

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**CHILDREN'S SERVICES CABINET PANEL
THURSDAY 8 MARCH 2018 AT 10.00AM**

THE ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL HEAD

Report of the Director of Children's Services

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Executive Member:

Teresa Heritage, Children's Services

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 This report sets out information on the attainment and progress of children looked after at each key stage in 2017 and the progress and achievement of care leavers between the ages of 16 and 19.
- 1.2 The report also outlines the progress and impact of the Virtual School improvement plan that includes development across Children's Services, with schools both in and out of Hertfordshire, with Senior Ofsted Inspectors in Eastern region and with children and young people.

2. Summary

- 2.1 Hertfordshire Virtual School was created in 2010 to champion the educational needs of young people looked after by Hertfordshire, to ensure they have the best possible education and every chance to realise their potential. The Virtual School is committed to empowering schools, social workers and carers to make education a priority for Children Looked After (CLA) and care leavers. The primary focus is to close the achievement gap between children looked after and their peers, both locally and nationally.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1 The Panel is asked to note and comment on the summary of performance in 2017 attached as Appendix 1 to the report.
- 3.2 The Panel is asked to note and comment on development of the Virtual School improvement plan for 2017-18.

4. **Background Key figures and statistics** *(as at end of Autumn Term 2017)*

Total Number of CLA (0-18)	914
Total number of CLA of Primary school age	229
Total number of CLA of Secondary school age	364
Number CLA in Hertfordshire Schools	400
Number CLA in schools Out of County	193

The large majority (82%) of Children Looked After attend 'good or better' schools.

4.1 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) – of school age

The number of school age UASC children is 20.

4.2. Care Leavers

4.2.1 Total number of care leavers (between 16 years old and 19 years + 1 month old) as of end of Autumn term 2017: 442

The majority (86%) of Children Looked After go onto further education, training or employment at age 16-17 (September 2017).

4.3 Pupil Premium

4.3.1 100% of Pupil Premium Grant is used to promote either directly or indirectly, the educational achievement of Hertfordshire Children Looked After. The pupil premium is monitored by the Virtual School and the monies are used in a wide variety of ways based on an up-to-date assessment of need to support children's academic, social and emotional development. (Pupil premium is a sum of money given to schools each year by the Government to improve the attainment of disadvantaged children.)

4.4 Key drivers of improvement

- Education Advisers support and challenge schools to raise attainment and accelerate progress for CLA.
- To continue to implement the improved structure of the Virtual School to provide consistent support and challenge to schools and other educational settings.
- To deliver training and guidance to young people, schools, carers, social care that raises expectations of and aspirations for CLA.
- To track pupil progress through efficient data collection, Pupil Progress Meetings held on a rolling programme with experienced school colleagues.
- To target interventions to raise both achievement and aspiration.
- To ensure a rigorous scrutiny from Virtual Schools (VS) Governing Body and professional partners.
- To maintain the downward trend in exclusions over the past two years for Hertfordshire CLA against the trend for exclusion which has increased for all children nationally.

4.5 Attainment for Children Looked After – Primary and Secondary

4.5.1 A Virtual School Education Adviser visits all schools termly to focus on attainment and progress for CLA on roll. This includes a robust monthly scrutiny of vulnerable groups with regard to school attendance, Children Missing Education (CME), part time and alternative provision, exclusion, OFSTED rating of schools.

4.5.2 Data is collected from schools on a termly basis for all year groups and is used to target and challenge schools in their support of CLA (including more able disadvantaged).

4.6 Outcomes at the end of Key Stage 2 (Summer 2017)*

4.6.1 There has been a notable improvement in the percentage of children reaching the expected standard in Writing.

Level 4+	2015-16	2016-17
Cohort Size	41	44
Reading	41%	43%
Writing	34%	48%
Maths	44%	43%
RWM combined	27%	27%

*All 2016/17 data remains provisional, un-validated and not in the public domain. Comparison cannot be made to previous years

4.7 Outcomes at the end of Key Stage 4 (Summer 2017)*

4.7.1 There is growing evidence of improved attainment in the Hertfordshire Virtual School at key stage 4, when compared to children looked after nationally. However, the gap between CLA and their non CLA peers at the end of Key Stage 4 remains too large.

