

CORPORATE PARENTING REPORT

Education of Children in Care

Background: The Children and Families Act 2014 requires local authorities in England to appoint at least one person for the purpose of discharging the local authority's duty to promote the educational achievement of its Children in Care. The Virtual School Head (VSH) must be an officer employed by the local authority.

The VSH is the lead responsible officer for ensuring that arrangements are in place to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of the authority's Children in Care, including those placed outside the home authority's boundaries.

Gloucestershire employed their first VSH in 2007, before the role was statutory and in recognition that the concept of a Virtual School would be beneficial and allow tracking and monitoring of outcomes.

Since its' inception The Virtual School in Gloucestershire has developed to include other vulnerable learners beyond the children in care cohort. For 6 years an Education Advisors, who supports children previously in care, has been in post and since September 2018 these children and those post-16 in education have been supported as part of the extended duties of the VSH.

Academic Year 2019/20: This Briefing extracts key information from Gloucestershire County Council's Virtual School Annual Report (2019/20) which was presented to The Corporate Parenting Group in December. It provides a summary of the key performance headlines.

For reporting purposes, both to the Department of Education (DFE) and internally, the progress and performance of Children in Care in Gloucestershire County Council is based on those who have been looked after continuously for a minimum period of 12 months. It is not appropriate to provide comparative data to previous years due to changes in counting methodology.

Performance for 2019/20 in respect of educational outcomes are as follows:

- Gloucestershire **Early Years** (11 children in the eligible cohort)
No EYFS data for this academic year due to Covid 19
- Gloucestershire **Key Stage 1** (8 students in the eligible cohort)
No KS1 data for this academic year due to Covid 19
- Gloucestershire **Key Stage 2** (23 students in the eligible cohort)
No KS2 data for this academic year due to Covid 19

- Gloucestershire **Key Stage 4** (58 students in the eligible cohort, 23 students not on the GCSE pathway for English and Maths). **7 students (12% of eligible cohort and 20% of those who were on the English and Maths GCSE pathway) achieved grade 4+ in English and Maths**
(National children in care key stage 4 first statistical release 2018-19. 17.9%)
- Gloucestershire has 17 care leavers at University
- Attendance 2019-20 for the Reception to Year 11 cohort was **92.6% until the 20th March (start of partial closure due to Covid 19)**
- 12.1% of children/young people from reception to the Year 11 cohort experienced an exclusion
- 73.6% of children in care were in OFSTED graded 'Good or Outstanding' schools. 7.4% of children in care were in schools with no rating

Integral to the statutory duties of The Virtual School is their quality assurance role in respect of Personal Education Plans (PEP) for all CiC. PEPs are intrinsic to the child's care plan and the child's social worker, as the lead professional responsible for ensuring the PEP process takes place, calls the meeting with the learner's school /education setting. The Virtual School supports the PEP process from the time that a child enters care and throughout their care journey.

Three times a year a CiC will have a PEP meeting arranged by their social worker to ensure that the education needs of the child are met via the PEP. From the key stages of reception to year 11 there is Pupil Premium Plus funding available to source any additional provisions, equipment or resources that the child needs to secure good outcomes. Each plan is therefore unique to the child. To request additional educational resources and funding this meeting must happen in a timely and meaningful way.

The Virtual School has responsibilities relating to Personal Education Planning irrespective of the age of the child while they are also responsible for the management of the 'Looked After Pupil Premium' (often described as Pupil Premium Plus, PP+) to support learning for children in reception to Year 11 (611 children). Personal Education Plan completion rates were exceptionally high during the year, as follows:

- Early years = 100%
- Reception to Year 11 = 99%
- Post 16 = 99% 4

The financial year 2019/20 saw the continuation of the Pupil Premium Plus allocation which is driven by the needs of children and young people. The breakdown of spend was as follows:

Area	Total	%
Learning	£809,879.48	64.4%
Social Emotional and Mental Health	£437,332.55	34.8%
Attendance	£10,830.00	0.9%

Priority Focus in 2020/21

Educational Outcomes for CiC are too low and whilst completion rates of PEPS are high, the quality of PEPs has been highlighted as an area for significant improvement. Evidence has show a lack of Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely (SMART) targets set within PEPs which is linked directly to outcomes. Addressing this is a key priority for The Virtual School going forward via a SMART Target Campaign alongside schools. Progress will be monitored by a newly formed Virtual School Management Committee which replicates, as far as possible, a Governing Body.

Cllr Richard Boyles

Cabinet Member – Children’s Safeguarding & Early Years

February 2021