

# I Need to Belong

## A Cultural Entitlement for All Learners



# I Need to Belong - A Cultural Entitlement for All Learners

## Executive Summary

Children and young people who experience care, disadvantage or vulnerability are disproportionately excluded from consistent access to arts, culture and wider enrichment opportunities. Yet evidence consistently shows that participation in arts and cultural activity plays a critical role in building wellbeing, identity, belonging, confidence and engagement in education and society.

This document serves as guidance, advice and support for strategic leaders and professionals across Children's Services, Education, Health and the Arts and Cultural sector to recognise and embed a cultural entitlement as a core component of our collective Corporate Parenting responsibilities.

Produced by the Midlands Arts Partnership for Care Experienced Children and Young People, this work draws on over a decade of evidence-based practice, action research and cross-sector collaboration across the East and West Midlands. It is informed by the lived experiences of care-experienced children and young people, and the learning of practitioners working across education, social care and the cultural sector.

The evidence is clear. Arts and cultural engagement supports improvements in mental health, confidence, motivation, school engagement and social connection. Trauma-informed creative programmes create safe spaces where children and young people can explore identity, build trusting relationships and develop transferable life skills. These benefits extend beyond individual outcomes, strengthening carers' understanding, professional practice and system-wide collaboration.

This guidance document outlines the importance of targeting access to arts and culture can create a more consistent, connected and inclusive offer for all our children and young people. It strongly recommends that each individual has 'universal championing' to enhance embedded systems and the sense of belonging and self-worth. Furthermore, it provides practical strategies to overcome the potential barriers such as cost, transport, instability, placement moves and lack of coordination between services.



At a time of increasing concerns about wellbeing, attendance and disengagement, this document outlines how a cultural entitlement can actively move from aspiration to expectation.

This will ensure:

- *Arts and culture are recognised as essential to children and young people's development, not optional enrichment*
- *Cultural entitlement is embedded within corporate parenting practice, policy and accountability*
- *Relational-focused, trauma-informed, inclusive and flexible cultural provision is available and accessible, supporting all children and young people to thrive, build belonging and grow into healthy, confident adults.*
- *Partnership working between education, social care and cultural organisations is strengthened*
- *Practical barriers to participation are removed or minimised*
- *Awareness and the currency of cultural engagement is raised, captured and valued within existing processes such as Personal Education Plans, Internal recording and reporting systems, Looked After Reviews and Annual Health Assessments.*

This document strongly recommends that school leaders and key professionals:

- *Provide Safe, Creative Spaces – all projects prioritised trust and emotional safety before artistic risk-taking.*
- *Enable Co-Production and Youth Voice – young people actively shaped design and delivery.*
- *Embed Trauma-Informed Practice at the centre of Arts programmes – flexible, emotionally aware delivery was central across all models.*
- *Enhance Social Bonds and Belonging – peer networks and trusted adult relationships proved key to sustained engagement.*
- *Identify and Mitigate for Practical Barriers – transport, scheduling, and communication challenges were a feature of all projects that had to be worked through and solved*
- *Integrate Capacity-Building and Learning – practitioners and carers developed confidence in youth voice and trauma-informed approaches.*
- *Create Pathways and Progression – provide clear guidance for post-16 creative opportunities.*
- *Engage parents, guardians and foster carers.*

This document has been developed to support the key adults and professionals around our most vulnerable young people, including:

**Education** – Head Teachers, Teachers, Designated Teachers, Mentors, SENCO's, Pastoral Leads, Safeguarding Leads, Parent/Carers, Virtual School Professionals, MAT leaders and/or CEO's

**Social Care** – Directors of Children Services, Social Workers, Foster Carers, Youth Workers, Participation Officers

Health – Nurses, Mental Health Professionals, Dr's

**Criminal Justice** – Youth Offending Teams, VRU, Police

**Other agencies** - Arts Council, Arts providers and organisations

It recognises and strongly advocates for, the positive impact a cultural entitlement has on all individuals and helps to meet and overcome many of the challenges faced across the system.

