

**TO: EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND
LEARNING
20 JANUARY 2015**

**ANNUAL REPORT ON THE WORK OF THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL
2013 - 2014**

Director of Children, Young People & Learning

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To note the Annual Report of the Virtual School.

2 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 **To NOTE and APPROVE the Annual Report on the work of the Virtual School**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

3.1 To review the progress made by the Virtual School from September 2013 to August 2014.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 None considered.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

5.1 The LA has established a Virtual School with a remit to ensure that Looked After Children receive appropriate education and achieve well. The attached report covers the period for the academic year 2013 – 14 and includes a description of the work undertaken by members of the Virtual School. The Assistant Virtual School Head reports to the Chief Adviser, who is the nominated Virtual School Head for the LA.

5.2 The report has been written to describe the work of the Virtual School and the impact of the service on Looked After Children.

Supporting information

Annex 1 Annual Report on the Work of the Virtual School (September 2013 – August 2014)

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

6.1 Not Required

Borough Treasurer

6.2 Not Required

Equalities Impact Assessment

6.3 Not Required

Strategic Risk Management Issues

6.4 None identified.

Other Officers

6.5 None identified.

7 CONSULTATION

Principal Groups Consulted

7.1 None.

Method of Consultation

7.2 Not applicable.

Representations Received

7.3 Not applicable.

Background Papers

7.4 None

Contact for further information

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Looked After Children

Annual Report of the work of the Virtual School

September 2013 – August 2014

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1. Vision and Values

Our vision is that every child and young person in care is the best they can be. We aim to enable this to happen by having a direct impact on the life experience of children and young people in care through working directly with:

- Children/young people
- Schools
- Social care staff
- Foster carers and the full range of support services, and
- Acting as their 'champion' in facilitating the best educational opportunities possible.

Our approach is to treat each child and young person as an individual. We take pupils' varied life experiences and needs into account.

The work of the Virtual School can be encapsulated in our mission statement:

'MAKING EVERY DAY COUNT FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'

On 31st March 2014 there were a total of 113 looked after children in the care of Bracknell Forest. 52 lived within Bracknell Forest and 61 in other Local Authorities. 67 were in a form of education. The Virtual School has the responsibility for ensuring all these children, both inside and outside Bracknell Forest, receive the best possible educational opportunities, in the broadest sense, to enable them to achieve their potential and more.

This annual report will outline the work of the Virtual School during the academic year September 2013 to August 2014, with a particular focus on the outcomes for children and young people.

In terms of educational achievements we strive to ensure:

- Good progress is made by all Looked After Children based on their starting point
- Needs are identified in order to match resources to those needs and plans are tailored in a personalised way to help Looked After Children meet and potentially exceed their personal targets
- We have the most up-to-date data on each Looked After Child's progress and attainment, including National Curriculum levels where appropriate
- That schools and we have good tracking systems in place
- A culture exists where Looked After Children participate in positive activities
- Attendance rates are high and given priority by schools
- Looked After Children have good access to further and higher education, training and employment.

- All those working with and supporting Looked After Children have high aspirations for their success.

The overall aim of Bracknell Forest Virtual School is to promote and champion the educational needs of all Looked After Children across the Local Authority and those children and young people placed out of authority.

The Virtual School for Looked After Children supports schools by proactively offering to:

- Track and monitor the progress of all Bracknell Forest Looked After Children
- Deliver in school interventions and placement support through 1 to 1 work from qualified teachers
- Intervene, where necessary, in admissions of Looked After Children to school and ensure key partners are familiar with the School Admissions Code
- Arrange individual tuition as required
- Access Early Years advice and support
- Monitor completion and undertake quality control of Personal Education Plans (PEPs)
- Identify individual and cohorts of Looked After Children who may need additional support.
- Provide Further Education / Higher Education advice and support
- Provide support at Looked After Children Annual Reviews and Special Educational Needs meetings
- Support transitions between schools and key stages.
- Support partnership working with agencies and Council Services
- Provide support/advice to Designated Teachers in schools, set up networks for Designated Teachers and regularly liaise with all Designated Teachers
- Maintain a database of Designated Teachers for Looked After Children at schools and Ofsted ratings of schools
- Deliver training to teachers, school governors, foster carers and partners.
- Recognise the achievements of Looked After Children through an annual awards ceremony
- Advise on the targeted use of the Pupil Premium to raise achievement.
- Advice to carers at key stages of schooling such as SATs and GCSEs.