	2015-16	2016-17
Total Number Y11 Children Looked After	68	71
Higher Level 2** In English Grade 5+	This is the new challenging criteria for 2016-17 onwards	17%
Higher Level 2 In Mathematics Grade 5+		6%
Higher Level 2 in Mathematics & English Grade 5+		11.3%
Level 2 In English Grade 4+ (A grade 4 is the equivalent of a C grade GCSE)	25%	24%
Level 2 In Mathematics Grade 4+ (A grade 4 is the equivalent of a C grade GCSE)	19%	24%

Level 2 In English and Maths Grade 4+ (A grade 4 is the equivalent of a C grade GCSE)	13%	16%
Any Qualification	78.6%	84%

*All 2016/17 data remains provisional, un-validated and not in the public domain. Comparison cannot be made to previous years

** Level 2 = GCSE level of study and is that expected at the end of Year 11 (age 16).

4.8 Early Years

4.8.1 An electronic Personal Education Plan (ePEP) is now in place for nursery age children. Records of progress in settings are now recorded on this system and will transfer to schools. This is a significant improvement and will enable the Virtual School to improve outcomes for CLA from an accurate starting point/baseline.

4.9 Post 16

4.9.1 The team has been in existence since 2004 and supports young people in and leaving care up to the age of 25.

4.9.2 The number of young people going to and staying in courses at FE colleges is increasing year on year enabling those care leavers to achieve better qualifications after statutory education through the personalised support they receive.

4.9.3 The Hertfordshire Virtual School Care Leaver University Adviser has increased the numbers going to and achieving at University year on year. There are currently 64 at Universities throughout the country. In 2017 there were 14 graduates with 3 First Class Honours.

4.9.4 The team quality assures the processes for Care Leavers in all four colleges of Further Education in Hertfordshire to review support for Care Leavers.

4.9.5 A programme of residential interventions for CLA pre-16 is maintained as there is proven impact on their motivation in sustaining education post 16.

4.9.6 Young people are supported in apprenticeships, work placements and put on employment projects to help young people become employment ready. One such employment project is a summer tea room which provides young people with work experience and an opportunity to develop a whole range of employability skills.

4.10 Current Innovations

- 4.10.1 The 'CLASEF' (Children Looked After Self Evaluation Form) is a self-evaluation audit completed by the schools for the purpose of reflection on practice and planning, the termly report to Governors, the Pupil Premium audit of efficient and effective spend and an action plan for improvement.
- 4.10.2 The ePEP focuses on voice of the child. Coram Voice 'Bright Spots' research reported that support for education is a 'Bright Spot' in Hertfordshire with particular reference to support for learning received from carers at home and from teachers in school and beyond the classroom. (a survey of the views of looked after children and young people aged 4-18yrs in Hertfordshire carried out in March 2017. All looked after children were asked to participate in this online survey through their schools and colleges.)
- 4.10.3 The inclusion of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) in the PEP enables social care and schools to co-ordinate and better understand children's wellbeing and readiness to learn. (The SDQ is a tool which measures young people's emotional development and progress. It is completed by mental health practitioners and Social Care also use this tool in preparation for each Child's Health Care Review.
- 4.10.4 Education Advisers, in partnership with each school's Designated Teacher, use a rating process to improve the quality of ePEPs.
- 4.10.5 In anticipation of the updated Statutory Guidance (Spring 2018), the Virtual School has had a part time education adviser seconded to the Adoption Services team. The updated guidance will extend the provision of advice and guidance to schools and families with Children who are previously looked after.

