

Committee:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	27 April 2012
Title of Report:	SE7 SEND Pathfinder and the impact for Looked After Children (LAC)
By:	Director of Children's Services
Purpose of Report:	To provide a brief overview of the Virtual School's involvement in the SE7 Pathfinder Project

Recommendation:
Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to consider this report

1 Background and Context

1.1 Following publication of the SEN and Disability Green Paper – *Support and Aspiration* – in the spring of 2011, the Department of Health and the Department for Education launched a “Pathfinder” programme to test the proposed reforms to the system of support for disabled children and young people and those with Special Educational Needs. East Sussex is one of seven regional local authorities known as “SE7” comprising: Brighton and Hove, East Sussex, Hampshire, Kent, Medway, Surrey and West Sussex. The project runs from September 2011 to March 2013 and initially involves trialling different approaches to supporting those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

1.2 The Project is organised around 10 core strands, each involving both SE7 wide activity and local activity. Although all core strands will impact on LAC with SEN, the Virtual School is particularly keen to take forward the core strand relating to the development of a “single plan” ie streamlining planning processes and bringing currently disparate processes into a coherent whole. Of the five optional strands one is specifically related to LAC ie “Support to vulnerable CYP: LAC and ethnic minority families”. Kent and Surrey are leading on this strand.

1.3 An initial meeting took place in March between all 7 Virtual School headteachers or their equivalent together with representatives from social care, to agree the scope of the project and agree the key issues that need to be resolved. There were three main outcomes of the initial meeting:

- 1.3.1 To develop a protocol across SE7 to improve arrangements for school admissions for all Looked after Children (whether or not they have a statement of special educational need)
- 1.3.2 To audit the number of LAC from each Local Authority placed in other SE7 Authorities
- 1.3.3 To engage Independent Reviewing Officers, Social Care and SEN teams in order to develop a single plan

2 SE7 School's Admissions Protocol

2.1 Although the Schools' Admissions Code makes it very clear that school's must admit LAC if they are requested to do so, all Virtual Heads reported that they had experienced significant barriers when attempting to place LAC, particularly those with challenging behaviour, in schools outside their own authority. East Sussex has developed a protocol so that schools that fail to comply with the admissions code are robustly challenged and, where necessary, are directed to admit a child by the Director of Children's Services or by the Secretary of State in the case of academies. SE7 Virtual Heads are currently developing a similar area wide protocol which will include clear timescales and pathways facilitated where necessary by intervention from the Virtual Head and Director of Children's Services in each Local Authority.

2.2 Within East Sussex we endeavour to only place children and young people outside the local

authority once educational provision has been arranged, however there will be cases where placement changes take place in an emergency and a protocol that ensures speedy access to education will be of great benefit.

2.3 The SE7 Schools' Admission Protocol will also consider ways of improving upon the current arrangements for supporting LAC with Statements of Special Educational Need who are placed outside of their own Local Authority, as in this case the current legislation can lead to situations where up to three separate Local Authorities become involved in decision making (the home Local Authority, the Authority in which the child lives and the Authority in which the school is located).

3 The number of Looked After Children placed in other SE7 Local Authorities

3.1 This data is currently being verified and will be cross referenced by the seven Local Authorities.

3.2 Of the 622 LAC in East Sussex (as of 31.03.12) 81 are placed outside of East Sussex (13%). Within SE7, 26 are placed in Kent, 17 in West Sussex, nine in Brighton and Hove, eight in Surrey, five in Medway, four in Hampshire.

3.3 There are 260 LAC living in East Sussex who are the responsibility of other Local Authorities, 134 of them from SE7 Local Authorities. 81 from Brighton and Hove, 19 from Kent, 18 from West Sussex, 13 from Surrey, three from Hampshire and none from Medway.

4 Development of a single plan

4.1 If a LAC has a statement of special educational need there are currently two separate educational reviews that take place within schools – the Personal Education Plan that must be reviewed at least twice a year and the Annual Review of the child's statement. Within East Sussex we are exploring bringing these two planning processes into line in order to ensure that we more consistently focus on reviewing progress, setting meaningful targets and reviewing what support a child needs in order to make good educational progress.

4.2 London Boroughs have developed a "Pan London PEP" to provide a consistent approach to educational planning regardless of which authority has responsibility for a child. SE7 Virtual Heads are keen to explore a Pan SE7 Education Plan.

4.3 The SE7 Virtual Headteachers support the development of a single common planning process for LAC but recognise the need to do this in consultation with social care colleagues as the PEP is an integral part of the LAC review process. To this end Independent Reviewing Officers have been invited to the next meeting.

MATT DUNKLEY
Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer: Adrian Money
Tel: 01323 464630

Local Members: All
Background Documents: None