



SPRING TERM EVENT & ACTIVITY NEWSLETTER

Issue: Spring Term

Birmingham Virtual School

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2026: A New Year of Enrichment and Support at Birmingham Virtual School

Birmingham
Virtual School

As we begin 2026, we're delighted to share a full calendar of events and activities for our young people, carers, social workers, designated teachers (DTs), and partners across the Birmingham Virtual School community. This term is filled with opportunities designed to broaden horizons, nurture wellbeing, build confidence, and celebrate achievements throughout the year. From enrichment activities and creative experiences to skills-building and participation programmes, there is something for every age and interest. Please keep an eye on this newsletter for sign-ups, dates, and ways to get involved - and do share these opportunities within your networks so more children and young people can benefit.

WMVS CiC FOUNDATION PODCAST WORKSHOP SUCCESS

The WMVS CiC Foundation Podcast Workshop, held in October 2025, proved to be an inspiring and empowering creative experience for care-experienced young people across the West Midlands. Led by practitioner Aaron Child, the workshop guided participants through the full podcasting process - planning, scripting, recording, and reviewing their own content. As soon as the young people put on their headphones and began speaking into the microphone, their confidence grew. Conversations became focused, thoughtful, and meaningful, giving even the quietest voices the opportunity to be heard.

Young people worked in pairs to develop podcast ideas based on their interests, experiences, and stories they wanted to share.

Highlights included: a softly-spoken young person who created a calming podcast about dreams, surprising professionals with the richness of his voice, a lively participant whose humorous episode, "School Sucks," led to a powerful and honest moment about being in foster care, and a young person on the autism spectrum who, despite finding group work challenging, became fully immersed once recording began.

Professionals reported significant growth in confidence, communication, and maturity among participants. Staff reflected on the workshop's inspiring atmosphere and praised the facilitator's ability to create a supportive, empowering space. Importantly, the workshop demonstrated how creative approaches like podcasting can offer young people a safe, meaningful platform to be heard. The workshop sparked strong interest in podcasting, and WMVS CiC Foundation and Birmingham Virtual School are now partnering to offer further podcasting opportunities. More workshops and digital projects will be shared in future newsletters and on the ePEP noticeboard.

- Birmingham Virtual School Awards Ceremony 11-18-year-olds.
- February Half Term WMVS CiC Foundation - Wicked Workshop.
- Winner Up! Event - Music Celebration.
- Music Lessons for Children in Care.
- Care to Dance Programme.
- Free Swimming Lessons.



Birmingham Virtual School Secondary and Post-16 Award Ceremony 2026



IMPORTANT UPDATE

Award ceremony date changed - now taking place on 21 March 2026.

Following a recent schedule update, we are pleased to confirm that the Birmingham Virtual School Awards Ceremony 2026 will now take place on Saturday 21st March 2026.

Birmingham Virtual School is delighted to once again shine a spotlight on the incredible young people we support, as we proudly host the Birmingham Virtual School Awards Ceremony 2026.

This flagship celebration, delivered in partnership with Birmingham Children's Trust, will take place at the iconic Alexander Stadium, Walsall Road, Birmingham, B42 2LR.

This special award ceremony celebrates the resilience, talent, and achievements of children and young people in care aged 11-18. Whether their accomplishments are academic, creative, sporting, community-focused, or personal, every nominee will be recognised for their progress and the strengths they continue to show.



Why This Event Matters

Our Awards Ceremony is far more than a single afternoon of celebration - it represents the united commitment of schools, carers, social workers, families, and professionals who champion young people every day. By bringing our community together, we recognise not only outstanding achievements but also the encouragement, care, and belief that support each young person's journey.

Nominate a Young Person Now

NOMINATION PROCESS

There are no fixed award categories. We welcome nominations for any achievement, whether that's showing resilience, embracing new opportunities, improving at school, supporting others, developing confidence, or demonstrating creativity or talent.

Who can nominate?

- Teachers and school staff
- Social workers
- Independent Reviewing Officers
- Parents and carers
- Partners and organisations working with Birmingham Virtual School young people

Nomination deadline: 31st January 2026.

Each nominator can put forward up to two young people.

How to submit a nomination:

- Complete the online form here: [Nomination Form - Secondary and Post 16 Awards](#) [Nomination form: Secondary and Post 16 Awards - \(21st March 2pm 2026\)](#)



What to Expect on the Day

Birmingham Virtual School Award Ceremony 2026



The Awards Ceremony will be a friendly and relaxed event where young people can feel proud of their achievements. When nominees arrive at the Alexander Stadium, staff will be there to welcome them and guide them into the main space, where music will be playing to help create a positive atmosphere.

