

Virtual School Annual Report 2022/23

To: Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee

Meeting Date: 15th November 2023

From: Assistant Director, School and Settings Improvement

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: No

Outcome: Provide information and evaluate the work of the Virtual School.

Recommendation: The Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee is recommended to:

- a) Note the content of the report, and
- b) Raise any questions with the lead officer

Officer contact:

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1. Background

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to detail and evaluate the work undertaken by the Virtual School from September 2022 to August 2023 and to set out the key priorities for the academic year 2023-2024. Furthermore, it is to share the outcomes of the eligible cohort (children in the care of Cambridgeshire County council for a year or more as of 31st March 2023).
- 1.2 Every local authority in England must appoint at least one person to fulfil the local authority's statutory duty to promote the educational achievement of its children in care, wherever they live or are educated. This person is called the Head of the Virtual School. Within Cambridgeshire we have a team of education professionals that support the Virtual School Head in fulfilling these responsibilities.
- 1.3 Cambridgeshire Virtual School support children and young people in care between the ages of 2 and 18. The Virtual School brings together information about children and young people who are in the care of Cambridgeshire as if they attend a single school.
- 1.4 Additionally, Cambridgeshire Virtual School provide information and advice for children previously in care including those who have been adopted from care and those under special guardianship and child arrangement orders. Cambridgeshire Virtual School is responsible for children previously in care attending a Cambridgeshire school or education setting.
- 1.5 The Virtual School has a non-statutory strategic leadership role for children who have or have had a social worker (in the last 6 years).
- 1.6 Cambridgeshire Virtual School sits within the Education Directorate. The Virtual School Head is line managed by the Assistant Director for School Improvement. Following consultation, a direct line of sight has been introduced between the Virtual School Head and the Executive Director of Children, Education and Families.
- 1.7 The Virtual School Headteacher is currently in post as Eastern Region Virtual School Head's Chairperson. This means that Cambridgeshire has a seat on the National Association of Virtual School Heads' Extended Board.
- 1.8 The Virtual School has a 'management board' which offers both challenge and support to the work and direction of the Virtual School.
- 1.9 [Guide for children and young people: Stable Homes, Built on Love](#) was published by the DfE in 2023. This has implications for the Virtual School and role of the wider council as a corporate parent. Although this hasn't yet been written as primary legislation, it has already begun to influence thinking around future developments within the Virtual School.

2. Main Issues

- 2.1 Please see the Virtual School Annual Report 2022/23, attached at Appendix 1.

3. Alignment with the Council's ambitions

- 3.1 Net zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire by 2045, and our communities and natural environment are supported to adapt and thrive as the climate changes

The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:

- Virtual Schools have replaced face to face meetings with virtual meetings, where it does not compromise the outcomes of the meeting.
- The team are making use of Rocket Books as opposed to paper-based notebooks.
- Paper is kept to a minimum in training sessions, making use of QR codes, apps and electronic materials.

3.2 Travel across the county is safer and more environmentally sustainable

The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:

- Virtual Schools have replaced face to face meetings with virtual meetings, where it does not compromise the outcomes of the meeting.
- The team make use of car sharing as appropriate.

3.3 Health inequalities are reduced

The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:

- Recovery Through Relationships [detailed within the report, page 9] is an evidenced based approach to respond to adverse childhood experiences (ACES) by being trauma responsive.
- Raising an awareness of Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder has formed part of the Virtual School priorities [detailed within the report, page 9-10 and appendix 4 page 32-36].

3.4 People enjoy healthy, safe, and independent lives through timely support that is most suited to their needs

Education is a protective factor and provides a pathway to future success. The report attached sets out the implications for this priority in [entire report].

3.5 Helping people out of poverty and income inequality

The recent addition of strategic lead for children with a social worker has implications for this priority. Nationally between 50% and 60% of children with a social worker (CiN / CP) are eligible to free school meals, which is seen as an indicator of deprivation [details within the report, page 18].

3.6 Places and communities prosper because they have a resilient and inclusive economy, access to good quality public services and social justice is prioritised

There are no significant implications for this priority.

3.7 Children and young people have opportunities to thrive

The report attached sets out the implications for this priority in [entire report]

5. Source documents

5.1 none