

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Panel:	Corporate Parenting Board
Date:	8 November 2023
Title:	Virtual School Activities to Support and Improve Educational Outcomes for Hampshire Children Looked After
Report From:	Director of Children's Services

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Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an interim report on educational outcomes for Hampshire CLA with actions for improvement as requested by Corporate Parent Board 5 July 2023.

Recommendation(s)

2. That the Corporate Parenting Board note the Virtual School activities to support and improve educational outcomes for Hampshire's Children Looked After.

Executive Summary

3. This report seeks to provide an interim report on educational outcomes for Hampshire CLA with actions for improvement. As final published data is not released until at least January 2024 all data is summarised within this report based on provisional figures obtained from schools; actual figures are not reported.
4. Analysis of reports shows a variety of factors impact on the educational outcomes of children in care in addition to quality education provision. Consequently, these factors also need to be considered and addressed if education outcomes are to improve.

Contextual information

5. The following analysis refers to children in care in the 'OC2' or published cohort during 2021-22 academic year. That is children who have been in care for a year or more as of 31st March 2023.

6. The data referred to in this report for children in care has been drawn from schools, rather than published data sets, and is provisional at this stage. Schools are not obliged to shared data with us and only do so on the proviso that we only use it internally to guide our improvement planning.
7. Destination data for our post 16 is gathered from the Hampshire Futures team.

Finance

Pupil Premium Plus

8. The Virtual School is grant funded by Pupil Premium Plus. This grant covers Virtual School staffing, the electronic Personal Education Plan (PEP), attendance monitoring, training, service level agreements, projects and any interventions.
9. In line with the Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance, the Virtual School publish a policy document which makes clear the expectations and arrangements in place around pupil premium plus for children looked after. [Pupil Premium Plus and funding | Hampshire County Council \(hants.gov.uk\)](https://www.hants.gov.uk/pupil-premium-plus-and-funding)

Performance

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

10. Since the changes to statutory guidance and assessments for EYFS it should be noted that the weighting of this assessment has changed and this data is now seen as an indicator / measure for whether a child is ready for the Key Stage 1 (KS1) curriculum rather than a predictor of end of key stage success.

The main purpose of the profile assessment at the end of the EYFS is to support a successful transition to Key Stage 1 (KS1) by informing the professional dialogue between EYFS and year 1 teachers. The EYFS profile is not an accountability measure for schools and the DfE does not publish school level results for the EYFS profile p5 EYFSP handbook 2023 [Early years foundation stage profile handbook 2023 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/114444/early-years-foundation-stage-profile-handbook-2023.pdf)

11. Early indications of EYFS data, filtered to OC2 and matched indicated that Hampshire children in care performed better than last year.
12. Discussions with Year R practitioners indicate that although not all children received a Good Level of Development (GLD) this summer, the progress their children made is strong and in some cases exponential. This is in comparison to where they started at the beginning of the year. The number of children with EHCPs in 2023 has increased and those with SEN support has declined slightly.

13. Due to our Personal Education Plan (PEP) system not being suitably informative regarding ongoing attainment, we have not been able to target our work with schools to improve outcomes for specific children as we would have liked. However, with the new electronic system launched in September 2023, our visits, support and monitoring will be more accurate and tailored to meet needs during the academic year 2023-24.
14. GLD is broken down into the three prime areas of Communication and Language, Personal Social Emotional Development (PSED) and Physical Development. The decrease in PSED outcomes follows the national trend and we are focusing Virtual School resource in this area during 2023-24. Our transition packs support both communication and language and PSED, although we will be enhancing the PSED area of this resource.
15. Virtual School are aware that early years professionals need continued support in understanding the difference between an attachment and trauma response and age and stage appropriate behaviours, therefore for the academic year 2023-24 we have increased our support offer from our Hampshire and Isle of Wight Educational Psychologists (HIEP) team. We have increased our attachment training offer to two sessions and will work to increase last year's attendance by advertising the sessions at Designated Teacher (DT) networks across the county. We have also added individual consultations to the Private Voluntary and Independent (PVI) sector to discuss LAC cases.
16. In schools during our Spring term PEP visits, we will focus on PSED outcomes and moderating these assessments.
17. The Virtual School will offer specific DT training on understanding attachment and trauma in relation to PSED assessments so that DTs are able to moderate judgements themselves and challenge whether teachers are assessing using age and stage expectations, as this makes a difference to this assessment outcome.

