

Report to: Corporate Parenting Panel
Date of meeting: 25 October 2019
Report by: Director of Children's Services
Title: Virtual School Annual Report - 1 April 2018 - 31 March 2019
Purpose: To outline the performance of the Virtual School between 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019

RECOMMENDATION:

The Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to comment on and note the report

1. Background information

1.1 The Virtual School Report is contained within Appendix 1. Provisional attainment data is contained as Appendix 2

1.2 The Virtual School is funded via a combination of grants and will continue to direct the Pupil Premium to interventions which will have the best possible educational outcomes for Looked After Children (LAC).

2. Recommendation

2.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to comment on and note the contents of the report.

STUART GALLIMORE

Director of Children's Services

Contact Officers:

Sally Carnie: Head of Looked After Children's Services

Tel: 01323 747197

Local Members: All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Virtual School Report 2018/9

Appendix 2 - Provisional Academic Results for East Sussex Looked After Children (LAC) September 2019

Virtual School Report 2018/2019

1. Introduction

1.1 During this period the Virtual School (VS) focused on the delivery of support to schools and social workers to ensure the best possible outcomes for children who are looked after (LAC), previously looked after children (PLAC) and care leavers (CL). All interventions were designed to meet this overriding objective and were planned using an evidence based approach, incorporating national research and local quantitative and qualitative data.

1.2 The VS supported 445 LAC in schools and 685 CYP (Children & Young People) when care leavers are included. 26% of the LAC cohort had an EHCP (Education Health and Care Plan), 55% were on the special needs register at SEN support level and 20% were in special schools. As at March 2019 there were 55 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children in years 7 to 13, 15 of whom were of school age. This is an increase of approximately 50% since the start of the academic year. Caseworkers in the VS had an average caseload of 80 LAC.

1.3 The Key Stage 4 education accountability measures for all children have changed to reflect progress (P8) as well as attainment (A8). These measures involved the use of a complex formula which is administered centrally. Changes have also occurred in reported primary outcomes. There is no confirmed data on outcomes to date, and it is anticipated that final primary data will be released in December 2019 and secondary in 2020. At Key Stage 4 (aged 16) attainment and progress A8 and P8 are recorded and calculated by taking data across 8 qualifications. The accountability measures used by the VS were revised to reflect these national changes. Any comparison performance data will need to reflect these changes, particularly in relation to attainment at GCSE where the exams have changed from an A – G grading system to a 1 – 9 grading system and will be affected by subject entry patterns at a national level.

1.4 The VS school holds and manages the Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) for LAC. In the financial year 2018- 2019 each LAC was allocated £2,300. Funding from the PPG is pooled to ensure the best outcomes for our children as outlined in 1.1 and according to the priorities set out in the Virtual School Development Plan as described below. Pupil Premium funding for PLAC is also £2,300 but is held by their schools. The VS school has advised schools on appropriate spend of the grant allocation for this group of children.

2. Virtual School Structure

2.1 The VS restructured a number of vacant posts during 2018/19 to include a Primary Advisory Teacher specifically to lead on the development of teaching intervention, with a focus on the primary phase of education. This appointment corresponded with the employment of 17 casual Intervention Teachers. The new role had a remit for the delivery of academic, social and emotional intervention; this was as a direct response to a local provider revising their offer and no longer providing one to one teaching. The VS delivered interventions to meet the identified priority subjects, with a particular focus on English and Maths across all the age ranges. This team of Intervention Teachers had a formal induction process and were offered regular training and supervision. They remain employed on a casual basis but policies and procedures were developed to ensure that their intervention was at least good, and a sense of team was encouraged.

2.2 In addition, two Personal Advisers (PAs) were appointed mid-way through the year with a specific educational role within the Through Care Service. One PA focused on working with young people who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) and the other on Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking

Children (UASC). Both posts were created in response to identified needs within these two groups and were co-located with the Through Care team. The PAs were managed by the Practice Manager of the service.

