

16th July 2018**Agenda Item: 9****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION, LEARNING AND
SKILLS****ANNUAL REPORT ON THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL FOR LOOKED AFTER
CHILDREN (LAC)****Purpose of the Report**

1. To update Committee on the impact of the work of the Virtual School and its partners for the academic year 2016/17.

Information

2. The Virtual School (VS) discharges the Council's statutory duty to promote the educational achievement of Looked After Children (LAC) in all phases of education. It does this by working in close partnership with schools and other partners to build shared responsibility and in particular to build capacity in schools.
3. The work of the Virtual School contributes to the achievement of the ambitions summarised in Nottinghamshire's Partnership Strategy for Looked After Children & Care Leavers 2018-21. The Virtual School is a key contributor to the Local Authority's LAC and Care Leavers Partnership Board; this accountability board ensures that key partners come together from across and beyond the Local Authority (LA) to have collective responsibility for the education, health and wellbeing needs of those children in care to Nottinghamshire LA.
4. Within an increasingly 'schools-led' and academised system, it is essential that the Virtual School promotes a clear, shared vision for developing systems capacity and accountability through strong partnership working, thereby securing good quality educational provision and outcomes for LAC.
5. The Virtual School's Senior Leadership Team oversees the strategic and operational working practices of the team. This leadership team currently consists of the Co-ordinator of the Virtual School, the Principal Education Psychologist and the Senior Educational Psychologist for LAC. The wider team includes four full time, permanent LAC Achievement Officers (AOs) and one full time, permanent Virtual School Data Officer.
6. The Committee already receives updates on validated educational outcomes of Looked After Children through quarterly performance reports to Committee.

7. The current profile of Nottinghamshire's statutory school-aged LAC and their educational settings or alternative provision is as follows:

- The number of statutory school aged LAC under the care of Nottinghamshire at the time of writing is 541
- Of these, 391 attend Nottinghamshire schools
- By key stage, 19 are in reception, 140 are primary age, and 232 are secondary age
- 23 are Nottinghamshire LAC living in Nottinghamshire but educated in other local authority schools (8 are primary age and 15 secondary age). *This has been an area for focused attention, and significant improvements have been made since 2014 when 83 Nottinghamshire LAC living in Nottinghamshire were being educated in other LA schools.*
- A further 127 are Nottinghamshire LAC living out of county and being educated in other local authority schools (3 being of reception age, 33 primary age and 91 secondary age). *In 2014, 80 Nottinghamshire LAC lived out of county and were educated in other LA schools.*

8. The table below shows the percentage of looked after pupils attending schools by Ofsted category. This represents an improving picture of the schools (in and out of county) that Nottinghamshire looked after pupils attend. It can be noted that the percentage of LAC in outstanding schools has risen significantly and the number in inadequate schools (six pupils in total, 2 secondary and 4 primary) has dropped. The number in adequate schools will drop again in the next academic year due to natural transition points where pupils are moving to good or outstanding schools. All pupils attending schools judged to be less than good or outstanding are monitored closely by the virtual school.

	Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	Inadequate
July 2018	18%	74%	8%	1%
July 2017	14%	74%	10%	2%

9. The Virtual School uses pupil level progress and attainment data to support and challenge educational settings to maximum their impact on progress and attainment. The aim is to ensure that all initiatives to drive up attainment and progress are accessible to Nottinghamshire's LAC both in and out of county. Data systems used by the Virtual School have become increasingly sophisticated, and this facilitates greater challenge of publicly funded schools and other providers when individual pupils do not make educational progress. The Council's Performance and Review team works closely with the VS Data Officer to provide support with accessing and analysing data sources locally, regionally and nationally.

10. The VS Co-ordinator monitors Personal Education Plans (PEPs) to identify those LAC who are not making expected progress or who are experiencing difficulties in educational settings. Once identified as being 'at risk', the Virtual School's risk and management information system is used to gather a more detailed picture of the LAC's profile and needs. This monitoring process then informs the priority of involvement for LAC Achievement Officers.

11. The majority of LAC are educated full time in school settings. If needs dictate, schools sometimes arrange for part of the pupil's educational provision to be delivered by an

alternative provider. The VS ensures that schools use Council approved providers of alternative provision. In these circumstances the school where the pupil is on roll continues to monitor attendance and progress.

12. Where appropriate, colleagues from Children's Social Care and/or placement teams will consult with the Virtual School about education, including where school moves are required due to placement moves.
13. The Virtual School team works in close partnership with other Council teams, including the Fair Access Team, to ensure that there is a robust joined-up approach to identifying and monitoring those LAC who are at risk of missing education. This process is delivered through the work of the Vulnerable Children's Education Committee (VCEC), Children Out of School Group (COOS) and the Children Missing Education panel (CME). These processes enable a clear escalation process for those LAC who are at risk of not receiving appropriate full time education. These forums have also provided the Virtual School with a mechanism for the early identification of children who may be at risk of coming into care.
14. The Virtual School works closely with colleagues in the Education, Learning and Skills division in areas where there are shared responsibilities, for example with Achievement and Equality consultants in supporting Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASCs), and with Early Years Teachers to ensure effective partnership working with early years schools and settings to implement the Early Years Pupil Premium.

