

OLDHAM VIRTUAL SCHOOL FOR LOOKED-AFTER CHILDREN

Autumn Term 2018

This report provides an overview of the work of the Virtual School during the Autumn term of 2018 (September 2018 – December 2018) and complements the Virtual School Annual Report 2017-18.

Summary

Expansion of the Virtual School Team continued with the introduction of two new posts:

- Education Support Officer for Post 16
- PEP Coordinator.

The introduction of these two roles has enabled the Virtual School to develop our work with regards to our statutory duties.

Having previously seen an increase of almost 50% in the number of Looked-After Children between 2015 and 2018, there was a decrease of approximately 10% (from 582 to 524) in the Autumn term.

In December 2018 the Virtual School cohort was;

- Early Years: 21%
- School Ages: 67%
(Primary: 34%, Secondary 33%, In borough: 71%, Out borough 29%)
- Post 16: 12%

The Headteacher of the Virtual School has been working with Children's Social Care (CSC) and health partners to further develop a notification system within Mosaic. This will ensure timely information at the point a child becomes looked after, thereby enabling swift liaison with schools so that provision and support can be put in place immediately.

Un-validated figures for Looked-After Children in the Autumn term show:

- 91% attendance,
- 12% of the school age cohort currently have attendance under 90%,
- 6% of young people received 1 or more fixed term exclusion.

During the Autumn term, 2 children were at risk of permanent exclusion. The Virtual School directly intervened and support programmes were put in place that enabled the young people to remain in education without the stigma of a permanent exclusion. To date no Looked-After Children has been permanently excluded from school.

Issues regarding attendance, exclusions and alternative or reduced timetables are monitored and continue to inform the case work of the Virtual School Officers in working directly with the young people, schools, social workers and wider partners to ensure appropriate access to education.

At the end of the Autumn term, 80% of school age Looked-After Children were attending good or outstanding schools. When a child comes into care, whilst a school may be judged

as less than good it is often inappropriate to simply move their school placement based on the current Ofsted rating. The Virtual School team monitor such provision to ensure that educational needs are being met. During the course of the term, of the school age children that became looked after, 20% were attending schools that were inadequate, 25% attended schools that Require Improvement and 55% were in good or outstanding schools.

Personal Education Plans (PEPs) continue to be a focus area for the Virtual School to improve both quality and compliance. The PEP Coordinator came into post in October and the impact of the role is already evident. Initial PEP completion rates for children new into care have improved from 0% in July to 66% being completed within the statutory timescale of 20 working days in December. 89% of initial PEPs were completed in time for the first Looked-After Children review at 28 days.

In September, the Virtual School commissioned online training on attachment and trauma to support Designated Teachers and key school staff in understanding the needs of Looked-After Children. To date 48 professionals have accessed the training, with positive feedback received. The Autumn Term Designated Teacher (DT) focussed on Social Emotional and Mental Health. The forum was well attended with workshops on Adverse Childhood Experiences and Functional Behavioural Analysis.

During the term the Virtual School continued to deliver monthly ePEP briefings to education and CSC staff to support their understanding of PEPs and the ePEP system. The first session of training was also delivered to Governors regarding their statutory duties in meeting the educational needs of Looked-After Children. This was positively received with further training planned each term. Briefing sessions have also been delivered across the CSC teams to provide an update of the new statutory duties, role and responsibilities in promoting the education of looked after and previously looked after children.

Priorities for Spring Term

- Development of CLAESS (Children Looked After Education Support Services) meeting to develop multi-service approach to meeting the educational needs of Looked-After Children
- Development of PEP toolkit
- Revise ePEP document
- Termly Meeting with Secondary DTs in Oldham Schools (Challenge and Support)
- Develop work with SEND team incorporating PEP and EHC planning
- DT Forum: The Voice of the Child and Corporate Parenting
- Development of the Virtual School Governing Body.