and Language Therapists. The role and support of the SST is outlined in this handbook.



Educational Psychologist Specialist Support

This section of the handbook will cover the specialist support provided by the Educational Psychologists working within the Walsall Virtual School.

Educational Psychology Services are commissioned by Walsall Virtual School to support looked after and previously looked after children who are experiencing social and emotional difficulties within the school or care placements, with the following aims:

- To improve the emotional wellbeing of children and young people
- To enhance education and care placement stability by supporting staff, foster carers and all relevant adults in implementing holistic support with the child or young person.
- To promote nurturing and attachment friendly environments in all relevant settings for LAC including schools, foster placements, nurseries, care homes etc.
- To ensure that schools and settings have the capacity to support children and young people who have attachment and trauma difficulties.
- To work closely and collaboratively with other agencies to support children, school staff and parents/carers
- To work effectively with social workers and carers
- To apply effective models of psychology to promote positive change and to raise standards of achievement and well-being

Our Educational Psychologists are registered with the Health Care Professionals Council (HCPC) and follow strict professional guidelines to ensure we work ethically and professionally.

Educational Psychologists with the Walsall Virtual School support Looked After and previously looked after children and young people whose needs can be understood to be acting as a barrier to their inclusion in education. This can be children or young people:

- whose development seems different from their peers'
- who have identified problems/medical needs affecting their development
- who have been affected by stress, anxiety or trauma
- who have mental health concerns
- who are finding it hard to learn
- whose behaviour is causing concern

There are four areas of special educational need described in the Code of Practice and EPs support children and young people whose needs fall within or across any of these four areas: Cognition and Learning, Social Emotional and Mental Health, Communication and Interaction and Sensory and/or Physical needs.

Input Provided by Educational Psychologists

Settings must be able to show that they have already tried and reviewed a range of different strategies to support the child or young person.

Following the referral process, if they meet the criteria for involvement, children and young people will be allocated to one of our two educational psychologists.

Following an initial consultation with the Walsall Virtual school Education Advisors a consultation with the education setting and the carers, a plan of action will be developed based on the presenting concerns and the needs of those involved.

In all instances if involvement is agreed the EPs will work directly with the key adults supporting the child or young person in order to best meet their needs.

Following the initial consultation it may become apparent that the child or young person, and relevant adults are managing well, and that no intervention will be offered at that time.

Systemic Work

Systemic support is essential for children and young people struggling socially and emotionally, especially if they are looked after or have experienced trauma.

Systemic support aims to ensure that the child or young person's environment, and therefore the adults around them (known as the 'systems' around the child) are compatible to their needs.

Systemic support could include:

- Small-group consultations e.g. solution circle work around a particular child/children
- Individual consultation for key adults around a child/children
- Supporting the management of organisational change
- Supporting self-evaluation and school improvement
- Carrying out development work
- Being involved in school based projects and action research to enhance inclusion and equal opportunities
- Supporting the development and evaluation of policies and practice
- Supporting work with parents and carers
- Working with staff to set up group based interventions such as coaching staff support groups and carer group support

The level and length of involvement will vary depending on need and will be regularly reviewed by the EP and the Walsall Virtual Phase Leads. With all systemic involvement we would expect to make follow-up contacts to help embed skills and understanding.

Whole-Setting Training

If a setting (e.g. school or care home) appears to have a particular area of need, or has a particularly high number of looked after or previously looked after children, we would be able to provide whole-setting training on a specific topic or topics related to supporting LAC. Support can be tailored to specific needs.

Training could also be delivered for small groups of staff within a setting, such as those responsible for supporting a particular child or group of children.

Example training topics are as follows:

- Developing an attachment friendly environment
- Background and principles of attachment theory
- Restorative approaches including Restorative Justice
- Developing attachment friendly behaviour policies
- Strategies and target setting for LAC
- Developing an environment that positively supports social and emotional wellbeing
- Developing a 'listening school'
- Promoting behaviour as a form of communication
- De-escalation strategies
- Meeting needs to enhance self-esteem
- Differentiation

Small-Group Consultation around a Child or Young Person

Consultation involves working with a part of the network or system around an individual, explicitly for the benefit of that child or young person. This also may involve working on the interactions between a child or young person and the adults around them.

A consultation, led by the EP, would be an opportunity to discuss issues and concerns, share successes and useful strategies, plan possible ways forward, and reflect on progress.

If a target child or young person has been identified we would set up short-to-medium term consultation sessions with key adults working with them. The length of involvement would be reviewed by the EP involved. We would expect these consultation sessions would include, but are not limited to:

- The foster carers
- Social Workers
- Class teachers
- SENCo
- Designated Teacher
- Member of Senior Management
- Teaching Assistants.

