

**15 January 2018****Agenda Item: 8****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, EDUCATION, LEARNING AND  
SKILLS****VIRTUAL SCHOOL PEER CHALLENGE PILOT REVIEW****Purpose of the Report**

1. This report seeks to inform Committee of the outcomes of Nottinghamshire's Virtual School Peer Review (**Appendix 1**) undertaken between 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> June 2017 and requests the endorsement of the areas of recommendation to be further reviewed and incorporated within the Virtual School's improvement plan within the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy.
2. In addition, the report requests that Committee approves in principle and pending additional financial resource, the creation of a Post 16 Looked After Children (LAC) Adviser, with a teaching qualification, within a refreshed Looked After Children and Care Leavers Service.

**Information and Advice**

3. Every local authority is required to have a Virtual School for Looked After Children which advocates and oversees the education of the authority's Looked After Children wherever they are educated. Currently in Nottinghamshire 72.5% (359) of school aged Looked After Children (LAC) are educated within the County with 27.5% (136) educated out of County. (Data correct as of 30<sup>th</sup> November 2017)
4. The National Association of Virtual School Heads (NAVSH) is currently developing a model for 'Peer Challenge'. This was not an inspection but rather a professional opportunity for rigorous self review with the support of Virtual School Heads from other local authorities. The process was agreed in consultation with members of the Local Government Association (LGA) and Nottinghamshire's was the first Peer Challenge pilot to be undertaken during the summer term of 2017.
5. The Peer Challenge was undertaken between 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> June 2017 and focussed on the role of the Virtual School to build capacity within a school-led system to work effectively in partnership with other stakeholders to maximise educational opportunities and outcomes of all Nottinghamshire's LAC. Specifically, the Peer Challenge focussed on:
  - a) How effectively are all the partnerships represented within the Virtual School's improvement plan and implementation? Are the collaborative priorities sufficiently

focused to drive improvement in outcomes for LAC in all key phases of education?  
Is progress against priorities evidenced?

- b) In a sector led system, is there evidence of schools and other partners accepting and embracing their role and responsibility towards LAC?
  - c) How has capacity to meet the needs of LAC been developed to date across all four phases and with particular reference to early years and post 16 delivery/provision moving forwards?
  - d) How effectively is the LAC Pupil Premium used to secure outcomes?
6. The 'report', presented in letter format, outlines the significant strengths of the Virtual School and its partnership with schools and other educational stakeholders in supporting the educational provision and outcomes of Nottinghamshire's LAC. The Peer Challenge process included meetings and dialogue with key stakeholders endorsing the Virtual School's bold and forward thinking vision for the education of LAC.
7. Key areas for consideration are outlined in the report and are currently being appropriately incorporated within the Virtual School's Action Plan. Underpinned by a renewed vision and ambition for all LAC and a strengthening of the governance of the Virtual School, a key development will be the focus on support for Post 16 LAC in educational settings. New ways of working are currently being considered within the context of a renewed Looked after Children and Care Leavers Strategy. This report recommends that the Virtual School should renew its commitment to the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy and to explore the ambition of embedding a Post 16 LAC Adviser, with a teaching qualification, within a refreshed Looked After Children and Care Leavers Service, pending additional financial resource.
8. Other key developments will be the development of a renewed vision and ambition for LAC and a strengthening of the governance arrangements for the Virtual School. This review also supports the Virtual School to further refine its ambition in the light of the government's current consultation which seeks to extend the role of the Virtual School to supporting previously looked after children.

### **Other Options Considered**

9. No other options have been considered.

### **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

10. The Virtual School comprises one full-time Co-ordinator, four full-time Achievement Officers and one Data Officer. This team does not have the capacity or the expertise to provide support and advice to post 16 educational settings on the most appropriate provision to improve the attainment and progress of looked after children at post 16.
11. As a result post 16 care leavers are at risk of not being in education, employment or training (NEET), when they leave statutory schooling at the age of 16 years.
12. Recent legislation means that this small team will have an additional statutory duty to provide advice and support to schools and other educational settings for those recently in care as well as for children currently looked after. This will also impact on the capacity of

this small team to continue to meet the Council's statutory duties in relation to looked after children.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

13. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **Financial Implications**

14. The maximum cost of a full-time Post 16 LAC Adviser, with a teaching qualification, to focus on the provision of support and advice to educational settings for post 16 provision, will be £51,415 including on-costs. The post cannot be funded from the existing budget allocation for the Virtual School. A further report will be provided for Committee to consider an addition to the staffing structure for the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Service, should additional funding be identified.

## **Human Resources Implications**

15. The recommendation, if approved, has implications for the staffing structure of a refreshed Looked After Children and Care Leavers Service and would require any new post to be subject to the agreed job evaluation process.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

That the Committee:

- 1) endorses the areas of consideration as identified in the Peer Challenge outcome letter, attached as **Appendix 1**, to be used to refine further the development priorities of the Virtual School.
- 2) agrees the proposal to aspire to incorporate a Post 16 Looked After Children (LAC) Adviser, with a teaching qualification, within a refreshed Looked After Children and Care Leavers Service.

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**Constitutional Comments (SLB 19/12/17)**

16. Children and Young People's Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report.

**Financial Comments (SAS 03/01/18)**

17. The financial implications of the report are contained within paragraph 14 above.

**HR Comments (BC 3/1/2018)**

18. The staffing implications are contained within the body of the report.

**Background Papers and Published Documents**

None.

**Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

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