This document, has been produced by the **Midlands Arts Partnership for Care Experienced Children and Young People**, with the aim to call for more cohesive and comprehensive guidance, support, funding and capacity within statutory services and education to ensure a cultural entitlement for every child/young person experiencing vulnerabilities and disadvantage, including those that are care experienced.

The partnership is made up of representatives from The Mighty Creatives, Arts Connect, Attachment Research Community and Virtual Schools across the East and West Midlands. The document comes from over a decade of developing evidence-based programmes for care experienced children and young people, and their subsequent learning and demonstrated impacts.

These proposals recognise that whilst care-experienced children and young people are at the centre of the recommendations and work, those from a disadvantaged, those with a social worker and those with SEND would also benefit from more targeting and support to access a cultural entitlement. It is highly likely that these children and young people are not, or have limited engagement in cultural activity.

In this document, we call on strategic leaders and all key professionals across Children's Services, Education and the Arts and Cultural sector to prioritise a cultural entitlement for all children and young people, in particular every care experienced child and young person, as part of our Corporate Parenting responsibilities to ensure our children are growing up to be happy and healthy adults.

## The Context

If an adult was asked to consider what hobbies, pastimes and activities they engage in during their own free time, the majority would include an aspect of arts and culture in their answer.

A second question could be, who introduced/encouraged this interest?

The response likely would include a 'key adult', probably including parents and possibly teachers.

Is this the case for our Children in Care or for disadvantaged young people?

The pressures that education has faced in recent years have seen a reduction in the arts and cultural offer in many schools. At a time when there is a greater awareness around the importance of good mental health and a positive sense of belonging, it is vital we have a more balanced and varied learning offer to ensure all our children and young people are able to be creative to use their own free time purposefully and in a way that enhances their wider experiences.

The role as 'Corporate Parent' is a wide ranging one, that helps to 'pull together' the different strands for a child or young person in care. It engages a range of potential 'key' adults rather than one individual.

The leadership of this work, whilst highly likely to be 'distributed', needs the focal point of recording, encouraging the sharing and discussion of cultural experiences both formally and informally.

So, who takes the lead on behalf of each child or young person, care experienced or individual experiencing vulnerabilities?

Indeed, who ensures that each child or young person has an enriched education – academic, social, emotional, physical and cultural?



## Understanding the Challenge

In focusing upon our most vulnerable children and young people, in addition to increased exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences and Trauma, we hear all too often of the disadvantages that Care Experienced children and young people face.

In November 2024, the Department for Education released key stats on the current state of the care system.

**18,040** Children in Care are moved over 20 miles away from their local area.

**2,570** Care Leavers (aged 17-21) were found to be living in accommodation deemed unsuitable by their own Local Authority.

Over the past decade, there's been a **51%** increase in children living more than 20 miles from their local area.

**39%** of Care Leavers are Not in Education, Employment or Training.

**45%** of Children in Care are now living out of their Local Authority area.

There are also growing concerns about the disengagement of our children and young people.

We welcome the Government's announcement to prioritise the reform of Children's Social Care, announced in November 2024. We welcome their plans for Staying Close support to be available to all care leavers up until the age of 25, as well as their plans to extend Corporate Parenting Responsibilities to a wider range of public bodies.

The Promoting the Education of Looked After and Previously Looked After Children Statutory Guidance states that it is our duty as corporate parents to 'act in the best interests and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing of children and young people' (Gov 2018).

Key components of this approach to corporate parenting should include **building positive relationships, supporting consistency, positive reinforcement and empowering the child to thrive, not just survive.**

But where are we making these a priority amongst our statutory duties and reporting mechanisms?



## Key Research Findings:

An Arts Council funded research programme, Collaborate & Innovate, was successful in achieving its intended outcomes of building partnerships, developing capacity, embedding research, and supporting young people's engagement with the arts. The strongest theme is the value of strategic facilitation and bridging roles.