The Virtual School has the additional role of monitoring the progress of Looked After Children who are placed in Bracknell Forest schools by other local authorities, and will offer advice and exchange information with other authorities. On the 1st of September 2014, there were 67 Looked After Children placed in Bracknell Forest Schools from other Local Authorities.

2. The Virtual School

Changes to the role of the Virtual School Head

Local authorities have a duty under the Children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of a child looked after by them. This includes a particular duty to promote the child's educational achievement, wherever he or she lives or is educated. Following an amendment to The Children and Families Act 2014, local authorities in England are now required to appoint at least one person for the purpose of discharging the local authority's duty to promote the educational achievement of its looked after children, wherever they live or are educated. As a result, the role of the Virtual School Head (VSH) became a statutory role. This change led to a further

emphasis on the working relationship between Social Workers, Virtual School Heads and Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) to work in partnership to ensure that education arrangements for a child are arranged at the same time as a care placement and that an out-of-authority care placement should not be made unless there is appropriate educational provision in place before the placement is agreed.

The Team

The Virtual School currently consists of a Virtual School Head, an Assistant Head and three Looked after Children Education Support Officers (equivalent of 2.2 FT). They are all qualified teachers with several years of teaching experience across a range of settings and curriculum areas. This expertise is pivotal in ensuring that the Virtual School maintains a holistic view of the educational journey of all young people and that relevant plans are developed and effectively monitored.

Our Partners

The Virtual School recognises the importance of partnership working and actively promotes Corporate Parenting. There is an expectation that Looked After Children are the responsibility of all services and that their outcomes can only improve if those services work together. The Virtual School is an active member of the Life Chances Team and co-chairs this group supporting the development and monitoring of the action plan. The action plan is a continuous working document which is reviewed at each meeting. Our key partners include: Pupil Referral Unit, Behaviour Support Team, Education Welfare Service, SEN team, Children's Social Care, Educational Psychology, Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service, School Improvement Team, Leaving Care service, Fostering and Adoption, Independent Reviewing Officers, Information Management, Further Education Providers, Admissions Service and Welfare Call.

3. Impact and Achievements

Our plans for 2014-15 build on the work we did in 2013 – 14. During this period, we noted:

- Improved rates of children's attendance at school. There were no permanent exclusions during 2013 – 14.
- Children are doing well at school, are generally progressing in line with expected levels and Key Stage results are improving when comparing against performances from the previous year.

A key part of the work of the Virtual School is to monitor the annual attainment at the end of each key stage for LAC cohorts. The following provides an analysis of the performance of LAC in these assessments:

Key Stage 1

At 31 March 2014 there were four Year 2 LAC in the cohort. However, one was disapplied as they were working at a level significantly below Level 1 as a consequence of their special needs. The percentage attaining Level 2+ in reading remained the same as in 2013 from 2012 (i.e. 100%). The percentage achieving Level 2+ in writing reduced by 67%. Although a significant number this was mainly due to the small cohort for both years (i.e. 2013 and 2014). The percentage of LAC who achieved level 2+ in Maths reduced by 33% - all three young people achieved

L2+ in maths in 2013 but only 2 out of the 3 did so in 2014. The cohort had two (50%) children with a statement for SEN.

