

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD
20 JANUARY 2020

Title of paper:	Educational Attainment of Children in Care	
Directors:	Nicholas Lee Director, Education Services Helen Blackman Director, Children's Integrated Services	Wards affected: All
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Relevant Council Plan Key Theme:		
Nottingham People		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Living in Nottingham		<input type="checkbox"/>
Growing Nottingham		<input type="checkbox"/>
Respect for Nottingham		<input type="checkbox"/>
Serving Nottingham Better		<input type="checkbox"/>

Summary of issues (including benefits to citizens/service users):

This report provides an update of the work of the Nottingham City Virtual School and provides details of attainment in the 2018-19 academic year.

Recommendation:	
1	To note and discuss: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the recent trends and current levels of educational attainment for Nottingham City's Children in Care (CiC) in comparison to the performance of all children and CIC nationally; b) the current work and interventions of the Virtual School to promote and support the educational achievement of Nottingham City looked after children and previously looked after children.

1 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1. To ensure the Nottingham City Virtual School is discharging the Local Authority statutory duties to promote the educational achievement of it's looked after children and previously looked after children.

2 BACKGROUND (INCLUDING OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION)

2.1. This report will consider the attainment of looked after children during the academic year 2018-19, and the work of the Virtual School to promote and support their education.

2.2. The Virtual School has a duty to monitor, track, promote and support the educational achievement and experience of its authority's children in care and to provide advice and support in respect to the education of previously looked children.

- 2.3. The Nottingham City Virtual School sits within Nottingham City Council’s Education Service and reports to the Director of Education and the Director of Children’s Integrated Services.
- 2.4. The Nottingham City Virtual School team consists of a Virtual School Head, a recently appointed Virtual School Team Manager, 3.5fte Education Support Officers for statutory school aged children, 1 Education Support Officer for post-16 children in care, 1 Education Support Officer with responsibilities relating to previously looked after children, 2 Business Support Administrators and 1 Data officer.
- 2.5. A governing body is in place to scrutinise and consider the Virtual School’s arrangements in meeting their statutory duties. The governing body acts as a critical friend supporting and challenging the Virtual School to drive improvements in the educational achievement of children in care and previously looked after children.
- 2.6. In the 2018-19 academic year 482 compulsory school aged children were on roll at the Virtual School. Of the 482 school age children, 154 (32%) were of primary school age and 328 secondary age (68%).
- 2.7. At the end of the academic year, there were 429 compulsory school aged children on the Virtual School roll; 177 were receiving education within Nottingham City, 143 were receiving education within Nottinghamshire County, 86 were receiving education outside of Nottingham, 17 children had no recorded school and 6 were in custody.
- 2.8. At the end of the 2018-19 academic year, 63 of the children in care on roll at the Virtual School were in schools judged by Ofsted as ‘outstanding’, 243 were in schools judged ‘good’, 38 were in schools judged as ‘requiring improvement’ and 4 children was being educated in a schools judged as in ‘special measures’ or having ‘serious weaknesses’. The remaining children were either being educated in a recently converted academy and therefore had no judgement or were in Independent Schools subject to a different inspection process or had no recorded school.

Attendance and Exclusion of Looked After Children

- 2.9. Welfare Call is commissioned to gather attendance and exclusion data for children in care. Attendance data is updated daily for each child in care on the Virtual School roll and the Virtual School caseworkers scrutinise reports periodically in order to support and challenge social workers, carers and schools where children are identified as having low attendance or where they have been subject to a fixed term exclusion.
- 2.10. There was a slight drop in the school attendance rate for Nottingham City children in care in the 2018-19 academic year; the percentage school attendance in 2017-18 was 93.5% compared to 93.6%.
- 2.11. There was 1 permanent exclusion of a child in care during the 2018/19 academic year and 120 incidents of fixed term exclusion, which is a decrease from the previous academic year. The table below provides details of the number and types of fixed term exclusions experienced by our children in care in 2018-19 compared to 2017-18:

Exclusion Code	Number of Incidents 2017/18	Percentage of incidents	Number of Incidents 2018/19	Percentage of incidents 2018/19
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		2017/18		
Bullying	2	1.4%	0	/
Damage	3	2.1%	8	6.7%
Drug and alcohol related	4	2.8%	3	2.5%
Non-cooperation	/	/	7	5.8%
Other	45	32.3%	4	3.3%
Persistent disruptive behaviour	29	20.8%	10	8.3%
Physical assault against a pupil	14	10%	10	8.3%
Physical assault against an adult	10	7.2%	9	7.5%
Racist Abuse	2	1.4%	2	1.7%
Theft	1	0.7%	0	/
Truancy	/	/	2	1.7%
Verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against a pupil	7	5.0%	3	2.5%
Verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against an adult	22	15.8%	17	14.2%
School unable to supply reason	/	/	45	37.5%
Grand Total	139	/	120	

2.12. The Nottingham City Virtual School has effective arrangements in place to report, monitor and scrutinise attendance and exclusion data pertaining to individual children in care. Where issues are identified arrangements are in place to challenge, advise and support professionals to consider interventions and strategies to improve low attendance and prevent exclusions.

Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

2.13. Currently the Nottingham City Virtual School monitors and reports on PEP completion for children in care of statutory school age. PEPs are required to be sent to the Virtual School PEP inbox, an outlook account specifically for PEP submission, for checking and saving to SIMs, this enables the Virtual School to produce weekly PEP compliance reports.

2.14. At the end of the academic year 2018-19 (week ending July 26th 2019) the weekly PEP compliance outcomes was as follows:

- 71% of all the authority's children in care had an up to date PEP completed in the last 6months;
- 21% of children had a PEP completed during the last year;
- 2% of children have a PEP that was out of date by over a year;
- 6% of children have not yet had a PEP completed.

2.15. We previously reported that the current arrangements for completing and reporting PEP compliance required improvement to improve efficiency, quality and accessibility. Identified issues with the current PEP were reported as follows:

- The current PEP is paper based, making it time consuming for the different professionals (carers, designated teachers, children and social workers) to contribute their views/information on the one form, which sometimes causes delay in PEP reports being typed and sent to the Virtual School.

- PEPs are not always being sent to the Virtual School inbox, but are instead saved directly to Liquid Logic, consequently they are then recorded as a 'breach' as they have not been counted by the Virtual School.
 - Inability to report on the number of PEPs attended by carers, children or the Virtual School, therefore performance in this area, and the possible impact of non-attendance cannot be considered.
 - The current system does not enable consideration of any extenuating circumstances for non-completion of PEPs.
- 2.16. Because of the inefficiencies in the current PEP processes, described above, work commenced to develop the electronic PEP in Liquid Logic with reporting to be completed centrally through the Liquid Logic system. Early into this piece of work it became apparent that Liquid Logic would not enable us to effectively address the issues identified or enable us to perform the functions required to operate effectively. In order to effectively and efficiently fulfil our duties and address the issues with the current PEP the Virtual School would require a purpose built information management system and electronic PEP portal system.
- 2.17. Two leading providers have developed a bespoke information management and ePEP system specific for Virtual Schools; Welfare Call and eGov. Nationally over 110 other Virtual Schools use either the Welfare Call or eGov ePEP and Information Management system.
- 2.18. The Virtual School already commission Welfare Call to collect, hold and report attendance and attainment data, therefore having already gone through a full tender and procurement process, it was decided to use Welfare Call to also provide the additional ePEP portal service. The costs for commissioning the Welfare Call Virtual School Information Management and ePEP system is being met through Pupil Premium Plus, made possible through the Conditions of the Grant.

Progress and Next Steps for the Implementation of the Electronic PEP

- The Virtual School has designed the ePEP portal and has sent this over to the commissioned provider, Welfare Call, to build.
- Feedback from social care colleagues and Education Support Officers went into the design of the ePEP portal. The templates used by other authorities have also been considered in designing the Nottingham City ePEP.
- The Virtual School Head as met with the Analysis and Insight and Capita One Team to consider what information can be automatically ported to and from the ePEP and other council systems (Capita One and Liquid Logic).
- The Virtual School Head needs to meet with the Liquid Logic team to consider the communication of the ePEP to and from Liquid Logic.
- Reporting from the Welfare Call ePEP needs to be finalised.
- Training guides and templates, as well as face-to-face training, needs to be developed and rolled out to professionals to support them with the new PEP process.

- Access and log-ins to the Welfare Call ePEP needs to be provided to schools and social workers accordingly.
- 2.19. We are working to a timeframe of the end of the spring term (April 2020) for the completion of PEPS, PEP reporting and PEP quality assurance to move over to the Welfare Call ePEP portal. In the meantime PEPs are continuing to be arranged and completed in the same way.