The research programme focussed on eight key questions, working with care-experience children and young people, and alongside Arts specialist professionals (from Adverse Camber, Arena Theatre, Care To Dance, Junction Arts, NMPAT, Voice, Orchestras Live and Culture Coventry).

The programme was designed, led and evaluated by Arts Connect and The Mighty Creatives and involved training 28 arts organisations in trauma informed practice. Of these eight organisations then partnered with one of the Virtual Schools Coventry, Derbyshire, Dudley, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Rutland, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Wolverhampton to undertake an action research project.

These were:

- *Can music participation encourage a sense of belonging for UASC young people?*
- *What does 'cultural and identity needs' mean to care experienced children and young people?*
- *How does music education need to adapt to capture all children in need and children in care?*
- *What impact does trauma-informed practice have on engagement and retention?*
- *Can storytelling activities support youth voice in primary aged children?*
- *How do foster carers own experiences influence what cultural opportunities they provide for their young people?*
- *What knowledge of creative careers already exists within VSs and how can we encourage more care leavers to take this route?*

There were a number of key consolidated findings from seven of the action research projects that leaders and key professionals might consider when planning their Arts offers in order that they include all vulnerable children and young people.

The creative sessions build trust, cross-cultural connections, and participant confidence. In organizing any programme, recruitment success came from incentives, friend referrals, and visual communication. This planning also benefits from identifying, considering and addressing potential barriers (e.g. transport, cost, awareness, cultural unfamiliarity with arts, timings re: cultural festivals).

An Arts offer for children and young people improves confidence, self-belief, and mental health. It also creates significant boosts in motivation for school and self-esteem, as observed by Carers. Indeed, the importance

of the potential role of Carers needs to be recognized not only for their support (eg transport provision), but also the impact on their understanding of identity broadened this beyond heritage/gender. Importantly, public outcome and exhibition are identified a critical part of this research and value.

The power and effectiveness of co-production is a strong theme as this leads to inclusive programming and stronger social bonds. This may also benefit from the availability and continued support of translation tools and peer interpretation to help overcome potential language barriers.

A flexible design will plan for and allow for drop-in attendance, essential for participants with unstable schedules, with a no-blame and inclusive ethos. In the event that a programme includes refreshments, it is worth noting that culturally appropriate food and informal socialising increased engagement.

There are also benefits for the key professionals workforce around the children and young people illustrated by Social workers developing a deeper understanding of trauma-informed and being able to build personal relationships with children through their active participation.

The action research also identified further benefits beyond an experience within the Arts. A focus on relationship-building was central with flexibility being essential for recruitment and engagement. This allows and is supported by the creation of safe creative spaces which helps to encourage authentic conversations.

The range of Arts experiences available is critical in meeting the needs of our most vulnerable children and young people. For example, story mapping created emotional safety, self-expression, and identity exploration, whilst Podcasting can be used as a creative consultation tool to explore barriers to arts engagement and creative careers, and group singing fostered inclusion, aspiration, and emotional safety. It is this engagement in the Arts that transformed initial reluctance into pride and enthusiasm for performance and enabled ownership of creative process which further deepened engagement. These programmes also have the potential for evolving into leadership opportunities and potential accreditation, and help Young People to not only be aware of creative industries but also about possible career routes.



## The Vital Benefits of Cultural Entitlement

“Art makes me feel, no, it truly makes me feel,

I used to be empty, lost, bare,

But that gap is now filled, and art is there.

My happy place, a sense of belonging.

A feeling close to our hearts and souls, a feeling like a brew.”

*The Power of the Arts, a poem written by Care Experienced Children and Young People in Leicestershire.*

We know that engaging in arts and cultural activity can have profound positive impacts on children and young people’s sense of self, identity, confidence and belonging, encouraging better and more positive engagement in education, employment, training and the world around them.