Individual Consultation for Adults around a Child or Young Person

Individual consultation can also be offered independently or alongside small group consultation in order to support individuals working with the child or young person. This could be for the adults who have a lot of direct contact with the child, and might benefit from additional support; adults such as foster carers, social workers, class teachers or teaching Assistants.

This support could include discussing concerns, developing a support plan, evaluating the success of strategies and considering the child or young person's difficulties in relation to their previous experiences.

Criteria for Involvement

Involvement would be based on the need of each individual child or young person, and allocated depending on the capacity of the educational psychologists involved.

Particular risk factors would be considered for each child or young person, which can include the following:

- Risk of foster placement breakdown
- Risk of school placement breakdown
- High levels of challenging behaviour
- Dramatic changes in behaviour or mood
- Dramatic changes in academic attainment
- Engagement in risky behaviours (e.g. alcohol or substance misuse, sexually concerning behaviours etc.)
- Signs of sexual exploitation, or being at risk of sexual exploitation
- Changes within the foster placement
- Signs of self-harm
- Mental health issues, or signs thereof
- History of fixed or permanent exclusions
- Part-time timetable for longer than half a term.

Virtual School Complex Needs Panel

Referrals for EP involvement will be considered by the Walsall Virtual School Lead and Phase Leads, who meet regularly through the school year.

At these meetings one of the following decisions will be made for each case:

- 1 Initial consultation assessment agreed.
- 2 Urgency or referral as in some cases, especially when the EP has limited capacity there may be a waiting list.
- 3 Intervention currently not offered. The panel feels that direct involvement does not currently appear to be necessary.

Following panel, the referrers will be contacted by representatives of the panel to be told of the decision.

What happens when an Initial consultation is agreed?

If the panel decision is that an initial consultation is agreed, the referrer will be contacted by a Virtual School Officer and within 10 working days will receive an informed consent form together with a teacher questionnaire and parent questionnaire.

At this point, an initial consultation will be arranged with an EP for within 15 working days of panel.

For cases on a waiting list we would aim to set up an initial consultation within the next half term at the latest. Before the initial consultation can begin an informed consent form will need to be completed by the individual with parental responsibility. A carer and teacher questionnaire will also need to be completed. It is also important that the SDQ is completed on ePEP.

The initial consultation will be an opportunity to discuss main concerns and for the referrer and EP to agree on an action plan for future involvement. The referrer will retain their own copy of the teacher and carer questionnaires and will be responsible for collating a record of the contact with the EP which summarises concerns and the agreed upon action plan, for their records.

If further involvement is agreed at the Initial Consultation stage a second contact will be arranged by the allocated EP. This will happen within a further 15 working days of the initial consultation (excluding holiday times).

What happens if intervention is not currently agreed?

If the panel decides that no intervention is currently needed, it could be because it appears that the child or young person's level of need do not meet the required threshold, and the setting seems to be managing well.

Due to limited capacity it will be important for panel to consider the needs of all the children and young people, and allocate a limited number of cases according to level of need. If it appears that capacity may become available in the next half term the child or young person could be placed on a waiting list.

In the event of a 'no' decision some general strategies may be shared by the Education Advisors. The referrer would be able to re-refer if circumstances change or if the referrer has more evidence.

In the event of a re-referral it may be helpful to gather more evidence for the Panel. This could include individual education plans to demonstrate the support that has already been implemented, and the impact this has had or a record of incidents including dates and duration of the incidents. It is vital that ePEP data is current and up to date for the children who are referred in order to support the work of the EP. Re-referrals can be emailed directly; details of which will be included in the decision letter.

Emergency Referrals

Emergency referrals may also be accepted in extreme circumstances. Emergency referrals for work from an Educational Psychologist can also be made directly to the Walsall Virtual School Lead, Lorraine Thompson. In emergencies one of the EPs would aim to complete an emergency consultation within 5 days of referral. However, this timeline is only possible during term-times.

An emergency could include a sudden and dramatic change in behaviour/demeanour, or imminent threat of placement breakdown (in the home or in school).

The emergency referral process may need to be reviewed if it becomes unmanageable within the capacity of the team.

Who can refer?

Referrals for support from Walsall Virtual School EPs are made through the child's Designated Teacher.

Consent forms

Following a successful referral, consent forms will be sent out to the individual with parental responsibility, usually the child's Social Worker. Teacher and Carer questionnaires will also be sent out. Consent forms will have to be completed in order for work to begin. Consent forms can be scanned and emailed to the address given on the consent form.

Evaluation

Methods of evaluation may include SDQ data, pre- and post-intervention scaling measures, focus groups, individual discussions, questionnaires, training evaluation forms and classroom observations, where appropriate.

