

VIRTUAL SCHOOL

To: **Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee**

Meeting Date: **20.03.19**

From: **Claire Hiorns
Interim Virtual School Head Teacher**

Electoral division(s): **All**

Purpose: **This report provides:**

- a) an update on the Virtual School developments
- b) a six month update on the issues explored in relation to the Virtual School at the meeting on 19 September 2018;
- c) Comment on the Virtual School response to the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) inspection

Recommendation: **The Sub-Committee is asked to note and comment on the report, offering support and challenge as necessary.**

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Summary:

This report provides an update on the progress towards the development priorities within the Virtual School. Members were provided with a copy of the development plan at the previous meeting on 30 January 2019. There is also an update on the issues arising from the report produced in September 2018. The September report was written by the previous Virtual School Head Teacher. Comment is also provided on the Virtual School response to the recent Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) inspection

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Virtual School is a statutory requirement for the Local Authority. The current arrangements for the Virtual Head Teacher are interim. The substantive post will be advertised and appointed to for a September 2019 start.

2. MAIN ISSUES

2.1 Priority 1: Strengthen the collection of data, use of data analysis to inform strategy and interventions to drive improvement and maximise impact

The Virtual School has been working with the Data Intelligence Team and Welfare Call (the Personal Education Plans (PEP) and attendance service that Cambridgeshire Virtual School buy into) to facilitate the building of data toolkits. This will enable the key performance indicators to be tracked and used, to inform the work of the Virtual School. The first build should be completed by 15th April 2019. The toolkit will continue to evolve beyond this.

The Service Director for Education is continuing to explore the possibility of a shared role with Peterborough to create capacity and resilience around data for both local authorities.

2.2 Priority 2: Create a school improvement approach to improving outcomes for children in care and children previously looked after

Cambridgeshire Virtual School have strengthened links with Suffolk and Peterborough Virtual School. A joint development plan has been written with Peterborough. A visit has taken place to Hertfordshire Virtual School. An initial meeting has taken place with Cambridgeshire's Head of Service for School Intervention. Cambridgeshire Virtual School has a development week planned for the end of March, one of the priorities within this week, is to use the knowledge and information gained from these visits to develop processes and systems for Virtual School, school improvement work.

The Virtual School Educational Psychologist role has now been advertised, with a view to appoint, for an April 2019 start.

2.3 Priority 3: Create a Virtual School Inclusion Team who will take the lead in supporting individuals to access high quality education provision and ensure that the children and young people's experience of education is positive, aspirational and meets all needs

The Virtual School offer has been drafted. As meetings have taken place with key partners, the offer has been shared. The aim of the meetings has been to share with other teams the remit of the Virtual School, to understand their remit, to strengthen relationships and look at collaborative working in the future. So far meetings have taken place with:

- Social Care Managers
- Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs)
- 0-25 SEND Service
- Alternative Provisions Manager
- Admissions
- Education Inclusion Officers
- Business Intelligence
- Head of Service for School Improvement
- Head of Service for Early Help
- Clinician Team

Some of the key outcomes from these meetings have been:

- Monthly meetings with social care to develop systems and processes to resolve issues and strengthen working practice
- Input into the review of the PEP
- Start and finish task group being established to look at processes around children in care with Education, Health and Care Plans, with the aim of minimising drift
- A developing plan as to when to involve the Admissions Team, to direct schools who are who are showing resistance to the swift admission of Children in Care
- Data toolkits under development for the Virtual School
- Access to information held by School Improvement Service

2.4 Priority 4: Realign processes and procedures, to fit with the new model, whilst maintaining compliance with statutory guidance

Welfare Call (the company used for Cambridgeshire PEPs) have attended a team meeting to share developments within their service around PEPs. A review has taken place of the statutory requirements of the PEP. The Virtual School is in the process of consulting with children and young people, designated teachers, Independent Reviewing Officers, carers and

social workers to gain their views on the PEP.

The allocation of and use of pupil premium plus is an area of focus for the Virtual School during the development week, at the end of March. By the end of the week, systems, processes and criteria will have been revised and the policy updated to reflect this.

The Transformation Team have been engaged to support the Virtual School in the communication strategy for the launch of the new model.

2.5 **Six month update on the issues explored in relation to the Virtual School at the meeting on 19 September 2018**

Data

The validated data for Children in Care will be available by the end of March. This information will be used as the basis for the head teacher's report and shared with members in May 2019. This is in line with the reporting used in both Peterborough and Suffolk Virtual Schools to their members.

Year 5 / 6 Project

In the summer term 2018, 16 out of 29, Year 5 pupils were identified to take part in Tute (an online learning programme), however schools were unresponsive and additional technical difficulties resulted in the decision being made not to proceed with this project at this time. The focus of the Virtual School for the spring and summer term is shown through the development plan, and progress towards this is detailed above.

2.6 **Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS)**

In relation to the Virtual School, the ILACS inspection reported:

- *A review of the work of the virtual school has taken place but that it is too early to see the impact of this work.*

There is recognition that the development plan seeks to address the areas of weakness within the Virtual School.

- *Too little strategic overview of the progress that pupils make*

The improvement of data underpins all changes within the development plan. This will promote a strategic overview of progress and enable a thorough response through the school improvement model

- *The impact of personal education plans and quality assurance of the plans is inconsistent*

The PEP will be simplified to ensure that key areas such as pupil voice,

attainment and progress data, targets and the use of pupil premium plus, are given the priority needed. The quality assurance process will be reviewed alongside this.

3. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

3.1 A good quality of life for everyone

The report above sets out the implications for this priority in section 2.1-2.4.

3.2 Thriving places for people to live

There are no significant implications for this priority.

3.3 The best start for Cambridgeshire's children

The report above sets out the implications for this priority in section 2.1-2.4.

4. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Resource Implications

The Local Authority need to increase resources to develop capacity around data collection and analysis within the Virtual School. The LA are currently exploring the possibility of a shared role with Peterborough to create capacity and resilience for both local authorities. This will be funded within existing resources.

4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

N/A

4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

All statutory requirements are being adhered to when looking at the development of the Virtual School

4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

N/A

4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

Clear communication in order to engage key partners in the new model will be critical to its success. The Transformation Team have been engaged to support this. The Virtual School Management Board will also be involved.

4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

N/A

4.7 Public Health Implications

N/A

Source Documents	Location
Peterborough and Cambridgeshire Virtual School joint development plan	Available from Claire.hiorns@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Cambridgeshire Virtual School offer	Available from Claire.hiorns@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee reports and minutes: 19 September 2018	https://cambridgeshire.cmis.uk.com/ccclive/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/959/Committee/46/Default.aspx