

REPORT FOR: CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Date of Meeting: 28 March 2011

Subject: INFORMATION REPORT - Virtual Head Teacher's Report 2009/10

Responsible Officer: Catherine Doran, Corporate Director Children Services

Exempt: No

Enclosures: None

Section 1 – Summary

This report sets out to inform Panel of the work of the Virtual Head Teachers and plans for 2011

FOR INFORMATION

Section 2 – Report

Currently Harrow has 3 “Virtual Head Teachers” (VHT) who work part time and a “Personal Education Plan Co-ordinator” who work very closely to champion Children Looked After (CLA). This report focuses on the work carried out during the year 2009-2010 and identifies the priorities for 2011.

At the end of the work carried out in 2008/2009 we were left with a number of issues to address:

- What is the VHT role for CLA from other boroughs?
- What is the VHT role for other LA CLA in-borough?

- Involvement of schools and foster carers in Letterbox
- Agreement about who takes lead responsibility and accountability for each CLA.
- Develop understanding and use of Framework-I and other data sources
- Need to develop the work on PEPs so they become a quality document that is useful for supporting CLAs
- Develop support for Designated Teachers

1. What is the role for VHTs for other Local Authority CLA in borough:

This has proved a difficult area to get to grips with, as we have to rely on other authorities sending Harrow the information related to their CLA in our authority. This collation of information only happens once per year so does not cover: children moving in and out of the authority during the year; being returned to parents; or being adopted. It is also inaccurate.

Actions:

All schools have been allocated to a VHT who receives information about the Harrow pupils monthly. Requests have been circulated to all schools asking for information on their out borough CLA. When visiting our designated schools (with Harrow CLAs) we ask about out borough CLA and discuss progress and difficulties with the Designated Teacher.

Outcomes:

When we are able to track the pupils it tends to be over the short term rather than the longer term as they move in and out of borough/care/school frequently. We have taken the decision to follow up other borough CLA when visiting Harrow schools, if they have any. The information we receive from schools about other borough CLAs is often only valid for a short time frame. The dilemma arises about creating additional workload for schools by requesting information on a more regular basis e.g. monthly.

As we have attended meetings with the "Virtual Schools Network" and our neighbouring authorities, we are in a position to signpost named VHTs for Designated Teachers to contact, across the country, if there are any issues or concerns raised.

2. Involvement of schools and foster carers in Letterbox

Letterbox was implemented this year May – October 2010. However due to staff illness it was difficult to engage with Carers at the beginning of the project. It was planned to evaluate the project at the end.

Action:

Links have been made with the social care manager who is responsible for foster carers, and practical information has been made available for foster carers about how to support the education of CLA.

9 children were enrolled for the project, but over the 6 months the numbers decreased to 2 in the last two months. This was due to the success of the Local Authority in children being adopted; being subject to statutory guardianship powers or returned to parents. It was agreed that the children were able to receive the parcels, which was carried out through the schools. At a recent Life Chances Meeting the VHT proposed that should the Care Matters Grant continue, instead of being involved in the Letterbox Project, all children of school age would receive a specially designed and reasonably priced package of books and stationery from Harrow. This could be implemented following discussions with the Library Service and Schools. No decision has been made as yet.

Outcomes:

Both children who took part in the KS2 Assessments had been part of the Letterbox Project last year (see section 6 Monitoring and Evaluation). There are 3 pupils who will be involved with KS2 assessments next year; all 3 were part of the Letterbox project last year and 2 this year.

3. Develop understanding and use of Framework i and other data sources

VHTs now have remote access, and have undertaken some training to navigate and use Framework-I. Relevant security codes and fobs have been allocated. Discussions have taken place about ways of developing the system and encouraging all social care workers to use it effectively and systematically. This is an area that needs further development.

Possible next steps:

- Summary of attendance and the link to welfare call. Can this be flagged if it falls below a certain level?
- Missing children of school age. Can they be flagged? Vulnerable/at risk/child protection children.
- Reports added to the system. Can they be emailed to VHTs from schools?
- Offences committed by CLAs recorded on the system – archived after being spent
- PEP information up to date?
- Virtual school information: Fischer family trust/raise on line
- Summary of assessment results and the ability to drill down for specifics

4. Need to develop the work on PEPs so they become quality documents that are useful for supporting the progress of CLAs

The PEP needed to be seen as a useful document that supports CLAs. It also became apparent that work was needed to support social workers to understand the relevance of education to improving the life chances of CLAs.