% KS1 Reading L2+			
	2013	2014	% Change 2013-2014
Bracknell LAC	67	100	33%
All Bracknell	91.5	90.1	-0.6%
National (LAC)	69	71	+2%

% KS1 Writing L2+			
	2013	2014	% Change 2013-2014
Bracknell LAC	67	0	-67%
All Bracknell	89.0	87.8	-1.2%
National (LAC)	61	61	0%

% KS1 Maths L2+			
	2013	2014	% Change 2013-2014
Bracknell LAC	100	67	-33%
All Bracknell	94.1	93.0	-0.9%
National (LAC)	71	72	+1%

Key Stage 2

At 31 March 2014 there were six Year 6 LAC in the cohort compared to four in 2013. Of these six, two had a statement of SEN and one was entered for the assessments. The percentage attaining Level 4+ in Maths rose from 67% in 2013 to 80% in 2014.

% KS2 Maths L4+			
	2013	2014	% Change 2013-2014
Bracknell LAC	67	80	13%
All Bracknell	84.9	84.8	-0.1%
National (LAC)	59	61	+2%

A similar increase was seen for L4+ attainment in Reading and Writing:

% KS2 Reading L4+			
	2013	2014	% Change 2013-2014
Bracknell LAC	67	80	13%
All Bracknell	88.0	89.1	1.1%
National (LAC)	63	68	+5%

% KS2 Writing L4+			
	2013	2014	% Change 2013-2014
Bracknell LAC	67	80	13%
All Bracknell	86.6	86.1	-0.5%
National (LAC)	55	59	+4%

Key Stage 4

At 31 March 2014 there were eight Bracknell Forest LAC who were eligible to take GCSEs, six less than last year. In general, the cohort size is quite small and so there can be quite wide swings of reported performance from year to year as a result. The cohort had six (75%) statemented children compared to six (43%) last year. The percentage obtaining 5 or more GCSEs grade A* to C was 12.5% in 2014, a decrease of 20.8% on the previous year figure which was of 33.3%.

% KS4 5+ A* - C grades			
	2013	2014	% Change 2013-2014
Bracknell LAC	33.3	12.5	-20.80%
All Bracknell	89.1	66.9	-22.20%
National (LAC)	74.5	62.6	-11.90%

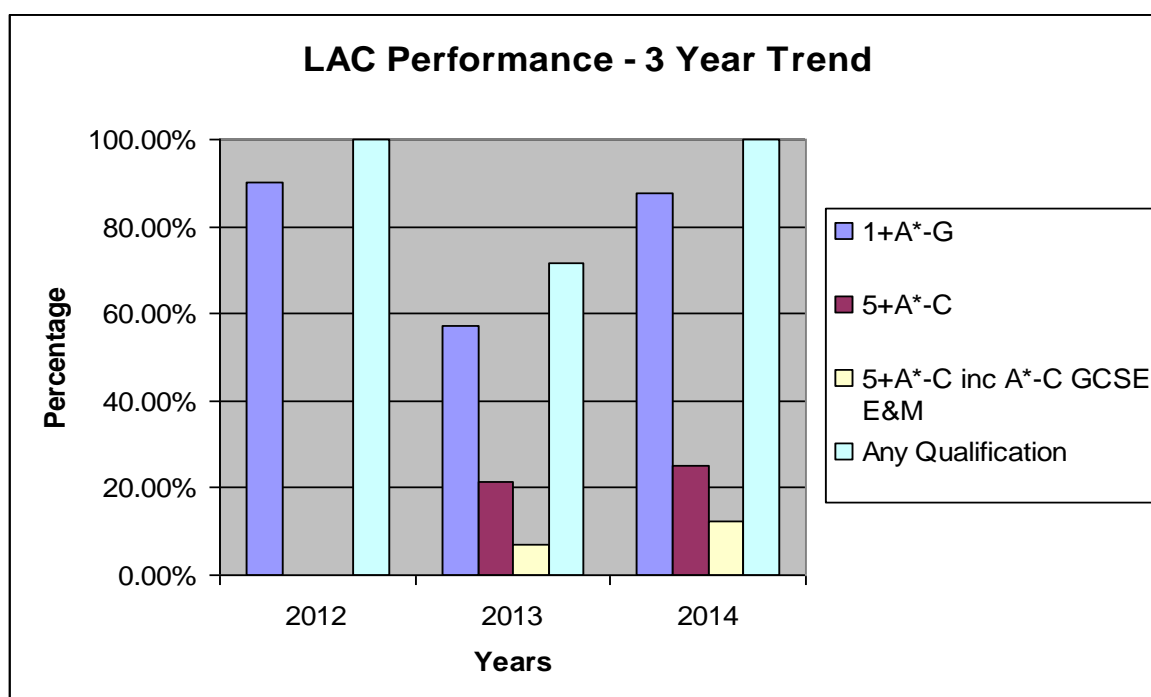
12.5% obtained 5 or more GCSE's grade A* to C, including English and mathematics in 2014, an increase on last year of 2.5%. All Bracknell Forest pupils achieving 5+ A* - C including English & mathematics has slightly increased, 63.9% in 2014 compared to 63.4% in 2013.

