



The Virtual School: celebrating positive working relationships

How the Virtual School's in-person training has transformed their professional relationships

By Carrie O'Rourke, Assistant Head of The Virtual School

In recent years, speaking to our education colleagues on the phone and, planning and reviewing together in online meetings has become an efficient and effective way for the Virtual School team to engage with the greatest number of schools and providers. Alongside the Personal Education meetings held for our Children We Care For, a key element of our statutory responsibility is to provide information, advice, and training around the impact of adversity and trauma.



As much as we want to embrace the efficiency of online engagement, nothing beats working together, face-to-face, listening, sharing, nurturing and building working relationships. The launch of a brand-new training package in September 2023 gave us an opportunity to do that and so much more. ***The impact of Trauma – through the eyes of a child*** is now at the heart of the Virtual School's commitment to raise awareness of the needs of trauma experienced children and, most importantly, give colleagues in settings and schools the knowledge and tools to meet those children's needs.

1 in 10 children – approximately 3 in the average class – has been in receipt of social care support in the last 6 years. That is 3 children who have experiences that impact on their development to such an extent that they are not able to fully engage in learning and all the enriching, life enhancing experiences school has to offer.

The training has been running for a full year now and we are blown away by the feedback from attendees. We acknowledge the bravery of attendees who, using virtual reality headsets put themselves in the shoes of a little girl experiencing neglect and abuse, as we follow her journey from before her birth right through her educational journey.

"I look at the children I work with differently now and I wonder how much I really know about their life outside school, it explains so much."

The content is uncomfortable, and we celebrate the relationships that form quickly in the group, as attendees and trainers support and look after one another. Attendees consistently tell us that they are so grateful for a space to reflect. Word is spreading, and attendance at this free day-long training has increased across the year. We have created a day-long session tailored to each phase of education, to ensure that the content is appropriate and useful for our colleagues. We want