Action:

The Harrow Version of the Pan London PEP was completed and implemented in early November 2010. The Harrow version has the appearance of the 'Pan London PEP' but has a number of embedded information features to assist the social work practitioner in completing the form. The features include 'pop-up' educational information sheets and an intranet link. The link allows for downloading of an age appropriate form called 'child's view.' There are two forms (i.e. one for primary and the other for secondary school use). The embedded information has been designed, so that it can be up-dated on Framework-i as required. It is hoped that the new PEP form design and additional features will assist practitioners in 'capturing' a more comprehensive account of a child in education, at the time of the meeting and make educational tracking issues and progress simpler. Therefore, it is hoped that quality of the PEP Planning and target setting will be improved.

The Pre- School PEP was also completed and implemented on the framework-i computer system in early November 2010. The intention of this PEP is to track, monitor and 'diagnose' any educational development difficulties that might arise for children who are in pre-school settings. The Pre-school PEP can be up-graded in future should there be a need. It also contains a number of helpful features and a web-link for more information on educational issues relating to early years education.

Both new PEP forms have been configured to pre-populate basic information, so as to assist practitioner and reduce the time taken to complete the forms. There have been technical issues in terms of monitoring PEPs and statistical data gathering, because of the way in which PEP episodes have been configured into the framework-i environment. The PEP coordinator who identified this issue has communicated the problem to the IT and Data Divisions. The issue has been conveyed to 'Core Logic,' who are the designers of Framework-i in order that they can produce a practical solution to the configuration problem, which when resolved will make data collection easier and more accurate. It is estimate by our IT Division that a software solution from Core Logic may take 2-months or more.

Additionally, there will be future discussions about the development of 'the Pan London PEP forms,' within the 'Virtual Schools Network,' which is a multi-borough forum for Virtual Head Teachers, LACE Team Managers and PEP Coordinators. The aim of the group is to exchange ideas on good practice with regard to looked after child's educational matters. One of the intentions of the group is to look at future of the Pan London PEP with view to harmonization of changes in the PEP form across boroughs that have implemented the Pan London PEP.

Training:

The PEP Coordinator has been running a series of "small workshop sessions" on the PEP process. This work has been aimed at new members of staff and is intended to give them a basic grounding in the practice expectation of the PEP process.

The PEP Coordinator and VHT have set up induction training which gives an over view of the educational process in relation to CLAs. The training session is aimed at social work practitioners who are new to the borough.

Outcomes:

As the new PEPs have only been implemented recently it is too early to comment on the outcomes. There is an intention to develop the work further by creating a 16+ PEP to support older CLA.

The PEP Coordinator and assigned Data Division Officer met during towards the end of 2010 to discuss the design of a monthly 'PEP performance data sheet,' which will assist tracking the completion of PEPs on Framework-i.

The objective is to improve performance for "completion of the statutory PEPs" (within the specified time scales) to an 80%, or above within the next 12-months.

The feedback from the social worker's induction course was very positive with an average score of 8 (scale 1-10, 10 being the highest/most satisfied.) All those who completed the evaluation form either strongly agreed or agreed that the criteria that was set was met by the session. The focus of the training was the importance of education in raising the life chances of CLA.

The training provided an opportunity to ask practical questions and be apprised of other educational resources within children services that practitioner should be aware of to support the raising of educational standards for CLAs.

5. Come to some agreement about who takes lead responsibility for each CLA and resolve issues around who has all the relevant information, and who is accountable?

Discussions have been started on this issue and a draft flow chart has been developed. Further work is needed across Children Services to establish full agreement.

6. Other Areas of Work: a) Monitoring and evaluation

Action:

On a monthly basis reports are received which identify all Harrow's CLAs and where they are located. VHTs check these to track where the pupils are and what has happened to them if they no longer are on the lists e.g. been adopted, gone back to parents etc. These checks can be made with schools, social care managers etc. Alongside this VHTs visit schools and speak to Designated Teachers about the children in their care. In this way we track their academic, social and emotional progress identifying any barriers they may be facing. VHTs also have access to Fischer Family Trust information and work is taking place to enable VHTs to have access to "Raise on Line Data". VHTs have met with education psychologists to discuss the overlap in work between them and VHTs and the impact this has on a school's workload.