3. Key Developments

3.1 In order to better understand the experiences and views of our LAC in East Sussex, the VS commissioned Coram Voice to undertake a survey of all LAC and Care Leavers. The Bright Spots Survey is a nationally recommended tool and very well regarded. Both surveys gathered some very rich feedback on a range of issues concerning care, education, relationships, accommodation and finances. All LAC aged 4-18 years were helped to complete the survey using a trusted adult who were independent of the service. A feedback event took place in April 2018 for the LAC Bright Spots survey and participants responded by making a range of commitments to develop improved services for LAC. These commitments took the form of 'We Will' statements and have since been disseminated across the Local Authority. The Care Leavers survey has now been completed and the findings will be delivered to an event which is being designed to further develop the Local Offer for care leavers in East Sussex.

3.2 The quality of teaching and learning has been the main focus for the VS throughout the year 2018/19. The successful appointment of the Intervention Teachers enabled the VS to offer consistently high quality learning for LAC. An analysis of the 2018 performance data indicated that literacy and numeracy should remain the key areas for intervention, with a particular focus on writing. In addition the VS developed an assessment and reporting policy to evaluate the impact of this work. This enabled the VS to be assured of the effective assessment, planning, delivery and review of each intervention. These interventions were supplemented by a partnership developed with local providers to deliver services to young people who were not engaging with school. 'Eggtooth', based in Hastings, was commissioned to offer educational and therapeutic interventions to LAC in the Hastings area. Likewise a relationship was developed with Develop Outdoors, the Education Foundation Trust and YES. The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service for Looked After Children were closely involved in the work with these new partners and took on a key role in the referral and review process. As a result of these partnerships there was an increase in the levels of engagement of LAC in education and in post 16 pathways.

3.3 Personal Education Plans (PEPs) remained critical to the effective planning for raising educational outcomes for our children during this period. Any applications for Pupil Premium funding to support LAC and their learning continued to be made via the PEP. In addition, a new system for monitoring and reviewing PEPs was introduced, in order to streamline and improve performance. In the next academic year the VS will be exploring the benefits of using an existing PEP product or considering whether it would be better to develop an in-house system.

3.4 The VS reviewed the use of the Book Club in 2018/19 and found that it remained a very cost effective intervention to support literacy. This is a termly service whereby LAC receive a bag/parcel of books. The review established that

- **92%** of children described the positive feelings they had when the parcels arrived
- **75%** of the children felt the book parcels helped them with their reading or their enjoyment of reading
- **85%** of carers/parents described the positive reaction they got at home when the parcels arrived.
- **82%** of carers/parents described how the parcels promoted the child's love for reading

3.5 The preparation of LAC for key educational transitions remained a focus during 2018/19 with the summer school for pre reception children and summer support for vulnerable year 11 students. The VS

also worked closely with the ESCC Behaviour and Attendance Service (ESBAS) to develop a secondary transition project. The VS worked together with post 16 providers and universities to raise aspirations, support young people to succeed at college and to secure the most appropriate post 16 pathway. A group of year 7s, 8s and 9s took part in a very successful 2 day Media course run by Brighton University. The YES Service continued to work with LAC re: future transition planning, and the Local Authority's Enterprise team offered a bespoke work experience programme for young people in year 11 and above.

3.6 The VS continued to work closely with Bede's to further develop the Springboard boarding project and plan placements for the next academic year. There are currently 4 students at Bedes (March 2019). Bede's also hosted the Coram event, the Children In Care Awards and the VS Governor meetings. It continued to offer our LAC a range of extra-curricular experiences, for example one of our year 11 students was offered work experience in the Bede's zoo.

3.7 The next annual Children in Care Awards will be held in October 2019 to celebrate the successes of our children and young people. Jacqueline Wilson was invited as a guest of honour and has agreed to produce a filmed message for the nominees and award winners.

4. National Agenda for Virtual Head Teachers

4.1 The Virtual Head Teacher (VHT) worked collaboratively with the national cohort of VHT's on a range of national priority areas. In relation to PLAC the VS has a duty to provide information, advice and guidance for children adopted from care, who are on Special Guardianship Orders or subject to Child Arrangement Orders. In 2018/19 the VS caseworkers developed this role in their allocated schools, providing advice to schools, social workers and adoptive parents. The VS also met together with Post Adoption Social Workers and with an Adoption UK support group to increase awareness of the new role. The VS funded membership of Adoption UK for 50 schools, trained Designated Teachers on their responsibilities regarding PLAC, and met with AMAZE the local advocacy and support group to consider how best they could support parents of PLAC with Special Educational Needs.