Speech and Language Specialist Support

This section of the handbook will cover the specialist support provided by the Speech and Language Therapists working within the Walsall Virtual School.

The Walsall Virtual School team has two Speech and Language Therapists (SaLTs) who support schools and carers, provide training and work directly with children and young people to maximise their communication skills.

We offer advice and support for children and young people who have speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) either as a specific area of difficulty or associated with other difficulties. Specific areas of need may include:

- difficulties in understanding and/or using spoken language
- learning and retrieving vocabulary
- speaking clearly
- talking fluently
- communicating effectively in social situations

RCLST 5 Good Communication Standards

Walsall Virtual School promotes the RCLST (Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists) 5 good communication standards as listed below for both professionals and children/young people receiving services.

For professionals:

1. There is a detailed description of how best to communicate with individuals
2. Services demonstrate how they support individuals with communication needs to be involved with decisions about their care and their services
3. Staff value and use competently the best approaches to communicate with each individual they support
4. Services create opportunities, relationships and environments that make individuals want to communicate
5. Individuals are supported to understand and express their needs in relation to their health and wellbeing

For children and young people receiving services:

1. There is good information that tells people how best to communicate with me
2. Staff help me to be involved in making decisions about my care and support
3. Staff are good at supporting me with my communication
4. I have lots of chances to communicate
5. Staff help me to understand and communicate about my health and how I am feeling

Aims of Walsall Virtual School Speech and Language Therapy Support

- **Screen:** All children who are taken into the care of Walsall LA (3-18 years old) require a screen of their speech, language and communication skills to be completed within their educational setting. Support for this is available through the Virtual School team.
- **Train:** Advice is available for carers and teaching staff to enhance use of positive communication strategies in the school and home environments. This can be done through specific case discussion and group training sessions delivered throughout the academic year.
- **Support:** Any children or young people who are identified as having SLCN will be offered appropriate support and intervention. The speech and language therapists can facilitate access to core NHS Speech and Language Therapy services with provision of an enhanced service when beneficial for the child/young person, educational setting or carer. This may be in terms of timeliness, location and resource allocation and consist of school visits, informal and formal assessments, individual therapeutic programmes, strategy advice and, when requested, attendance at PEP meetings and LAC reviews.

The Virtual School Specialist Support Team works with children who are looked after by Walsall Local Authority. We offered a tiered approach as follows:

- Screening programme
- Indirect Support
- Direct Support

Speech, Language & Communication Needs – Screening Programme

Educational settings are required to complete a speech, language and communication screen for all children new into the care of Walsall Local Authority, with support for screening available from Virtual School on request.

The screening tools currently in use are:

Early Years – WELLCOMM

KS1 & KS2 – WELLCOMM Primary

KS3 & KS4 – Afasic Indicators Checklist

The outcome of the screen will be discussed at the child's initial PEP meeting.



Accessing Walsall Virtual School Speech and Language Therapy Support

Additional support for SLCN can be requested by completing the generic Walsall Virtual School Service Request Form. Further information will be gathered and ongoing management will be agreed taking into consideration the following factors:

- Current or previous involvement with NHS Speech and Language Services
- Response to school based SLCN interventions (e.g. WellComm, TalkBoost, in-house language groups or Afasic Indicators Checklist strategies)
- The child's communication skills in a range of settings (e.g. at home with carers/parents, with adults at school and with their peers)
- Primary presenting need
- Communication in relation to learning ability. Progress with other skills, (e.g. gross and fine motor skills, cognitive development)
- Previous life experiences and learning opportunities
- The types of intervention or support required to enhance the child's communication skills
- Involvement with other professionals including Educational Psychology and CAMHs
- Location of current placement and educational establishment

Indirect Support

Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust Speech and Language Therapy Referral paperwork is not required for this level of involvement.

Ongoing management may involve:

- discussion following queries raised at PEP meetings
- gathering of more detailed information regarding the factors listed above
- indirect support through strategy advice to educational setting / keyworkers / carers
- liaison with other professionals e.g. CAMHs, Educational Psychology to ensure that
- SLCN are being addressed

Children or young people living and / or attending an educational setting outside the Walsall area:

- If they are not known to their local NHS speech and language therapy service but a referral is indicated we will offer support in gathering the relevant information for referral
- if they are already known to their local NHS speech and language therapy service we will liaise to ensure that appropriate support is in place for their SLCN.

Direct Support

If the need for assessment or direct intervention by a speech and language therapist is identified a referral to Walsall NHS Speech and Language Therapy will be made in agreement with the child or young person's social worker. This referral will be actioned by the Walsall Virtual School speech and language therapists in collaboration with other professionals who are working with the child or young person.