Outcomes:

To ensure there is no duplication of workload, the VHTs now undertake the systematic monitoring and tracking of CLAs and Educational Psychologists' work with children on their caseload. We need to clarify how the system will work with pre-school pupils. A further development of this work is being piloted between the school's data systems and the data department to extract CLA information directly for monitoring purposes.

CLA GCSE Results 2009-2010

According to LA data there were 27 pupils in the Y11 cohort. Results were available for 22. Thirteen pupils were out of borough with whom the VHT has had no direct or indirect contact.

Currently results available for 12 Harrow pupils are:

- 2 attained GCSE 5A* - C including E and M
- 5 attained GCSE 5 A – G
- 8 attained at least 1 GCSE
- 2 not entered for any subjects
- 1 held back an academic year

Two Yr11 had significant care issues during Y11 and their school believed that this impacted on their subsequent achievements. All High Schools have a very good pastoral care provision that has enabled all CLA to be fully and appropriately included. Additional support for academic and pastoral development is carefully considered and provided. Students are fully supported to reach their academic potential but are also fully supported in developing life skills for life beyond school.

Within these figures judgements are being made on pupils in/out of local authority; late arrivals; pupils who have been in care and at the time of exams are out of care and therefore not included.

The Data team will provide a report showing all the CLA pupils in secondary education and their results so that we have a more accurate picture of their achievements.

CLA K.S.2 results 2009-2010:

In 2010 Harrow only had 2 children who were looked after participating in the Key Stage 2 Assessments: 1 achieved a Level 4 in English and Maths and 1 achieved a Level 3 in both subjects. The child who achieved a Level 3 made excellent progress and the school felt that the Level 3 was a very positive achievement.

For 2011 Harrow currently has 3 children who will be taking part in the Key Stage 2 Assessments. Two children are on track to achieve Level 4 in English and Maths. The other child is making excellent progress now that he is in a settled placement and we are working towards him achieving Level 3 in English and Maths.

- a) Discuss with the schools what resources/support the pupil may need to succeed and signpost them - e.g. PEA allowances, 1-1 tuition.**

Action:

A Draft Personal Educational Allowance Pack was drafted by the PEP co-ordinator for the consideration of the Virtual Head Teachers Group, which would be available to schools and social care workers. This would give them information on what PEAs were and how they could be used. The pack was initially presented and discussed in brief. The view was that there was merit in considering further the future use of the reporting form for the tutor and the evaluation form of the Designated Teacher as means of analyzing the effectiveness of the use of Personal Education Allowances. The matter is to be considered further. The PEP Coordinator has been asked to present the pack for discussion at the next 'Life Chances Meeting (date to be confirmed). 1-1 tuition has been raised with Designated Teachers as a right for all CLA. There was some confusion about whether the provision for CLA came out of the school's allocation, as school's felt that there may be other children whose need is greater. This issue has been clarified and the expectation is that all CLA have access to 1-1 tuition, unless there is a good reason why not.

Outcomes:

The P.E.A. pack is still in the development stage and will be discussed further. At the induction training for new social workers the issue was raised and discussed, at the end of the session they were very clear about how to access it, what it might cover and how it might be used.

1:1 tuition has proved difficult to track. The report we have received is retrospective for 2009-10 and shows 15 CLA in the primary sector and 7 in the secondary sector receiving the extra support. This is an area we are taking steps to tighten up. Lists of pupils having 1-1 tuition have been requested from Achievement and Inclusion, which will be checked by the data department for CLA pupils. We hope this will give us information up front so we can follow up any anomalies.

- b) Work with Designated Teachers, who will have a range of experiences of working with CLA.**

Action:

On the 16th March the Designated Teacher's Forum was launched with a focus on exploring issues collectively: Designated Teachers, social workers and VHTs. The aim of the planning group was to engage all parties in identifying the issues they were concerned about; develop a calendar of events for the year linking Designated Teachers and social care staff, to break down barriers and develop good communication and shared understanding of their roles.

Outcomes:

The launch was well received albeit by a small group of people. Out of that meeting there was a range of feedback on: issues for development in the future; and areas of interest for inclusion on the web site. One of the issues raised was the need for Governor and new HT/DHT training. This is now offered under the more general heading: "CLA and underachieving groups/gifted and talented/ induction on CLA for new Head Teachers and Designated Teachers."