% KS4 5+ A* - C grades including English and mathematics			
	2013	2014	% Change 2013-2014
Bracknell LAC	10	12.5	20.80%
All Bracknell	53.9	55.0	1.10%
National (LAC)	55.4	52.1	-3.30%

The percentage obtaining at least 1 pass A* to G or equivalent was 87.5% in 2014 compared to 100% in 2013. This compares unfavorably with their Bracknell Forest peers with 97.8% obtaining at least 1 pass A* - G.

% KS4 1 GCSE pass A* to G			
	2013	2014	% Change 2013-2014
Bracknell LAC	100	87.5	-12.5%
All Bracknell	98.2	97.8	0.4%

- It is also worth observing the performance of Bracknell Forest Looked After Children over a period. Looking at the 3 year trend for this group, it is clear that certain patterns emerge. Most notably the gaps in attainment for 5+ A* - C grades including English and mathematics and the strength when looking at qualifications achieved across any assessed area:



- More young people are attending settings graded as either Good or Outstanding by Ofsted. The following table shows a breakdown for these schools:

Summer 2014

Primary (incl. Pre school/Nursery)		Total	
Ofsted Grading	Description	OLA	BF
1	Outstanding	0	0
2	Good	4	14
3	Satisfactory/Requires Improvement	1	5
4	Inadequate	0	5

29				
Secondary				
Ofsted Grading	Description	OLA	BF	
1	Outstanding	4	2	
2	Good	11	4	
3	Satisfactory/Requires Improvement	4	15	
4	Inadequate	0	1	
				41
6th Form				
Ofsted Grading	Description	OLA	BF	
1	Outstanding	0	1	
2	Good	0	0	
3	Satisfactory/Requires Improvement	0	0	
4	Inadequate	0	2	
				3
College				
Ofsted Grading	Description	OLA	BF	
1	Outstanding	1	0	
2	Good	5	0	
3	Satisfactory	3	3	
4	Inadequate	0	0	
				12
Total				85
Grand Total		OLA	BF	% of total LAC
	Outstanding	5	3	9%
	Good	20	18	45%
	Satisfactory/Requires Improvement	8	23	36%
	Inadequate	0	8	9%

The combined figure of 54% (i.e. percentage of Looked After Children attending schools inspected to be either Good or Outstanding during 2012 – 13) shows an increase of 6% on the previous year.

- The number of young people who have left care and gone on to university or higher education has gone up. There are currently 33 care leavers in further education and 9 in higher education. This is an increase of 15 from 2012 – 13 when there were 23 in a mainstream further education setting and 4 in higher education.