Key Stage One (KS1)

18. There is a slight improvement in KS1 attainment compared to the previous year. There were 38 children in OC2 cohort, compared to 54 children last year. In individual subjects, reading, writing and maths have all improved, with reading and writing being more in line with 2019 figures.
19. Within this cohort of 38, two children had EHCPs, four less than in 2022 and sixteen children (42.1%) were on SEN support (2 not assessed, 9 SEMH, 2 SLCN, 2 moderate and 1 specific needs). This is three more children on SEN support than last year. Combined with the two children that have an EHCP, 47.2% have SEND.
20. Out of 38 children, 26 children had Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) scores listed. Those with SDQ scores, 11 children had a score of 17

or over. A score of 17 and above is considered to within the 'abnormal' band' of behaviours. This is not a judgement of the young person's mental health, rather it refers to the fact that the SDQ score falls considerably outside the range of expected responses. This may impact a child's readiness to learn.

21. For this cohort of pupils, mandatory reporting of EYFS data in 2021 was cancelled (due to Covid) so it is not possible to compare progress expectations from Year R to the end of Year 2. This is also a cohort whose pre-school experience was extremely disrupted by the pandemic and schools report (informally) that children's 'readiness to learn' was not at expected levels when entering Year R, with foundations in learning needing strengthened before building core learning skills to move forward. In particular, speaking & listening skills (a pre-requisite for all core learning, but no formal data recorded) have been reportedly poorer in this cohort, with additional focus needed within EYFS and KS1 to develop and strengthen these skills. Moving forward, the Virtual School where appropriate may support language screening for all Year R / Year 1 pupils to support staff in identifying need and appropriate interventions at an earlier stage.

Key Stage Two (KS2)

22. The Government's preferred performance measure for KS2 is the proportion of children that have reached age-related expectations (ARE) in each of reading, writing and mathematics (RWM) combined.
23. Provisional data shows a significant increase compared to last year.
24. One impact of the current curriculum and assessment methods in place is that there are parts of the curriculum that many children in care, due to the turbulence in their lives, have simply not had time to learn securely by the end of the key stage. This implies that their final scores may reflect the lack of time they have had to learn the content rather than their capabilities.
25. Within the OC2 cohort, 27 children had an EHCP (30.3%), 15 of these children have SEMH as a designation. 27 children (30.3%) were on SEN support. This is a combined total of 60.6% of children with SEND. This is 1% more than the previous year.
26. Out of 89 OC2 children, 58 children had SDQ scores recorded. Those with SDQ scores, 21 children (36.2%) had a score of 17 or over. A score of 17 and above is considered to within the 'abnormal' band' of behaviours and may impact a child's readiness to learn.
27. The VS are running two pilot projects this year, with a focus on KS2 pupils. It is estimated that approx. 65% of CLA pupils have an undiagnosed speech and language difficulty, which impacts on their ability to understand, process and communicate information across the curriculum, presenting a significant barrier to learning in all subjects. The Virtual School are working with the

Specialist Teacher Advisory Service (STAS) Communication and Interaction team to train schools to identify and support these needs in KS2 pupils (without an EHCP) more effectively, which in turn should support greater access and understanding for children to the curriculum as a whole.

28. Much of children's learning is literacy heavy and reading skills are key. The virtual school are running a two-year project with a focus to improve reading outcome for pupils (current Year 5) with the hypothesis that this will also support access to learning in a wider sense and improved outcomes on other subject areas.

Key Stage Four (KS4)

