

**REPORT FOR: Corporate Parenting
Panel**

Date of Meeting: 7 April 2010

Subject: Virtual Headteachers' Report

Responsible Officer: Catherine Doran, Corporate Director of Children's Services

Portfolio Holder Councillor Christine Bednell, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services

Exempt: No

Enclosures: None

Section 1 – Summary

This report sets out the work of the three Harrow "Virtual Headteachers" for "Looked After Children" since they took up their positions in September 2010.

FOR INFORMATION

Section 2 – Report

2.1 Personal Education Plans

A desktop PEP review took place at the end of 2008 and was shared with the Virtual Head Teachers.

The Virtual Head Teachers have since met with a number of schools, Primary and High Schools.

There was a consensus of views from school and social care staff about the PEP documentation:

- It was lengthy and repetitive

In terms of the PEP process itself, there was a view that both Social Care and schools required further training and guidance on a variety of issues, including:

- Roles, responsibilities
- Sharing specialist knowledge.
- Resources and services for young people and how they are accessed
- Standardising the quality of the PEP
- Helping the young person to engage positively with the experience

The PEP was seen as a positive instrument:

- Aiding the development of a plan of action for the child
- Relevant people coming together – opportunity to develop relationships: sometimes the carer gives a different picture of the child
- PEP Information useful for carers and social workers. Useful to find out about child's educational development, identify learning needs – learning and behaviour, what support was needed. Useful to develop relationships school, carer, social worker

2.2 PEP co-ordinator:

In consultation, social workers suggested a variety of suggestions for PEP coordinator:

- To facilitate collaborative working between schools and social care workers
- Review and advise on the quality of PEPs.
- Assist in resolving differences
- Reduce the pressure on social workers
- Overview of the PEP process to ensure good quality work and partnership working.

Headteachers and designated CLA teachers suggested that:

- When CLA have a stable “home life” progress is usually positive
- CLA require consistency in their lives in terms of support from those in a caring capacity.

- CLA require reassurance about arrangements for when they become Care Leavers
- Where children are not making progress it may be because of the effect that going into care had on them. This is a major block to learning. Counselling and therapy may be required
- Some pupils are put into the wrong year group as a result of the documentation provided to the home office on arrival

2.3 Access to up to date and relevant information for the Virtual Head Teachers achievements.

The Virtual Head Teachers initially experienced a number of problems around the need to access relevant and up to date information in respect of CLA. This particularly came to light when we were asked to engage in target setting for year 6 and year 9 pupils.

We were sent some information about a computer programme “Virtual School Toolkit.” We invited George Pearson to give a demonstration to the Virtual Head Teachers which appeared a very easy and accessible programme that had three sections: A bank of education resources; a data base of information about CLA and a section where all parties involved with the child could communicate. We communicated our feedback to Adrian and Gail who later arranged for a group of people to view the programme and discuss the possibilities.

The Virtual Head Teachers were also given an opportunity to get an overview of “Frameworki” to see if we felt that the existing programme in Harrow could also work for us. Later on the Virtual Head Teachers spent some time using the system to judge the similarities and differences between the two systems.

Outcome:

We feel that if the information we require could be separated into the format required for the VHT, then Frameworki appears to be an acceptable solution

2.4 Meetings attended:

Life Chances Forum attended by Gwenda Caroli. These meetings were held once every month however they have now changed and are being held every two months. The Agenda is around the Care Matters document but they have added the work of the Virtual Headteachers and Letterbox.

The Life Chances Forum has discussed amongst others:

- PEP Booklet – the purpose of this booklet was to inform a variety of audiences including Social Workers, Foster Carers etc about the intended purpose of the PEP. The Educational Psychology Service undertook the task of updating the current leaflet. This work has now been completed and the leaflet will now be given to the PEP Coordinator to be distributed.
- Higher Educational Bursaries – these are given to Children Looked After when they enter higher education. This year £2000 has been given to 11 participants. There will be a new cohort in September.

- Achievement and Attendance Allowances – the criteria this year was academic. However it will be broadened next year to reflect effort etc.
- Independent Visitors Partnership Scheme – the Coordinator Sue Bush is now in place and has recruited and matched Independent Visitors with Children Looked After.
- Personal Educational Plan - £200 per school age child up to 16 (100 in total) has been sent to Foster Carers. Next year, 10/11, the amount will be £500 and the PEP Coordinator will lead on this as part of the PEP Process.
- The above monies have already been identified by way of the Care Matters grant

2.5 Letterbox

This is charity-based initiative for children in Year 3 and 5 in order to raise standards in English and Maths. It has been run as a pilot last year in selected boroughs having started in Leicester. It was devised by a College lecturer at the University who was also a Foster Carer.