During the afternoon, young people can enjoy activities such as a photo booth, music from a DJ, and light refreshments. There will also be time to chat, take photos, and enjoy the occasion with carers, social workers, and staff.

The awards presentation will be the highlight of the event. Each nominated young person will be invited up to receive their certificate and have their achievement recognised. The aim is to make every young person feel valued and supported.

There will also be a lucky dip and a few simple surprises to add to the fun. Overall, it will be a warm and enjoyable afternoon focused on celebrating the successes of Birmingham's young people in care.



Information for Carers and Social Workers:

Once a young person has been nominated, their carer and social worker will be contacted directly by the Birmingham Virtual School team with full details about the Awards Ceremony. They will receive confirmation of the nomination along with a formal invitation to the event, as well as information about the venue, timings, arrival arrangements, parking, accessibility and anything else needed to support the young person on the day. This ensures that every nominee is fully prepared and supported to attend, with the adults who play an important role in their lives being kept informed and involved throughout the process.

WMVS CiC Foundation - Wicked Workshop



Wicked Workshop - Birmingham Places Now Fully Booked

A BEHIND-THE-SCENES THEATRE EXPERIENCE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE

Due to very high demand, all Birmingham Virtual School places have now sold out. We are thrilled that so many young people were eager to take part, and it's fantastic to see such strong interest in creative and performing arts activities.

If you would like a young person to be considered for a place should any spaces become available, please email the Birmingham Virtual School team to be added to the existing waiting list:

BirminghamVirtualSchool@birmingham.gov.uk

Please note: A waiting list is already in place, and we will only be able to offer places if cancellations occur.

The WMVS Children in Care Foundation is offering an exciting opportunity for young people aged 10-18 to take part in a special Wicked Workshop, inspired by the award-winning West End musical Wicked. Taking place on Thursday 19th February 2026, this high-energy workshop brings the magic of Oz to life through movement, drama, and performance.

Led by a cast member from the actual West End production, the workshop gives young people a unique chance to learn real choreography from the show, explore character roles, and discover what goes into performing one of the world's most famous musicals. Designed for both budding performers and those simply curious about theatre, the session promises a fun, inclusive, and creative experience where everyone can get involved.

The workshop will be held at Coneygre Arts Centre, Sedgley Road East, Tipton, DY4 8XA, and is open to participants from Birmingham, Walsall, Wolverhampton, Sandwell, and Dudley Virtual Schools. Each Virtual School has seven spaces available, making the workshop an exciting but highly limited opportunity.

This workshop promises to be an unforgettable experience, giving young people the chance to build confidence, express themselves creatively, and experience a taste of professional theatre in a fun and supportive environment.



Future WMVS CiC Foundation Events

The WMVS CiC Foundation has an exciting programme of theatre opportunities planned for young people throughout 2026. These trips give care-experienced young people the chance to experience professional theatre, explore new stories, and enjoy high-quality cultural experiences in supportive group settings.



Throughout the year, the Foundation will be organising visits to some of the most popular and acclaimed shows in the West End and UK touring theatres. Planned trips include a visit to Les Misérables in March, followed by a performance of Hamilton later in March. In the summer, young people will have the opportunity to see Oliver Twist in June, as well as another performance of Hamilton during August. Towards the end of the year, the programme will continue with further theatre experiences, including Hamilton in November and a visit to Phantom of the Opera, also in November. Each trip aims to create memorable experiences, build confidence, and offer young people a chance to enjoy the arts with peers from across the region. All theatre trips include an educational workshop linked to the show, and many also offer the chance to enjoy a backstage tour, giving young people a deeper insight into the world of theatre.

In addition to theatre visits, the Foundation will also be running workshops across the academic year, including during half-term holidays, giving young people further opportunities to develop their skills, explore creative interests, and take part in high-quality arts activities.

Further details, booking information, and additional WMVS CiC Foundation events, activities, trips, and workshops will be shared in future newsletters and through updates on the ePEP noticeboard. Please keep an eye out so you don't miss upcoming opportunities for the young people you support. Or to find out more, please email BirminghamVirtualSchool@birmingham.gov.uk

Music Service



Winner Up! Music Event – Summer 2026

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY

Birmingham Virtual School is delighted to announce the return of Winner Up!, our annual celebration of music, creativity and young people's achievements. Each year, this event brings together children and young people in care who are already taking part in instrumental or vocal lessons through the Birmingham Virtual School music offer, delivered in partnership with Services For Education (SFE). It is always a joyful occasion where participants can perform, share their progress, and take pride in everything they've accomplished.

