

SWAP audit – Education of Children in Care

Cabinet Member(s): Cllr Frances Nicholson – Cabinet Member for Children and Families

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Summary	<p>As part of the 2017-18 internal audit plan a review has been undertaken to assess the implementation of recommendations made in the Education of Children Looked After (CLA) non-opinion review carried out in 2016-17.</p> <p>All local authorities have a duty under the Children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their care. This includes a duty to promote the promotion of educational achievement for looked after children, regardless of where they live or are educated.</p> <p>The Virtual School Head is primarily responsible for ensuring that there are effective systems in place to maintain an overview of all children on the Virtual School roll, their attainment and any actions that must be taken to facilitate improvement.</p> <p>The role of a Virtual School is to provide additional support for looked after children in mainstream schools or specialist provision through the collaboration of professionals such as social workers, foster carers and designated teachers, as well as the Virtual School itself. The Virtual School aims to support the education of CLA's by providing support to designated teachers and other professionals, monitoring the completion and quality of Personal Education Plans, arranging relevant training and development opportunities for staff, providing CLA's with one-to-one support and becoming involved in cases where there are attendance issues or there is a risk of exclusion.</p> <p>This report sets out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Current arrangements for the Virtual School and Learning Support Team• Progress towards the priority actions identified in
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	the 2017-2018 Report
Context	<p>This report and updated outcomes related to the period of the academic year 2017-2018. Shortly after this period the Virtual School Head left her role and Emily Walters picked up the interim leadership of the service. She was appointed to the substantive Headteacher post in May of 2019 and a restructure of the service was undertaken.</p> <p>The Virtual School is now called the Virtual School and Learning Support Team, and comprises a team of advisory teachers and learning mentors, under the leadership of a Virtual School Head and two full time equivalent Deputy Heads, one with a SEND focus and the other with a CLA focus.</p> <p>The review of activities below reflects the current situation and gives context around the progress towards meeting these outcomes.</p>
Review activity	<p>Finding 1:</p> <p>1. Educational outcomes for Children Looked After are reduced because agencies do not liaise effectively and do not have a clear understanding of their roles. Medium</p> <p>1.3a Proposed Outcome: Priority 4 We recommend that the Operations Manager - Children Looked After works with the Virtual School to develop standard induction materials relating to the Virtual School. These should be used during all inductions for professionals working with CLA. Previous documentation is no longer relevant due to the development of the new service. Ongoing liaison between Head of Service for CLA and Head of Virtual School ensures that new processes are agreed and shared. See 1.3.b</p> <p>1.3b Proposed Outcome: Priority 4 We recommend that the Operations Manager - Children</p>

Looked After ensures that all social workers in the Child Looked After team complete the Promoting Successful Education for CLA training course and that completion of the course is made mandatory.

This is available each term through the Virtual School team for Social workers and foster carers. Take up has been variable and we therefore began working with Social Care Ops Managers to find an approach which is more accessible and practical to all social workers. The first multi-professional event is taking place on the 10th Feb. It will include input from both teams to facilitate a deeper understanding of the roles and responsibilities. In addition there are sessions on admissions procedures, Post-16 work, and SEND. IROs will also be invited to attend.

Foster Carer training remains in place and continues to run twice a year with high attendance.

The document called 'Expectations of a CLA social worker' was agreed by the previous Ops Manager and VSH. A revised document in line with the new service is currently under review with VS management team and CLA Ops managers. This will be agreed this term.

1.4a

Proposed
Outcome:

Priority 4

We recommend that the Operations Manager - Resources and the Operations Manager - Children Looked After reminds officers of the need to ensure placement plans are fully completed. Placement planning meetings should be held prior to placement wherever possible and should clearly record any steps carers must take to support the education of children in their care.

This remains an ongoing area of development with the placements planning team. There is now a joint funded staff member working in the placements team – this ensures improved communication between SEND, placements, and VS. Monthly meetings in place with VSH, Strategic manager for placements, and Head of Service for CLA further support case oversight. Multiple monthly and fortnightly meetings are held to ensure plans for CLA are shared and agreed between Social Care and Education, these include Care Planning Meeting, Placements meeting, and CLA Forensic Review.

For more complex young people, SEND and Health agencies are also involved in this placement planning through the multi-agency complex case panel.

1.5a

Proposed
Outcome:

Priority 3

We recommend that the Strategic Commissioner - Vulnerable Children ensures that all IPAs completed for CLA in external placements have a fully completed 'Enjoy and Achieve' section.

We would welcome this development and ensure that enjoyment and achievement is at the heart of our newly developed PEP documents. This objective is not yet embedded and a dip sample audit is needed to track progress and assess the current situation. This will be implemented quarterly.

1.7a

Proposed
Outcome:

Priority 3

We recommend that the Virtual School Head Teacher ensures that an up to date list of designated teachers is always available to the Virtual School.

Complete and in place

1.10a

Proposed
Outcome:

Priority 3

We recommend that the Virtual School Head Teacher ensures that overdue PEP paperwork is promptly followed up.

For September 2019 the PEP process and document has been completely revised and therefore we anticipate a 'settling in' period. However there is now a clear escalation process which is now embedded. The admin team of the Virtual School now owns this process and escalation of non-submitted PEPs includes social workers, team managers, IROs, Head teachers, and ultimately Chairs of Governors. Where PEPs are still not received in the final two weeks of a school term, each setting gets a phone call twice weekly to follow up. Funding is also linked to the timely submission of a completed and high quality PEP.

In addition, the VSH is investigating the use of an electronic PEP, and will aim to have this embedded by September. This will enable all professionals to engage

	<p>with an online document and take responsibility for completing their sections. Currently three providers are being considered, one of which is the system currently used by Children’s Social Care.</p> <p>1.13a Proposed Priority 3 Outcome:</p> <p>We recommend that the Virtual School Head Teacher reminds the SEN team of the need for the Virtual School to be notified and involved in school moves for all CLA with ECHPs.</p> <p>Inclusion Somerset now has permanent strategic managers for Statutory SEND, Access and Additional Learning Needs, SEND Advisory Services, and Virtual School with regular meetings. In addition, the alignment of the Learning Support Team, SENIT and Virtual School has further strengthened the links between services. A secondment has been established for a member of the Statutory SEND Team to sit within the Virtual School to facilitate and support understanding of the EHCP process for CLA. Regular meetings between strategic and operational managers helps to ensure that we are all working towards the same objectives for children accessing multiple services.</p>
<p>Recommendations</p>	<p>The outcomes identified above will now been re-visited in light of the changes to the service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued liaison between CSC, VS and SEND at strategic as well as operational level • Review of the impact of induction materials and processes developed to support Social Workers • Evaluation following the implementation of the reviewed training arrangements on ‘Promoting Successful Education for CLA’ • Commissioner for independent placements links with the VS team on the IPAs and the focus on ‘enjoy and achieve’ <p>The joint funded post in the placements team is a focus for the audit which is currently ongoing so this should feed into the outcomes described above.</p>