Harrow decided to include Year 4 pupils as our numbers are quite low and they were not included in the pilot. Parcels were sent out in May and will be sent out monthly until October. The parcels include a selection of books, a maths game, some 'pretend' money (for the maths games) counters and stationary.

Gwenda will be visiting selected schools to carry out a Neal Reading Test in June as a base line for this work. She will also be discussing with schools the level of maths games suitable for each pupil from 4 levels. The first maths game was chosen by the charity.

Harrow is registered for Letterbox 2010 although we have a very small number of CLA in the relevant age groups. Baselines for this year's cohort will be undertaken.

2.6 Other Meetings

Gwenda Caroli is also meeting with the Foster Carers to discuss Letterbox and the Chance to Shine Homework Club on the 16th June at their meeting.

Pam Naish attends the Virtual CLA Team meetings, which acts a conduit between practitioners and the Life Chances Forum. The meeting will now have a new chair, Nick Crick, Service Manager, Children in Need.

Paul Williams attends corporate Parenting meetings. They meet every 3 months and receive management information and reports from senior social care managers.

2.7. Work undertaken in the light of experiences:

- Draft Job Description put together for discussion and agreement
- Each VHT now has a list of schools that they work with, that have CLA
- The new PEP co-ordinator has been appointed and has worked with the Virtual Head Teachers
- Clarified how additional provision/materials/money can be made available to CLA.

- Frameworki training has taken place and dongles allocated – passwords etc. have been allocated
- Meeting arranged to discuss the overlap in information collected from schools by Virtual Head Teachers and Educational Psychologists to minimise duplication. Shared communications developed
- Meeting arranged to discuss and set up training for designated teachers to meet the new requirements outlined by DCSF/OFSTED
- PEPs move towards use of a pan London PEP and a pre-school PEP work; quality assurance of PEPs work developed by Anthony Folami, PEP co-ordinator.

2.8. Further areas of development

- Ensuring that CLA placed out of Harrow receive the same educational opportunities as those in Harrow
- Developing a protocol for working with CLA placed in Harrow by other Local Authorities
- Involvement of schools and foster carers in Letterbox
- Considering lead responsibility for each CLA in relation to their educational needs.
- Develop understanding and use of Frameworki by the Virtual Head Teachers
- Continuing and reviewing the role of the PEP in supporting the educational achievement of CLA

2.9 The Way forward – suggested action:

Designated teachers:

A secure virtual space set up where Designated Teachers and Virtual Head Teachers can communicate:

- share information, concerns, worries
- seek advice from each other/VHTs/others
- hold relevant and up to date information
- signposting
- relevant training materials available for DT or use with others
- copies of current PEPs
- notice board

Calendars of events put together for the year linking Designated Teachers and social care staff to maintain good communication and shared understanding

Harrow CLA out of borough:

- the children are shared out between the Virtual Head Teachers and information is shared as if they were in borough
- copies of PEPs sent to Virtual Head Teachers
- liaison with other Local Authorities' Virtual Head Teachers

Other LA CLA in borough:

- the children are shared out between the Virtual Head Teachers who keep an eye on them via the school

- Virtual Head Teachers liaise with outer borough Virtual Head Teachers
- Copies of PEPs sent to Virtual Head Teachers

3.0 Frameworki:

1 term/6 month trial to ensure it can provide the necessary and relevant information to Virtual Head Teachers.

(Some current thoughts)

- Summary of attendance – link to welfare core – set up as a table – can this be flagged if it falls below a certain level?
- Missing children of school aged can they be flagged – vulnerable/at risk/child protection.
- Reports added to the system – emailed to Virtual Head Teachers from schools? Virtual Head Teachers then upload them.
- Offences committed by CLA recorded on the system – archived after being spent
- Management Information on PEPs
- Virtual school information: Fischer family trust/raise on line
- Summary of assessment results then ability to drill down for specifics

3.1 Identification of Lead responsibility for each CLA:

- Discussion needed to identify if there are different levels of involvement
- Construction of a flow chart so that everyone knows where the responsibilities/accountabilities lie

Section 3 – Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: ... Emma Stabler	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 30 March 2010		

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Paul Williams VHT, c/o Shaftesbury High School 02084282482

Background Papers: None