Special Educational Needs

One common feature of LAC is the high numbers who are on the SEN continuum. 2% of all Bracknell Forest children have a statement (Source: Schools Census

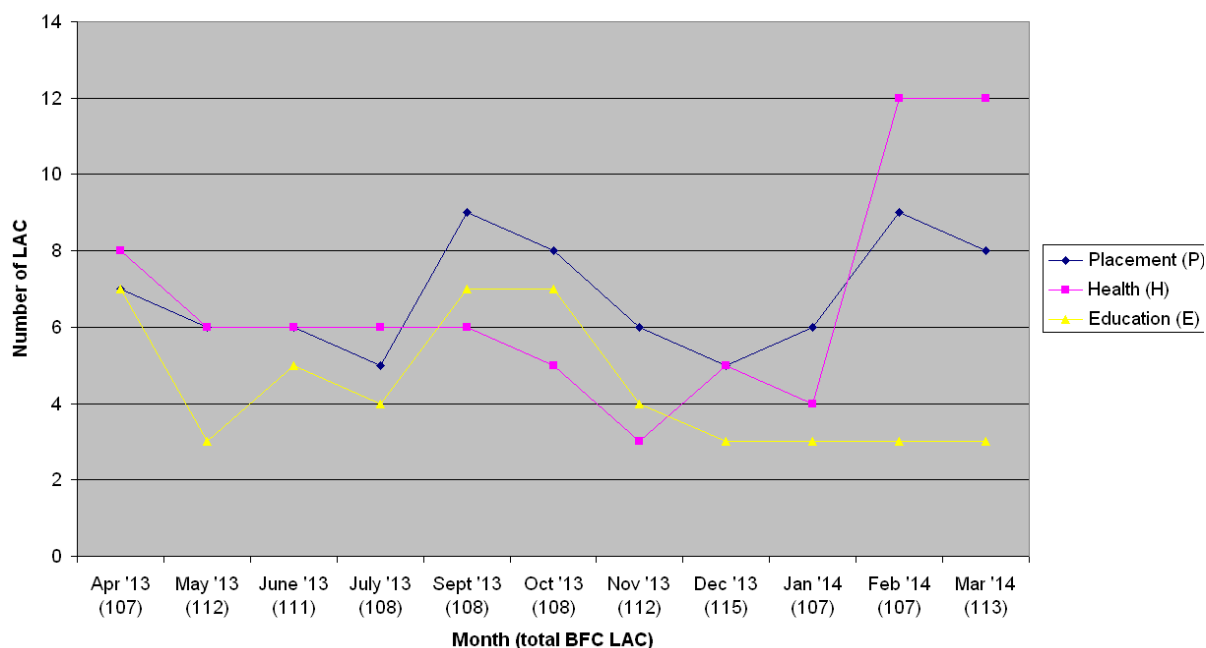
January 2014). By contrast, a larger proportion of Bracknell Forest Looked after Children have a statement for SEN. The numbers with SEN vary year by year as children come in and out of care and when in care have their needs fully explored. Of the total school age cohort of 68, 28 young people (41.1%) had a statement of SEN. The end of key stage results reflects the trend within individual year groups. The numbers of LAC with a statement of SEN across each key stage are:

- Early Years - 1
- Key Stage 1 - 2
- Key Stage 2 - 7
- Key Stage 3 - 9
- Key Stage 4 - 5
- Key Stage 5 - 4

4. Multi Agency Approach and Impact

- Engagement with the Life Chances team has led to a greater integration of the Virtual School, Education Psychology and Education Welfare services enabling joined up working to support individual children in school as well as benefiting from the input of other specialist resources. The impact of the work of the Virtual School has also been reflected in a decrease of 55% of education related concerns during the past 12 months. A typical example of greater collaboration between agencies was evident during a discussion at Life Chances Team (LCT) meetings where it was identified that both the Virtual School and Education Psychologist were having separate discussions with the same secondary school regarding the same pupil. A plan to arrange a joint meeting with the SENCO resulted in a coherent and quicker plan being put in place, and reduced the school's time in meetings.
- This improving trend combined with a positive impact on the reduction of the number of Looked After Children experiencing concerns around their Health and Placement can be seen here:

Number of LAC identified by LCT by area of concern



This chart demonstrates the impact of plans made at the LCT to address identified need, i.e. there has been a reduction in the number of children identified with concerns about their placement and education stability and a small increase in issues relating to health. During this period, there were 12 young people who had a RED status for three months or more – reflecting the complexity and the difficulty in resolving issues quickly, despite the intervention of professionals.