Through a research project conducted by The Mighty Creatives in 2024, they found that arts, cultural and creative activities positively impacted children and young people’s:

**confidence, communication skills and positive mental health**

And improves their abilities to:

**learn, explore new creative skills, develop stronger relationships and express themselves confidently.**

Out of all Local Authority partners interviewed in this research, **89%** reported that creativity was instrumental to these changes that they had observed in their children and young people.



“They have a stronger belief in themselves, starting to develop their own identity and can find joy in life.”

*Virtual School Staff Member about a child’s engagement in arts and cultural activity.*

These are the core foundational skills we all need to engage positively in society, education, employment and training, and to be most importantly, happy and healthy adults.

More broadly, the health and wellbeing benefits of young people’s participation in the arts and culture are very well documented, for example Cultural Learning Alliance’s report *The Arts for Every Child* shares that:

- *University of Nottingham, RSC and Tate reported in 2018 that nearly half of students sampled (45% / 671 CYP) said that engagement in the arts helps them relax and reduce stress.*
- *Schellenberg et al. in 2015 found that ‘children who take part in regular arts activities show significant improvement in social cohesion, cooperation and pro-social attitudes’.*
- *Cultural Learning Alliance in 2017 found that children who engage in the arts are more likely to volunteer, and more likely to vote, as adults.*
- *Lee Elliot Major and Stephen Machin in 2018 shared that ‘there is growing evidence that accumulating essential life skills as well as social and cultural capital is instrumental for future life prospects’.*

Furthermore, Kisida and Brown in 2019 found that:

*‘A substantial increase in arts educational experiences has remarkable impacts on students’ academic, social and emotional outcomes’.*

At a time where there are major concerns around school attendance the Centre For Young Lives (2025) suggest that:

*‘Enrichment has a proven impact on various positive factors like mental and physical health and wellbeing, positive relationships, learning and development, confidence and a sense of belonging – all of which are also proven to be associated with higher school attendance’.*

And The Social Biobehavioural Research Group in 2023 suggests that:

*‘Children and young people who participate in arts and cultural activities: Display less hyperactivity and inattention, and fewer antisocial or criminal behaviours. Have better prosocial behaviours such as empathy or helping others. Are less likely to smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol and use substances’.*

In considering the wider cohort within disadvantaged families:

*'The links between enrichment and attendance are likely to be compounded for children and young people in poverty, as they are more likely to be absent from school and less likely to have access to enrichment activities. There is a well-evidenced strong association between poverty and school absence, and research also shows that children and young people in poverty are adversely affected by a lack of access to enrichment activities'.*

(Centre For Young Lives – 2025)

The data on the positive impacts of arts and culture on childhood, adolescent and adult development goes on, and on.

A broader offer will help to ensure that more individuals will have the opportunity to be successful in learning, resulting in enhanced self-worth, improving their sense of belonging and helping to raise aspirations.

*When we have this rich data, why wait when we can act now and make Arts and Culture an entitlement for all children and young people, but especially for Care Experienced children and young people?*

It could therefore be suggested that cultural activities, including sports, arts clubs, volunteering, social action and adventures away from home, have been shown to promote children and young people's engagement with education, improve their mental and physical health, and even offer protection from involvement in violence.



## A Story of Belonging: Poppy's Journey – An Impact Study of Engagement

When Poppy first started dance, she wanted what many young people want - to feel free, to express herself, to belong. But her early experience in a college performing arts course left her feeling exposed and judged. She struggled with coordination and confidence and began to feel singled out, often rehearsing alone while others worked in groups. Break times were spent away from peers, sitting quietly in a nearby room when things felt too overwhelming.

At that point in her life, Poppy had already experienced trauma. She had entered care at the age of twelve, following years of instability, fear and loss at home. Anxiety became part of her everyday life. In unfamiliar or pressured environments, it was hard to trust, hard to regulate emotions, and hard to believe she belonged.

When Poppy joined a trauma-informed dance class, she did not expect to stay. She thought she might last a week.