The intention was to meet termly and use the web site as a place for communicating/locating relevant information. We are currently waiting for the IT department to identify the location for the site and work with us to develop it.

The monthly meetings have not taken place due to some confusion over the new booking system, although despite the meeting being cancelled some people did turn up!

This is an area for further development.

c) VHT/ PEP co-ordinator development

Action:

Over this last year the VHTs have taken part in:

- Across borough project with other local authorities (Hillingdon, Hounslow, Brent) to share good practice across authorities including tracking and monitoring pupils;
- Working with Hillingdon to complete D.T. training offered by G.O.L;
- Attending Corporate Parenting and Life Chances Forum;
- Attending the Virtual Head Teacher's Pan London group and conference;
- Discussions around security of information managed by VHTs

Outcomes:

The cross borough project identified the good practice that existed and the importance of knowing who to talk to. The good practice from each authority was shared. The outcome was a desire to set up a communal virtual forum that we can all access, which would make it easier to share concerns, possibly training, and track out borough pupils and monitor performance. As the creation of a Virtual Forum is already a target for Harrow VHTs we have taken the initiative and will discuss with the IT section how we can achieve this.

From the G.O.L training with Hillingdon we have a Designated Teacher's Handbook with relevant training resources, which we intend to use for training Designated Teacher staff in Harrow. With all of these experiences we have had opportunities for discussing modes of working and issues with their "virtual team" who are generally much bigger than ours; however our CLA numbers are smaller than theirs. We have also gained information of VHTs

right across the country that we can contact should an issues arise in Harrow with an out borough pupil or we need to gain information about Harrow pupils out borough. This is an area we are focussing on in the coming year. We also have access to the VHT toolkit.

An issue that has emerged for VHTs this year is around keeping communications and information secure in line with statutory guidance. Out of school emails have been changed to a more secure LGFL address and encrypted pen drives have been issued to store sensitive information on. We are taking advice from the IT department and trying to keep up to date with the directives.

d) Other issues addressed by the PEP co-ordinator: i) Teenage Placement Strategy Meetings

The PEP Coordinator has attended two 'Teenage Placement Strategy Steering Group Meetings.' These series of regular meeting started in the latter part of 2010. The meetings are intended to discuss and plan the coordination of Children's Services to provide a coherent combined service for looked after child from 16 to 18 years of age.

Action:

In the last meeting discussions included, consideration being given to the implementation of a further new PEP form for children in the post-16 category. The PEP Coordinator has started a draft of this document. These meetings are chaired by the Service Manager for Children in Need & Looked After Services.

Outcomes:

As part of the coordinating role it is envisaged that the PEP Coordinator would seek advice and support from VHT Group with regard to engaging with sixth forms and further education Colleges in Harrow as part of Children's Service post-16 strategy. However, further discussion is required on the development of a post 16-plus strategy at an overall service level.

ii) Draft Policy Document on the Roles of EWS and CLA

Action:

The PEP Coordinator has completed a draft EWS policy document, which outlines the roles of the Principal Educational Welfare Officer (PEWO), the Designated Senior Educational Welfare Officer (SEWO) and the PEP Coordinator, with regard to children in care.

Outcomes:

The draft is currently with the Principal Educational Welfare Officer. The document will need to be re-drafted to reflect the PEP Coordinator's move to the Children in Need Service, which will take place in mid-January 2011, as well as the outcome of the Children's Services' restructuring.

7) Proposed priorities for 2011-2012

- To track and monitor all Harrow pupils in/out borough
- To further develop our work on Framework i
- To continue to develop and monitor PEPs
- To continue inducting social workers into Harrow's education system
- To continue to develop the Designated Teacher's virtual forum and meetings
- To develop the work on "lead responsibilities" for CLA
- To further develop cross boarder links/communication
- To pursue, implement, track and evaluate resources for supporting CLA, including PEAs
- To develop the Letterbox concept.

Section 3 – Further Information

None

Section 4 – Financial Implications

The Virtual Head Teachers are funded from the Care Matters budget and there are no additional budget implications arising from this report.

Section 5 – Corporate Priorities

The work of the Virtual Head Teachers will contribute to improving the educational achievement of vulnerable young people, namely, children who are looked after.

Name: Emma Stabler	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 16 March 2011		

Section 6 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Paul Williams VHT, c/o Shaftesbury High School 02084282482
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Background Papers: None