This year, we are excited to announce that Winner Up! will take place across two days in June 2026. For the first time, we will be running separate events for primary-aged and secondary-aged young people. This new two-day format will allow us to offer more performance opportunities and create an experience that feels right for each age group - giving younger pupils a gentle introduction to performing, and older pupils a chance to take part in more developed or ambitious musical pieces.



One of the highlights returning this year is the DJ workshop, a huge favourite from last year's event. Young people previously loved its energetic, hands-on feel, with chances to try mixing, beat-matching, and creating their own sounds. We're excited to bring it back for 2026 and know it will be another memorable experience.

We are still finalising details, but this year's celebration already promises to be bigger, better, and just as enjoyable. The Birmingham Virtual School team looks forward to supporting performances and celebrating the fantastic progress young people have made. It's always a privilege to see their confidence grow and to watch them take to the stage with pride.

Letters for young people currently taking part in our music lessons are also being prepared for parents, carers, and social workers with invitation details - keep an eye out for your invite.

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If any young people who are already taking part in Birmingham Virtual School music lessons are interested in attending Winner Up! 2026 and would like to secure a place early, please email the team at:

BirminghamVirtualSchool@birmingham.gov.uk

Parents, carers, and social workers of participating young people will be contacted directly, but further details - including times and venue information will also be shared through our newsletters and the ePEP noticeboard, so please keep an eye out.

Interested but not currently taking music lessons? If you know a young person who would be interested in taking part in future Winner Up! celebrations but is not currently receiving music lessons through Birmingham Virtual School, please see the information below on how to sign up for music lessons. Our music offer, delivered in partnership with Services For Education (SFE), provides access to instrumental or vocal tuition for eligible young people in care. Joining the programme will ensure they can take part in upcoming opportunities like Winner Up! and continue developing their musical skills.

Music Lessons for Children and Young People in Care

Birmingham Virtual School is proud to continue offering high-quality instrumental and vocal music lessons for children and young people in care, delivered in partnership with Services For Education (SFE). This offer gives young people the chance to learn an instrument, develop new skills, grow in confidence, and experience the joy of music in a supportive and structured environment.

Music lessons are available to Birmingham children in care from Year 4 to Year 11 who attend Birmingham schools. The offer includes fully funded lessons for young people in Year 4 and Year 7, along with instrument loan, meaning there is no cost for families or schools. For children in other year groups, lessons are 50% subsidised, and schools can choose to use Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) to cover the remainder. A wide range of instruments is available, including brass, strings, woodwind, percussion, and voice, giving each young person the chance to explore the instrument that suits them best. Young people can start lessons at any point in the school year, and staff will do their best to accommodate preferred instruments and timetables.

How to Sign Up:

If you know a Birmingham CiC young person who would like to begin music lessons, signing up is simple. To arrange lessons, please email the Birmingham Virtual School team with the following information:

- The young person's full name
- Their school name
- A school staff contact email (usually the Designated Teacher)
- **Three** preferred instruments they would like to try

Please send this information to: BirminghamVirtualSchool@birmingham.gov.uk

The Virtual School team will then work with Services For Education to coordinate the referral.



Care to Dance



A Transformative Space for Young People

AGES 7-25 YEARS OLD

Care to Dance is one of Birmingham Virtual School's most valued enrichment programmes, offering a safe, nurturing space for care-experienced young people aged 7-25 to express themselves through dance. The sessions, held weekly in Birmingham with additional groups in Sandwell, Dudley and Walsall, are designed to build confidence, emotional resilience, and positive peer relationships. Week by week, young people grow in creativity as they explore contemporary, street, and creative movement styles in a warm and inclusive environment. Those aged 12 and above also have the opportunity to work towards Dance Leadership qualifications, allowing them to take on greater responsibility, develop their communication skills, and experience the pride that comes from guiding others in their dance journeys.



The essence of Care to Dance lies in its ability to empower young people through movement. Sessions are lively, creative, and intentionally supportive, offering participants a chance to work both independently and collaboratively. As they devise routines, experiment with new movements, and engage in group activities, young people build confidence not only in their dance ability but in themselves. The programme encourages emotional expression and provides a safe outlet for managing feelings. Many participants talk about how the programme helps them unwind, feel calmer, and connect with others. Over time, this supportive environment helps them form meaningful friendships, embrace challenges with confidence, and take pride in the progress they make each week.