Nine months later, she was still there.

What changed was not just the activity, but the way it was delivered. From the start, Poppy experienced a space where she was not judged, where learning happened step by step, and where mistakes were safe.

For the first time, Poppy choreographed and performed her own solo.

Dance became a way for Poppy to regulate her emotions. When she danced, the noise of the outside world quietened. Anxiety eased. Her body felt more confident. Over time, she began to make friends.

Central to this journey was the relationship she built with her dance teacher - a trusted adult who believed in her, encouraged her, and gently pushed her beyond her comfort zone. This relationship extended beyond dance. Poppy began to feel more confident in herself, more able to socialise, more willing to try new things. She then started supporting others, helping to lead group dances and working towards a Dance Leadership qualification.

Now, when Poppy thinks about her future, she sees herself as a dance teacher, supporting children with additional needs, helping them feel free, confident and accepted.

For Poppy, cultural entitlement was about belonging, expression and freedom.

## Relational Approaches – The power of a cultural entitlement

Care-experienced and vulnerable children are more likely to have experienced trauma, loss, instability and disrupted relationships. These experiences shape trust, emotional regulation, behaviour, attendance and engagement, and influence how children relate to adults, peers and learning environments.

Trauma-informed practice recognises this reality by prioritising safety, choice, trust and relationships. This approach creates the conditions in which children and young people can engage, take creative risks and sustain participation.

Evidence from practice and action research shows that trauma-informed cultural provision leads to stronger engagement, improved wellbeing, deeper relationships and greater retention, while also supporting carers, educators and practitioners to work more effectively.

Trauma-informed practice should not be seen as an optional enhancement. It is essential to ensuring that cultural entitlement is accessible and inclusive. A trauma-informed cultural entitlement creates the conditions for belonging and for all young people to truly thrive.



## Support to Develop Your Offers

### 1. Support for Schools - For School Leaders, Pastoral/Behavioural Leads, Curriculum Leads, Designated Teachers and Mental Health Leads

#### a. Online

There are several 'virtual experiences available to Children and Young People (CYP) that have been specifically designed for care experienced children and young people. These are easily accessible within the classroom but also within other nurture, inclusion and one-to-one settings, accessible at yours and their fingertips.

It is essential that key adults support these activities to ensure that all CYP are safeguarded effectively. Examples of this, like [My Creative Track](#) and the [Stepping Forward Programme](#) can be found below.

#### b. School Extended Learning Offer

The school or educational setting is a vital partner in 'opening the door' to cultural activities. In essence, it has a 'captive' audience in the children and young people that attend the school so should take advantage of this by integrating cultural activities as part of the curriculum throughout the educational pathway, including Post-16.

This can be extended and enhanced by opportunities and a cultural offer outside of a normal 'learning day', where children and young people can access a wider range of experiences as a participant, a spectator or in other roles such as 'backstage'.

It is essential that all engagement in this wide offer is captured and discussed in the Personal Education Planning (PEP) meeting process.

#### c. Community Groups

There are many 'local' community cultural groups that have a children and young people's programme/offer. School staff can play an essential part in bridging the gap between education and community offers. It is essential that key adults support these activities to ensure that all children and young people are safeguarded effectively. This may include joining disseminating information of the school and community arts and cultural offer to key adults in children and young peoples lives. Furthermore, key adults should use their due diligence to ensure groups are safe and follow procedures suitable for care experienced children and young people. You may want to use [Mighty Connections](#) to support this part of the process.

#### d. Arts Award



Arts Award takes children and young people on a creative journey, exploring the arts world, discovering their potential as artists, developing leadership skills – and gaining a recognised qualification along the way. It is open to anyone aged 25 or under, this unique set of arts qualifications builds skills essential for success in the 21st century: Creativity and communication, along with problem-solving, reflective-thinking and confidence.

Young people can achieve Arts Award in any art form, from music to mime, poetry to pottery, dance to drumming and progress through the five levels including Discover, Explore, Bronze, Silver and Gold.