Pupil Premium Plus (PPP)

- 2.20. The Pupil Premium Plus grant is funding provided by the Department for Education to the Virtual School to manage, and must be used for the benefit of the looked after child's educational needs.
- 2.21. The Virtual School receives an allocation of £2300 per child looked after for at least one day, as recorded in the previous March children looked-after data return.
- 2.22. The Virtual School manages the Pupil Premium Plus through an application process; schools are required to apply for the funding using an online form sent out each term. Funding is requested and provided termly up to the £2300 allocation; schools can apply for £700 in the summer term and £800 in the Autumn and Spring Term. Currently the Virtual School do not top slice any of the Pupil Premium Plus Funding; schools can apply for the entire £2300 allocation over the three terms.
- 2.23. If schools require funding over and above the termly allocation to support the cost of educational interventions that exceed the £2300 per year, the Virtual School have an Additional Funding Request process to support this, however, additional funds is subject to the amount of grant remaining.
- 2.24. Improvements in the way in which Pupil Premium Plus is allocated and managed is required; the current process is time consuming, as it relies on the Virtual School Head reviewing and approving each application for funding, which can cause delay in the funding being allocated. Furthermore, the current process for allocating funding is not aligned to the PEP process, yet schools use of the funds should match the needs identified in a child's Personal Education Plan. The Virtual School Head will therefore be looking to change the allocation process in the 2020-21 financial year, supported by the introduction of the new electronic PEP, as detailed in section 12 of this report.
- 2.25. The Nottingham City Virtual School has effective, clear and efficient arrangements in place to administer PPP funds to schools for the educational benefit of its authority's children in care, in accordance with the latest Conditions of Grant. An up to date Pupil Premium Plus policy is in place detailing these arrangements.

Annual Pupil Premium Plus budget for financial year 2018/19	£998,200
Breakdown of Expenditure	Amount £
Pupil Premium applications (includes summer, autumn and spring terms requests, plus applications extra funding)	717,474
Attendance at Alternative Providers - costs met by Virtual School	24,118
Nottingham City Education Psychology Service support	2,500

Nimbl Project	13,325
Attachment Training- Virtual School Team and some attach leads	8,750
Virtual School Head Teacher Post Graduate Course and expenses	2,063
Welfare Call Ltd	31,000
Big It Up Awards Virtual School's contribution	10,000
Education Progress Grant – Sept 18 requests	5,206
Other educational support to children in care (laptops, therapeutic education provision and education resources)	115,633
Fair Access- contribution to support education provision	6,657
Contribution to Special Educational Needs Team and Placement Team for the cost of education provision.	60,876
Total	£997,602

Previously Looked After Children

- 2.26. The Nottingham City Virtual School has a policy in place that details its planned arrangements for promoting the education of previously looked after children.
- 2.27. All Virtual Schools received grant funding to support with the new duty to promote the education of previously looked after children. The Nottingham City Virtual School used this grant funding to recruit an Education Support Officer (part-time and temporary) with specific responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of previously looked-after children, they commenced in post in May 2019.
- 2.28. Since starting in post the Education Support Officer responsible for previously looked after children has:
- Designed PEP forms, specifically for previously looked after children in different Key Stages.
 - Written guidance and information, relating to previously looked after children, for the new Virtual School Website (which will be made live in January 2020).
 - Provided advice and guidance to over 50 schools, social workers and adoptive parents in respect to the education of previously looked after children, as recorded on the advice log, that has also been created.
 - Create a web area, within the Nottingham City Council website, with information and advice promoting the educational achievement of previously looked-after children.
 - Facilitated and chaired PEP meetings and other education meetings in respect to previously looked after children.

- 2.29. The work of the Education Support Officer responsible for providing advice and support in respect to previously looked after children will continue until at least March 2021, as further grant funding has been provided to Virtual Schools by the DfE.

Attainment of Children in Care 2018-2019

- 2.30. The 2018-19 verified attainment data will not be received and analysed until after the DfE Statistical First Release in March 2020, at this point a full report on the attainment outcomes for Nottingham City children in care will be made available to the Corporate Parenting Board.
- 2.31. Whilst awaiting verified attainment data for children in care, the Virtual School considers the unverified data made available to all Virtual Schools via the NCER portal to inform its work, however, data from unverified sources cannot be used to form reports to external stakeholders.

3 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED IN MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 None.

4 FINANCE COLLEAGUE COMMENTS

- 4.1 N/A.

5 LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT COLLEAGUE COMMENTS

- 5.1 N/A.

6 STRATEGIC ASSETS & PROPERTY COLLEAGUE COMMENTS

- 6.1 N/A.

7 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 An EIA is not required because the report does not contain financial proposals or decisions.

8 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS OTHER THAN PUBLISHED WORKS OR THOSE DISCLOSING CONFIDENTIAL OR EXEMPT INFORMATION

- 8.1 None.

9 PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN COMPILING THIS REPORT

- 9.1 None.