4.11 Work with Partners

- 4.11.1 Focus groups of stakeholders (Designated Teachers, Social Workers, and Carers) are held to support the co-production of materials such as handbooks of information, development of the CLA-SEF, Good to Great action plan for Carers, Social Work PEP Champions.
- 4.11.2 Colleagues from the Virtual School attend the Head teacher Updates and Seminars on a regular basis.
- 4.11.3 Virtual School colleagues participate in the Corporate Parenting Board activity strands for example, the Stability project for CLA and attend monthly meetings with Senior Leaders in social care.
- 4.11.4 A dedicated team for children in residential care and on the edge of care referred to the Adolescence Resource Centre (ARC) Residential Services includes one Education Adviser and two part time Education Support Workers.
- 4.11.5 Monthly case discussion meetings are held between Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Social Care colleagues (led by the Virtual School), which

promote resolution of both individual complex cases requiring provision and improvement in communication and operational practice.

5.0 Next Steps

5.1 The improvement plan for the Virtual School 2017-18 is based on the research by the DfE and the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) that outlines the common factors where schools are most effective in improving the educational achievement of disadvantaged children. The following aspects are proven to particularly benefit the progress and achievement of disadvantaged children:

- Adopting a whole school ethos
- Addressing behaviour and attendance
- High quality teaching for all
- Meeting individual learning needs
- Assessment that is data driven and responsive to evidence
- Effective deployment of staff.
- Clear, responsive leadership

5.2 The Virtual School has based the operational approach to schools, settings carers, social workers and all other professionals on these approaches (Appendix 2). Working collaboratively with Ofsted in the region, prominent research bodies and with Virtual School leaders nationally, the work in Hertfordshire to promote the achievement of children and young people so that they flourish as young adults is informed, innovative and research-led.

5.3 The Virtual School will lead the educational element of the new DfE funded Innovation project for children in primary school who are subject to a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan as part of the Wave 2 of the Family Safeguarding project in 2018. This work will extend support to vulnerable families and their children in school and supplement the effectiveness of the Hertfordshire preventative strategy.

6.0 Financial Implications

6.1 The Virtual School is funded from several sources including HCC core funding, pupil premium and Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The service is forecast and has managed within the current budget allocated for it and the expectation is that this will continue into next year.

6.2 The operating model was reviewed and the workforce restructured to achieve savings required as part of wider Children's Services efficiencies in 2016-2017. This afforded the opportunity to strengthen and refocus the team to ensure good quality support and challenge to schools and children.

6.3 Events for children were supported by donation, both financially and in kind in 2017 and further sponsorship is being researched.

7.0 Equalities Implications

- 7.1 When considering proposals placed before Members it is important that they are fully aware of, and have themselves rigorously considered the equality implications of the decision that they are making.
- 7.2 Rigorous consideration will ensure that proper appreciation of any potential impact of that decision on the County Council's statutory obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty. As a minimum this requires decision makers to read and carefully consider the content of any Equalities Impact Assessment (EQiA) produced by officers.
- 7.3 The Equality Act 2010 requires the County Council when exercising its functions to have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 7.4 'Race' and ethnicity continue to be major factors influencing children's and adults' experiences of education at all levels and in a variety of respects that include academic achievement, curriculum development, assessment and professional employment. The recent Race Disparity Audit, (October 2017), [here](#) published that pupils in several ethnic groups are achieving and progressing better than White British pupils. Low educational attainment and progress is closely associated with economic disadvantage. White British pupils from state schools had the lowest university entry rate of any ethnic group in 2016.
- 7.5 Black and minority ethnic groups (BME) (all non-white British groups) account for around 22% of the total under 18 population (2011 Census) in Hertfordshire and 28.6% of the school aged population (January 2017 School Census). They also account for 32.6% of Children Looked After as at 31st March 2017 (an increase from 30.6% in 2016). For children in key stage groups the numbers are very low making the data statistically unreliable and not a proper basis for informed action.
- 7.6 No EqIA was undertaken in relation to this report.

Background information

Appendix 1: The Progress and achievement of children looked after in the Hertfordshire Virtual School

Appendix 2