

Virtual School and Education Support for Children and Young People in Care

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Summary of service

The Virtual School for Children in Care (CiC) is a core service within Slough Children's Services Trust. The Service provides advice, training and support to children and young people in care, teachers, school staff and governors, education support services, social workers, residential key workers, parents and foster carers. The Service monitors the educational provision and progress of all children and young people in the care of Slough. The aim of the Service is to promote achievement and equality of opportunity to increase the life chances for all children in care. The Service strives to raise attainment, improve attendance and reduce the number of exclusions of children & young people in line with national targets. For more information regarding the responsibilities of the Trust please refer to 'Promoting the education of looked after children: Statutory guidance for local authorities (July 2014)

Service Available

The Virtual School provides :-

- Support and organise individual, group and online learning to pupils in their school.
- Early identification of educational difficulties of CiC, early intervention and preventative work in schools. This includes identifying children who would benefit from an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and making sure Special Education and Disability needs are met.
- Additional study support to CiC taking SATs and GCSEs.
- Support to CiC and their carers in accessing school places.

Tracking attendance and follow up support to social workers and schools.

- Initially set up and review Personal Education Plans (PEPs) for all CiC. The review will also incorporate the Education, Health and Care Plan, the annual review for the Virtual School and Post-16 pathway planning.
- Help and support with the ePEP system, our electronic system for recording PEPs.
- Awareness training for all schools and other stakeholders on issues which affect the education and achievement of CiC
- Training and support to Designated Teachers for CiC in carrying out their role effectively.
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- Monitoring and evaluation of the educational performance of all children in the care of Slough to assess need and inform development of policy and future provision.
- A comprehensive and interactive database of educational information relating to all children and young people in the care of Slough.
- Policies, procedures and protocols between education and social services on the education of children and young people in care.
- Reports on the educational progress of CiC to schools, social workers, residential key workers, parents and carers generated via ePEP
- Visits to universities and organised activity days for groups of CiC.

Referral to the Virtual School

When a child of young person becomes looked after the manager of the process is required to send the Notification Start LAC email which alerts the Virtual School .The Case will be allocated to a Learning Advocate who will co-ordinate the first PEP.

Service Standards

All service users can expect the Virtual School staff to :-

- Respond to telephone and email enquiries within 3 working days and acknowledge and respond to mail within 5 working days (excluding periods when staff are on annual or emergency leave)
- Acknowledge individual referrals and request for support/advice within 5 working days.
- Give priority to pupils at risk of exclusion when responding to referrals.
- Ensure that permission has been obtained from parents/carers or social workers prior to any direct contact with an individual child or young person.
- Consult with social workers, school staff and carers as to how the referral should be addressed and agree on form of intervention.
- Consult with other colleagues within Education and Children's Services and professionals from other agencies where necessary.

- Arrive punctually for planned visits, support work and meetings, informing the school, carers or Social Services staff as soon as possible of any unavoidable delay.
- Ensure confidentiality is maintained at all times.
- Agree to share information only on a need to know basis from any meeting, discussion or intervention with teachers, parents/carers, social workers, other professionals and the child/young person.
- Provide oral and written feedback to schools, social workers and parents/carers following intervention.
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- Attend education liaison and planning meetings/reviews of CiC

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The quality and effectiveness of the service is evaluated by the following targets :-

- Closing the attainment and progress gap between CiC and their peers by creating a culture of high aspirations
- Ensure all CiC have an up to date Personal Education Plan; reviews should take at least 3 times a year, once per term. When a child first comes into care the first PEP should take place within 20 working days. The Virtual School will lead on at least 1 PEP meeting.
- Prioritising 'good' or 'outstanding' schools for CiC; unless there are evidence based reasons CiC should not be placed in a school judged by Ofsted to be 'inadequate'.

Regular updating of the ICS database to make sure education placement and attainment results are accurately represented

- Regular monitoring of fixed and permanent exclusions of CiC. Our target is to have no permanent exclusions
- Management arrangements to monitor the activities of the team.

Termly monitoring and updating of Personal Education Plans for CiC.

- Annual collation of statistics of SATs, GCSE results, and exclusion figures of CiC. Attendance will be monitored on a termly basis with appropriate targets in place if attendance is below 95%.
- Training evaluation forms.
- Review of methods, materials and resources following feedback.
- Minutes of multi-agency professional meetings, education planning and care plan meetings/reviews.
- Staff supervision and appraisal.
- Production of the Annual Report

SCHOOLS' RESPONSIBILITIES

The school will be responsible for :-

- Ensuring that there is a Designated Teacher for Children in Care within the school.
- Liaising with the Virtual School to share relevant information whilst at the same time having

respect for confidentiality.

- Leading the Personal Education Plan meeting; ensuring information from the meeting is written up in ePEP within 2 weeks of the meeting taking place.
- Using Pupil Premium funding when necessary to support CiC to reach their full potential. Full details of the use of Pupil Premium funding can be found within the 'Slough Children's Services Trust Pupil Premium Policy (September 2016)'

SOCIAL WORKERS RESPONSIBILITIES

The Social Worker will be responsible for:-

- Ensuring the CiC they are responsible for have a minimum of 3 PEP meetings a year; once a term. The Virtual School will lead on the initial PEP meeting. The social worker should liaise with the school to set all other dates in the academic year.
 - Keeping ePEP up to date in respects of personal, care and education information.
- Supporting the school to update the ePEP document, liaising with the Virtual School when necessary
- Upload completed PEPs onto ICS or support the Business Support Officer to complete this task.
- Ensure that they actively encourage their CiC to attend school regularly
- Ensure school applications for their CiC are made in good time, with support from the Virtual School and/or Special Educational Needs and Disabilities team if necessary
- Work with schools, the Virtual School and parents/carers if any significant changes happen with their CiC. Working with all parties to resolve any matters as quickly as possible, putting provisions in place to support the child and the school.

FOSTER CARERS/ RESIDENTIAL KEY WORKER RESPONSIBILITIES

The foster carer/ residential key worker play a lead role in supporting educational attainment of Children in Care (CiC) outside of school. Maintaining placement stability and understanding the education system and processes used are crucial to supporting CiC to improve their educational outcomes and ultimately their life chances.

The foster cares/residential key workers will:

- Ensure that they actively encourage their CiC to attend school regularly.
- Share responsibility for ensuring that all school aged CiC have access to suitable educational provision or an adequate alternative.
- Transport CiC to and from school.
- Ensure that CiC have a quiet space to do their homework and support them to complete it to a good standard.
- Develop a close working relationship with schools Designated Teacher for CiC, social worker, and other key professionals.
- Have an input in the PEP process; in particular carers must attend the PEP meeting/reviews, have a clear understanding of the targets that are set and the role they perform in helping the pupil

achieve them.

- Ensure they receive a log in and instructions for the ePEP system so the PEP can be reviewed.
- Attend school meetings and act as an advocate on behalf of the young person in relevant meetings where appropriate.
- Be aware of CIC achievements in school so that they can share and celebrate these with them.
- Attend Parents evening and target setting days.
- Attend school performances, sports days etc
- Encourage CIC to participate in extra curricular activities and out of hours learning by identifying and supporting their access to opportunities that are available to them.
- Participate in training relating to the Education of Children in Care