#### e. Stepping Forward Programme - Performing Arts for Life

##### The Stepping Forward – Performing Arts

For Life programme is an incentivised online pre-recorded programme with interactive elements created for young people who are currently in care, aged 13-17 years. The programme is accessible from phones, laptops or tablets by young people and will be accessible on the websites including:



*NB - this is not a public-facing programme but a bespoke offer which will be accessible only by the target audience, details of which can be found on programme website.*

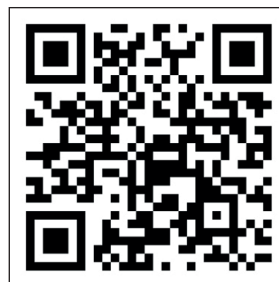
The programme has the following aims for the care-experienced young people who can access:

- *experience of different arts activities – Acting, Dancing, Singing & Backstage Arts;*
- *life-enhancing – making lives better through arts engagement;*

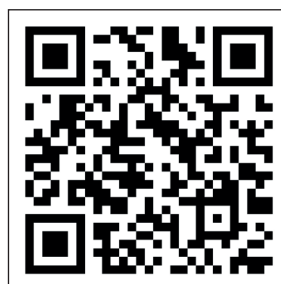
- *understanding of being an artist and opportunities for further studies or training;*
- *development of communication and creative skills;*
- *development of increased confidence and self-esteem;*
- *opportunity to ‘earn as you learn’ – incentive reward up to £200 into young person’s Junior ISA or Child Trust Fund*

The programme will take the form of 6 Stages, each stage containing 30 minutes of video content with industry professionals (split into digestible five minute clips) and 30 minutes of interactive learning & opinion seeking. The interactive learning takes the form of multiple-choice quizzes and reflection by typing answers or uploading audio clips. The answers submitted will be reviewed and will enable the young person to progress to the next stage of the programme, it will also notify The Share Foundation to donate the incentive reward for that stage into young person’s savings account, ready for them to access once they turn 18.

You can find out more about the Stepping Forward Programme through their promotional video and the Launch Highlight video below.



#### f. Coram Local Governors Association



## Key Adults & Professionals Supporting Young People

It is very clear that a collaborative and connected approach will be of most benefit in responding effectively to these challenges. It is vital that key adults are proactive in their relationships with all children and young people. This can include Carers/Parents, Virtual School staff, School Leader or Arts and Cultural organisation, the smallest of changes can make the biggest of impacts.

### For Local Authority Leaders and Corporate Parents

- *Recognise access to arts, culture and enrichment as a core component of Corporate Parenting responsibilities.*
- *Embed cultural entitlement within strategic plans, commissioning frameworks and accountability structures.*
- *Ensure that cultural engagement is recognised for the long-term impact, including increased wellbeing, educational engagement and stability of young people.*
- *Help to bridge the gap between services across sectors, including health, the arts, education and social care.*
- *Champion a system-wide expectation that every care-experienced child has access to meaningful cultural experiences.*

### For Virtual Schools and Education Leaders

- *Act as strategic leaders and coordinators of cultural entitlement for children in care and those with a social worker.*
- *Ensure arts, culture and enrichment are regularly reviewed through the Personal Education Plan process.*
- *Support the expansion of the arts offered to young people both in school and outside of school.*
- *Work in partnership with carers and cultural providers to reduce barriers to participation and promote trauma-informed practice.*
- *Champion cultural participation as central to belonging, identity and engagement.*

### For Schools and Education Settings

- *Integrate arts and cultural activity across the curriculum and extended learning offer, including post-16 pathways.*
- *Use your position as a consistent, trusted environment to introduce children and young people to a broad range of cultural experiences.*
- *Ensure trauma-informed practice underpins all cultural activity.*

### For Social Workers, Foster Carers and Key Adults

- *Seek out trauma-informed arts and cultural opportunities.*
- *Advocate for practical support such as transport, funding and flexibility to enable participation.*
- *Ensure cultural engagement is reflected in care planning and everyday practice.*