For children who are already known to Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust speech and language therapy department enhanced direct work can be offered on consultation with their current managing therapist. Enhanced support may consist of school visits, informal and formal assessments, individual therapeutic programmes, strategy advice and, when requested, attendance at PEP meetings and LAC reviews.

RCSLT guidance for partnership working with other SaLTs

‘The HCPC requires that all speech and language therapists work in partnership with colleagues, both within and outside the profession, in the best interest of service-users.

All SLTs should liaise fully with other professionals who may also be working with the individual.

Consent must be gained for sharing information from the service-user and the positive role that sharing information has on their care explained to the service-user.

In the case of two SLTs providing services to the same user, consideration of the possibility of test score invalidation and any deleterious effects of possible dual involvement should be borne in mind. Where appropriate a pathway for collaborative working to effectively address these issues will be established.

Where it is considered in the individual’s best-interests to receive professional help from two SLT practitioners, it may be best for one SLT to undertake the lead role in the coordination of case management. However, in some circumstances, share responsibility may be appropriate. Optimal case management will vary according to the needs of the individual.

This responsibility should be delegated after discussion, and steps should be taken to clarify with the individual the nature of the arrangement that has been reached.’



Virtual School CAMHS Education Service

This section of the handbook will cover the role of the Virtual School CAMHS Practitioner (this service is new to the VS so will develop further over time)

The aim of the Virtual School CAMHS Education Service

The aim of the Virtual School CAMHS Education Service is to improve the emotional wellbeing of looked after and previously looked after children and young people by enhancing educational placement stability.

The primary role of the CAMHS practitioner is to support education placement stability by delivering direct support to designated teachers, teachers and support staff to increase and improve the emotional wellbeing and mental health provision for looked after and previously looked after children.

Support provided by the CAMHS Practitioner may involve:

- Consultations with teaching staff to help them manage children's emotional behaviour in the classroom.
- Carrying out school observations of children and young people and working with teaching staff to develop care plans
- Delivering time limited direct work to children where needs indicate regarding emotional support where it is adversely impacting on the child's capacity for learning
- Referrals to Teir 3 CAMHS following assessment of needs for further support where needed
- Delivering bespoke training packages or workshops where there are themes of support identified
- Delivering strategies that are evidence based, needs led, trauma/attachment focussed (PACE),

Criteria for CAMHS involvement

Involvement would be based on the need of each individual child or young person and allocated depending on the capacity of the practitioner involved.

Risk factors considered for each child and young person can include:

- Risk of school placement breakdown
- Risk of self harm
- School refusal
- Attachment difficulties
- Low mood/anxiety
- Conduct difficulties
- Relationship difficulties
- Gender identity disorders

Who can refer to the CAMHS Education Support Service?

Referrals for CAMHS involvement will need to be initially requested through the child's EPEP meeting and then a referral form is to be completed by the Designated Teacher. Completed referrals will then be considered at the Virtual School Complex Needs panel. Once the panel decision is made schools will be informed within 10 days of the panel and contacted by our CAMHS practitioner if the referral is accepted.

What happens once the referral is accepted?

Once the referral is accepted our CAMHS Practitioner will contact you to arrange an initial consultation appointment to gather further information to explore whether additional CAMHS support is needed. Additional support may include further consultations, time limited direct work with the child, teachers or support staff, individual or group training and workshops where a specific need has been identified.

What happens if the referral is not accepted?

If the panel decides that no intervention from our CAMHS Practitioner is currently needed, it could be because it appears that the child or young person's level of need do not meet the required threshold and the education setting seems to be managing well or it is felt that another service would be more appropriate.

As this is a new service for the Virtual School it is envisaged that this service will continue to develop. However due to limited capacity it will be important for panel to consider the needs of all the children and young people, and allocate a limited number of cases according to level of need. Re-referrals will be considered. It is advised that schools outline clearly in the referral what support or interventions have been provided to date to support the emotional and mental health needs of the child or young person.



Specialist Support Referral Form

To request a service from the Walsall Virtual School Offer, please complete and return the following request form.

Date of request: _____

Name of child or young person:	
NCY	
Named Social Worker:	
Name of education provision:	

Which service(s) are you requesting?
Reason for request:

Referee Details	
Name of person making the request:	
Company/ service:	
Relationship to child/ young person:	
Contact number:	
Contact email:	

Request discussed with (please tick all that apply):
<input type="checkbox"/> Child or young person
<input type="checkbox"/> Social worker
<input type="checkbox"/> Carer(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> Parent(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> Education provider
<input type="checkbox"/> Virtual School
<input type="checkbox"/> Other, please state: _____

Thank you for completing the request for services from Walsall Virtual School.

To please send back requests to the Virtual school at walsallvirtualschool@walsall.gov.uk.

Notes

Notes

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