29. Early indications of provisional results are that results are similar to last year. There are 157 young people in the OC2 cohort, within this cohort, 40 children had an EHCP (25.5%) and 41 children (26.1%) were on SEN support. This is a combined total of 51.6% of children with SEND. This is 22.8% more than the previous year, so nearly a quarter more of our children have SEND, which will impact on results.
30. 21 (13.3%) of the cohort children came into care in KS4. Eight of these children experienced a change in school. The Virtual School works closely with social work colleagues and managers to ensure that, where placement moves are essential, school moves are avoided especially in the final years of schooling to maintain school stability.
31. The 'Strength and Difficulties' questionnaire (SDQ) is used with every looked after child as an indicator of need, with an 'abnormal' score indicating a significant level of need. 28 of the 157 children (17.8%) had 'abnormal' scores.
32. Within this cohort 11 young people (7%) are Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers. Virtual School work very closely with our Refugee Teams to ensure young people have education provision.
33. The VS are undertaking a project focussing on improving outcomes for GCSE English Language. This will involve working with DTs and schools, to target support for LAC in the key skills required to access the GCSE exam. As part of this project, the VS have commissioned a package with 'Schools Online' which will be available to all CLA in the current Year 10 cohort (Year 11 2025 CYP Cohort) to support acquisition of the key skills. The aim of the project will be to ensure Hampshire CLA are in line with or close to national outcomes for GCSE English Language.
34. The Virtual School has a Service Level Agreement with the Future You service and has been able to refer several complex cases to support CLA in engaging back in education or to provide functional skills tuition/mentoring in cases where the child had been out of education for some time. This is in

addition to targeted tuition through external agencies, such as Prospero, which is aimed at boosting LAC GCSE outcomes at KS4.

Post 16

35. As part of the Children's Services post 16 Careers and Participation team, the Education and Participation Team who support the post 16 young people within the Virtual School is fully integrated into the wider RPA (Raising Participation Age) statutory functions supporting all young people to participate successfully in formal education and training in year 12 and 13.
36. All young people in England are required to participate in formal education or training until their 18th birthday, under Raising of the Participation Age (RPA) legislation. Hampshire County Council has a statutory duty to support young people aged 16 and 17 (and up to 25 for those with Special Educational Needs).
37. The Council is held to account by the Department for Education (DfE) for its performance against this duty, including the proportion of young people in education, employment and training (EET) or not (NEET); and the proportion of young people whose activity is unknown.
38. The Hampshire Futures model uses a robust and wide-ranging dataset to target resources effectively and provides a dedicated 'Education Participation Advisers' to young people in Hampshire, to support and enable effective transition from year 11, monitor and track their progress and to ensure they sustain a positive post-16 destination.
39. Intended destinations for care experienced young people in year 11 are identified earlier and college applications are submitted ahead of the overall cohort (by the end of February each year). The September Guarantee (statutory duty on Local Authorities to ensure a guaranteed place in education Year 12-13) is also secured earlier for care experienced young people being supported by the Education Participation Advisers.
40. September Guarantee performance for the overall cohort in Hampshire (97.1%) for 2022 continued to be above National (94.6%) and Regional (92.8%) average.
41. Additionally, participation of looked-after young people in post 16 education and training is increasing in Hampshire. All measures are above national averages and NEET/Unknown is comparatively low.

Table 1: Looked-after participation in education, employment and training (Source: NCCIS June 2022 LA Tables)						
	HCC					
Destination	June 20	June 21	June 22		England	SE Region
EET Total	83.4%	84.4%	90.8%		80.1%	80.3%
NEET	15.0%	14.4%	6.7%		17%	17.5%
Not Known	1.6%	1.2%	2.5%		2.9%	2.2%
Combined NEET and Unknown	16.6%	15.6%	9.2%		19.7%	19.7%

42. There has been a 50% increase in care experienced young people progressing onto Higher Education in AY2022-23 compared to the previous year, courses include nursing, social science, law, criminology, psychology, conservation, sports and exercise science and art.

Other Key Issues

43. The implementation of the new electronic PEP system (Asset) which was launched 1 September 2023 means that the Virtual School will be able to monitor, and quality assure children and young people's outcomes in a timely fashion. This will enable subsequent follow up with Designated Teachers around progress to ensure that interventions and support are implemented to improve outcomes.
44. The Virtual School has recently expanded, and eight new caseworkers are now in place. The role of the caseworker is largely to have an oversight of the area cohort and undertake regular monitoring of this cohort. Their role has enabled early intervention of attendance and suspensions, for example, so that schools are supported to avoid further escalation of these issues. This collaborative approach between schools, social workers, foster carers and the Virtual School aims to improve school outcomes and attainment, by adopting a holistic approach around the child.

Conclusion

45. The Virtual School remains committed to removing the inequality in educational outcomes between children in care and the wider population of children. This means working in partnership with the whole system for children across schools, education and inclusion and social care, returning constantly to the question for us as corporate parents – *'Would this be good enough for my child?'*

REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Strategic Plan

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	Yes
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	Yes
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	Yes
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	Yes

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

Document

Location

None

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

1. Equality Duty

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.