### For Arts and Cultural Organisations and Practitioners

- *Design and deliver trauma-informed, flexible and inclusive cultural programmes that prioritise emotional safety and belonging.*
- *Work collaboratively with education and social care partners, and be proactive in raising awareness of your service to those working with vulnerable young people.*
- *Co-produce programmes with children and young people to ensure relevance and accessibility.*
- *Understand and adapt to the realities of care experience.*
- *Contribute to system learning by evidencing impact and sharing good practice.*

### For Health, Youth Justice and Wider Partners

- *Recognise arts and culture as protective factors that support wellbeing, engagement and positive identity.*
- *Integrate cultural opportunities into wider support plans for children and young people.*
- *Work collaboratively across sectors to reduce duplication and maximise impact.*
- *Champion relational, preventative approaches that strengthen belonging and resilience.*



## Glossary of Terms

### Corporate Parent:

When a child comes into care, the council becomes the Corporate Parent. It is the collective responsibility of the council, elected members, employees, and partner agencies who are responsible for providing the best possible care and safeguarding for children and young people who are Looked After by their Local Authority.

In accordance with the statutory guidance for Local Authorities Applying Corporate Parenting Principles to Looked-After Children and Care Leavers, Corporate Parents must follow the following principles:

- *To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people*
- *To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings*
- *To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people*
- *To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the Local Authority and its relevant partners*
- *To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people*
- *For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and*
- *To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.*

### Cultural Entitlement:

Cultural Entitlement refers to a variety of enrichment opportunities that:

- *Engage in culture through making, participating, sharing and as audience members,*
- *Learn through activities that are different to normal classroom learning,*
- *Participate in opportunities that support us to develop our skills, talents and strengths.*

Cultural Entitlement refers to a number of enrichment activities, whether that be through arts, culture and creativity or other activities like sports and special interests.

### Key Adults

There are a range of adults and professionals that support children and young people in the care system. In listing these, there is no reference to a hierarchy of importance, rather an identification of how vital it is that they are consistent in the approaches, the language and the active support by each adult around engagement in cultural activities.

This could include a range of methods such as transporting to events, financial support, informal discussions, linking with community groups, joining on trips etc.

The key adults include:

- *Foster Carers*
- *Social Workers*
- *Teacher*
- *Youth Worker*
- *Participation Officer*
- *Virtual School Staff/Adviser*
- *Mentor*
- *Creative Mentor*

All these adults can make a significant contribution to accessing a cultural entitlement with the connectivity being made through the Personal Education Plan process. This will ensure that the activities and experiences are not only discussed but has the potential to add further documentation to enhance/reinforce engagement.

### Personal Education Planning Meetings (PEPs)

PEPs are multi-agency meetings that discuss young people's who are in care, educational needs and progress. It also sets targets for their achievement and engagements. They're usually held termly and involve representatives from Children's Social Care, Education, Home and Living and other services and interventions. Sometimes the child/young person will also be in attendance and may be supported by an adult who will act as their Advocate.

### Virtual School

A Virtual School is an education support service within a local authority to support the education of children in care. All CiC should attend an educational setting, so the VS would work directly with this. Unlike the name, Virtual Schools do not exist as a building and children do not attend a Virtual School. Nor is it an online school.

Each Local Authority in England has a Virtual School as part of its services for children and young people. They coordinate the education of children and young people in their care, at a strategic level. They work alongside education providers (mainstream schools, specialist settings, alternative provision services, tuition services and many others) to set high aspirations for these children and young people in care, to achieve their full potential regardless of where they live and where they are receiving their education.

The Virtual School also has responsibilities for other vulnerable groups including:

- *Previously looked After (PLAC)*
- *Kinship Care children*
- *Children with a social worker*

The Virtual School will coordinate the PEP meetings (defined above).

## Supporters of this Work