Pilot Peer Review

15. The Virtual School volunteered to pilot the National Association of Virtual School Heads Peer Review process. This review was undertaken during May 2017. Recognised areas of strength included:
 - an established and widely respected Virtual School that was bold and forward thinking in its vision of partnership working
 - use of data collated from schools and settings to drive improvement was excellent
 - Designated Teachers receive a high level of support from the Virtual School with recognition of holding schools and partners robustly to account
 - strong senior leadership and political commitment to prioritising the education of LAC
 - good use of Pupil Premium, and linking this use to Personal Education Plans to effectively target expenditure.
16. The review outlined a small number of areas for review and consideration by the Virtual School, including:
 - to continue to embed partnership working
 - to develop the data systems to capture all available data sets
 - to develop systematic working relationships with internal partners e.g. involvement in social worker training on education matters
 - to continue to offer the Attachment Aware Schools project to embed the practice across all schools.

Post 16 LAC

17. The current Year 12 cohort of LAC is 94. As of April 2018, 13 out of 94 are not in education, employment or training (NEET). The Virtual School works closely with Family Service workers to support NEET young people to re-engage in education, training or employment opportunities. The Leaving Care team achievement officers support Year 13 young people with making choices from a range of education, employment or training (EET) opportunities.
18. 20 of this cohort who were at particular risk of becoming NEET were targeted for additional support as part of a D2N2 funded coaching and work experience project. All of these pupils have successfully remained in education, employment or training through the support of the project, and have positive plans to engage in further EET opportunities in September.
19. It is the statutory duty of the Council's Family Service team to identify those young people who are not in education, employment or training which includes LAC at Post-16. The Virtual School accesses support from 'Futures' colleagues within the Family Service to provide information, advice and guidance during Year 11 around viable Post-16 plans.
20. The Virtual School is currently working with a Post-16 Education Improvement Adviser to build collaborative partnerships with Further Education (FE) college leaders in order to investigate the setting up of information-sharing protocols and electronic LAC data tracking systems for Post-16 LAC. The Council's ambition is to make sure all Post-16 LAC are placed on appropriate EET pathways, and to provide effective support and challenge for Post-16 settings.

Supporting work of Designated Teachers

21. Each publicly funded school is statutorily required to have a qualified teacher undertaking the role of Designated Teacher (DT) for Looked After Children. The Virtual School has a responsibility to:
 - ensure all governors and school leaders are aware of their requirement to appoint and train a DT for LAC
 - work closely with, and provide training and support for all DTs to ensure that they understand and fulfil their statutory role for LAC
 - provide regular updates for governors, school leaders and DTs in terms of current outcomes for LAC and good practice examples.
22. Good links are in place with Designated Teachers in schools through a regular email service which provides DTs with update information and guidance on all topics related to LAC provision. In addition, free 'new to role' or 'refresher' training is offered to all DTs on a twice yearly basis. During the academic year 2017/18 over 140 DTs have received this training.

Monitoring and maximising the use of the Looked After Pupil Premium

23. The Pupil Premium is additional funding for publicly funded schools in England to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils of all abilities, and to close the gaps between them

and their peers. Pupils eligible for Pupil Premium are children eligible for free school meals, looked after and previously looked after children, and forces children.

24. In order for the Virtual School to release the LAC Pupil Premium, all schools must return a detailed Pupil Premium Plan which is quality assured by the VS Coordinator to ensure chosen 'spends' are appropriately focused on the educational needs/gaps for each eligible child. The Virtual School monitors the impact of this funding and has identified a number of evidence based interventions which have a positive impact on progress. This information is shared with schools and settings to support intervention planning for those pupils not making good progress.
25. In line with the 'Conditions of Grant' guidance, Nottinghamshire's Virtual School retains some Pupil Premium funding in order to commission and provide a number of additional, far-reaching development projects which aim to either involve and inspire groups of LAC or to pilot and develop collaborative good practice across Nottinghamshire's schools. For example, Letterbox club, multi-model literacy project and the Attachment Aware Schools project.
26. The Virtual School hosts an annual achievement event to celebrate the success of Nottinghamshire's LAC. This is attended by LAC young people, their carers, their teachers, their social workers, and various senior officers of the Council as well as the Virtual School team. Over 100 Looked After Children will be receiving awards at the 2018 achievement event.
27. 2018-2019 planning for the Virtual School includes:
 - to continue to work on a framework of partnership working to build capacity through a school-led system
 - to continue to review and develop the Virtual School's method of service delivery
 - to further develop the data system for challenging and supporting schools and settings to improve outcomes for LAC
 - to further develop the Attachment Aware Schools project
 - to extend the multi model literacy project to include augmented reality.

Other Options Considered

28. No other options have been considered.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

29. The report provides an opportunity for the Committee to consider any further actions arising from the information contained within the report.

Statutory and Policy Implications

30. 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

31. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the Committee considers whether there are any actions it requires in relation to the information in the report on the impact of the work of the Virtual School and its partners for academic year 2016/17.

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Constitutional Comments (EP 18/06/18)

32. The recommendation falls within the remit of the Children and Young People's Committee by virtue of its terms of reference.

Financial Comments (SAS 19/06/18)

33. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Nottinghamshire's Partnership Strategy for Looked After Children and Care Leavers 2018-21

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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