Birmingham Virtual School

Care to Dance offers numerous opportunities throughout the year for young people to perform and share their achievements. These celebration events are joyful occasions where dancers proudly take to the stage, showing how far they have come in confidence, creativity, and skill. For many, standing in front of an audience marks a powerful milestone - one that reinforces their sense of belonging and personal growth. These performances also allow carers, families, and professionals to witness the meaningful impact the programme has on wellbeing and self-belief.

For sign-ups or enquiries, please contact beth@caretodance.co.uk or 07868897816.

For more information about the offer, please email BirminghamVirtualSchool@birmingham.gov.uk



Care to Dance Autumn Term Highlights - Progress, Leadership and Growth

We recently received the Autumn Term reports from Care to Dance, and it has been wonderful to see the progress and success our young people have made.

The detailed feedback paints a picture of a group of young people who are not only developing their dance skills, but also growing significantly in confidence, leadership, and emotional maturity. Many have begun creating their own dances, demonstrating imagination, independence, and pride in their work. Others have taken on leadership responsibilities in sessions, showing the ability to guide their peers, offer support, and embrace new challenges with enthusiasm.

The reports also highlight the strong relationships forming within the group. Young people are developing friendships built on trust, kindness, and mutual encouragement.

Several have become positive role models, supporting younger dancers and contributing to an environment where everyone feels safe, valued, and motivated. There has been notable growth in emotional insight too, with dancers reflecting on their feelings, communicating more openly, and using movement as a powerful tool for expression.

Many participants have also taken part in performances, stepping onto the stage with growing confidence and showcasing the progress they have made. Others have shown remarkable resilience, continuing to engage even during personally challenging times. We are incredibly proud of every young person involved.

Swimming Lessons



Make a Splash! Free Swimming Lessons for Our Young People in Care

PARTNERSHIP WITH SERCO

We're excited to share that Birmingham Virtual School is once again partnering with Serco and Birmingham Community Leisure Trust (BCLT) to offer 10 completely FREE swimming lessons for children and young people in care. This fantastic opportunity is designed to help our young people build confidence in the water, learn essential life skills, and enjoy being active in a fun, supportive environment.

Swimming is an important skill that can boost wellbeing, support physical health, and open up new experiences. Whether a young person is brand new to swimming or just needs support to feel more confident, this offer provides a safe and encouraging space to learn.

Who Can Take Part?

This free swimming offer is open to:

Primary-aged young people:

- Pre-Reception, Reception, and Year 1
- Ideal for helping children gain early water confidence ahead of school swimming lessons

Secondary-aged young people:

- Young people new to care who cannot swim
- Newly arrived young people, including UASC, and those who may not yet have had access to swimming lessons

What's Included?

- 10 free lessons, each 30 minutes long
- Delivered weekly over a 10-week block
- Fully inclusive and part of BCLT's mainstream swimming programme
- Young people may earn a badge or certificate based on progress
- Sessions take place at BCLT leisure centres across the city

👉 Find your nearest centre:
[Birmingham Leisure Centres](#)

Carry On Swimming!

If young people want to continue swimming after the free block, there are extra benefits:

- 20% discount on further lessons through Passport to Leisure
- First month free on Direct Debit memberships
- No admin fee when joining

This helps families keep up the momentum and ensures young people can continue developing their swimming skills if they enjoy the sessions.

Key Information

- Spaces are limited and allocated on a first-come, first-served basis
- Each young person can access one funded block of lessons
- Regular attendance is essential to complete the block
- The Virtual School funds the initial 10 lessons only

How to Get a Place

Step 1: Social Worker Referral

A social worker completes the referral form with:

- Young person's details
- Carer and emergency contacts
- Any medical information

Completed forms should be emailed to:

✉️ Admin.bclt@serco.com

Step 2: Carer Receives Membership Number

Serco will then send carers a membership number once the referral is processed.

Step 3: Book Your Sessions

Carers use this membership number to book lessons at their preferred leisure centre.

Step 4: Enjoy the Lessons!

Young people attend 10 weekly sessions. Carers must stay on-site throughout.

Key Information

A referral must be completed by a Birmingham social worker using a Birmingham Children's Trust email address. Social workers, please email Birmingham Virtual School at: BirminghamVirtualSchool@birmingham.gov.uk to obtain a copy of the referral form.