4.2 The VS worked to develop better communication with Local Authorities across the country where LAC were placed out of the county. This was and remains an area of key challenge, particularly for those children with an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) or those awaiting assessment for an EHCP. As a result of these difficulties with out of county educational arrangements, there were a number of our children who were unable to attend school for significant periods of time. The VS worked closely with ISEND to develop policies and procedures to address this issue and as a consequence it has been possible to reduce the timescales for school admissions.

4.3 The exclusion of LAC from school has been a significant national issue during this period and is one that is being reviewed currently. This year the VS worked with all schools to support children who were in crisis, to avoid exclusion where possible. Unfortunately there were three children who were permanently excluded in terms 1 and 2 of the last academic year but there have been no more to date.

4.4 The mental health of children and young people is of national concern and the VHT's group has been keen to raise the profile of this issue. The VS continued to provide free training to schools on the impact of trauma and meeting the needs of children who have experienced trauma. 100% of all participants reported that they found these sessions at least useful and 53% rated them as very useful. This year the VS also worked strategically with other educational services and with health colleagues to develop a co-ordinated approach to supporting mental health in schools. The VS has planned for a joint conference with the school's Mental Health and Well-being Coordinator during 2019/20.

5. Governor priorities for the Virtual School 2019/20

5.1

Priorities	Tasks
To improve KS2 progress outcomes, particularly in writing	Develop PEP audit policy to include robust quality control To provide ongoing training programme to intervention teachers in response to needs of LAC To analyse end of intervention reports and use to inform practice.
To improve progress outcomes at KS4	To analyse end of intervention reports and use to inform practice. To ensure that Alternative Provisions interventions include clear assessment, planning and review
To develop inclusive practice re LAC in all schools – academic and pastoral differentiation so that all LAC have access to good and better schools and enjoy going to school	To develop work with LA services to develop a co-ordinated approach to the promotion of whole school practices and mental health and emotional wellbeing interventions (MHEW) To work with the School Improvement and ISEND teams to promote inclusive practice and use of the Inclusion Quality Mark To support the development of high quality MHEW interventions through joint working with LA services including LACAMHs and private providers To develop the training offer to Designated Teachers and other school staff To produce and share a Designated Teacher newsletter promoting inclusive practice To explore the use of social media to promote the work of the VS
To reduce exclusions – both fixed term and permanent	To challenge exclusions and work with schools to put in post exclusion and preventative plans
To increase the participation of all LAC and care leavers in opportunities that will raise aspiration and prepare them for the challenges of an independent future (Extra Curricular activities, Work experience, CICC developments)	To run a Care leavers Bright Spots dissemination event. To work with Universities to develop their Widening Participation programme from primary aged LAC to and ensure engagement in events by involving CYP in programme planning To develop a Information, Guidance and Advice group to ensure effective guidance for young people interesting in going to University
To develop high quality advice and support re PLAC	To increase staff knowledge and understanding of issues specific to PLAC To work with adoption team to develop an effective offer for PLAC
To increase attendance rates overall and reduce persistent absence	To embed and develop policy re LAC with EHCPs moving in or out of county To continue to track attendance and intervene at an early stage.
Improve rates of completion of PEPs on time	To develop the system for monitoring completion of PEPs – to include VS caseworkers and social workers as well as designated teachers in schools To develop the system for monitoring the quality of PEPs
To ensure clear and effective educational pathways	To ensure co-ordinated working between the UASC

for UASC	<p>team and VS caseworkers</p> <p>To work with EALs to develop a clear policy re EAL delivery to UASC and care leavers</p> <p>To work with EALs and post 16 providers re wider provision for UASC</p>
To ensure that all young people are engaged in education and have aspirations for their futures	<p>To work with YES and Enterprise team to develop targeted Information, advice and guidance from the start of year 10</p> <p>To develop bespoke work experience project for LAC and ensure LAC are included in schools' work experience offers</p>

6. Recommendations

6.1 The VS to review the priorities outlined above in light of the educational attainment and progress data from 2019 when it is confirmed.

6.2 The VHT together with the national group of Virtual Head Teachers to contribute to the national debate regarding the ongoing DfE commitment to funding Pupil Premium Plus for LAC and PLAC.