- In March 2011 6% of Looked After Children had missed at least 25 days of schooling in the previous year but in the following year to March 2014 3 children had missed at least 25 days of schooling. The improved situation was partly a result of the system which is in place for schools to alert the Virtual School should a looked after child be absent from school without authorisation.

Impact

It is also important to look at our progress in the national context. The Department of Education provided a statistical release 'Outcomes for Children Looked After by Local Authorities in England' which outlines the achievements of all Looked After Children in 2013 and reported the following headlines:

- Looked after Children have poorer outcomes than non Looked After Children. A high proportion (67.8%) have Special Educational Needs and their emotional and behavioural health is often a cause for concern. However, despite poor outcomes, there have been improvements for nearly all the measures in this statistical release.
- The percentage of Looked After Children achieving 5 or more A* to C GCSEs or equivalent has increased from 11% in 2009 to 15.3% in 2013.
- The attainment gap between Looked After Children and non Looked After Children for the main key stage 1, 2 and 4 measures have decreased or remained the same from 2012 to 2013. However, the gaps are still large especially for key stage 4 where 15.3% of Looked After Children achieved 5 or more A* to C GCSEs or equivalent compared with 58% of non Looked After Children. Although this gap has narrowed in recent years to 42.7% it is still higher than it was in 2009.
- Looked After Children are twice as likely to be permanently excluded from school and three times more likely to have a fixed term exclusion.

To further demonstrate the impact of the work of the Virtual School, the following anonymised case studies have been produced by the team.

Case Study 1

The school in question is a rapidly flourishing secondary school with an inspirational Head. The school has around 13.6% ethnic minority pupils with 8% EAL. Historically, the Pupil Support Department has relied on EMTAS to assess/induct and support new arrivals and EAL pupils. In November 2012, two new arrivals joined the school that were also of refugee status. The 2 Looked After Children had been placed by Children's Social Care with a foster family within the borough. The next step was to make provisions for a meaningful, challenging and yet at the same time accessible curriculum.

Actions:

The Headteacher took a lead in partnership with the Designated Teacher on implementing measures to initiate the school process for the pupils. Initial actions included provision of a half day time table and dedicated time from the Pupil Support Department to assist during the early days. A meeting was held in the presence of the two pupils, their foster family, the LA EMTAS Team Leader (who also acted as an interpreter for the meeting and subsequent sessions), a member of the Virtual School, the school Head and Assistant Head. The outcome of the meeting decided that initial sessions would include support from the EMTAS Team Leader on 2 mornings per week for an hour and a half on each day, a combination of mornings and afternoon only sessions to allow for flexibility for the pupils and lessons such as Design Technology (DT) and Physical Education (PE) highlighted as compulsory alongside English and Mathematics for the pupils to attend. The reason for Design Technology was the fact that it is taught by the Headteacher who was keen on working with the pupils in a classroom environment to demonstrate suggestive teaching and learning practices to colleagues and students.

Arrangements:

The lack of English meant that communication with the new arrivals was a serious cause for concern. The pupils were only able to communicate in their home language of Pashto. The EMTAS Team Leader initially commenced communication with a combination of Pashto and Urdu and used this as the foundation to establish the trust and confidence of the pupils who had come from a rather unsettling experience in their native country. The immediate steps were to establish the emotional well being of the pupils, their aspirations and expectations from attending secondary schooling in England. The information acquired was shared sensitively with the schools safeguarding lead to ensure that information was shared with all relevant parties.

Activities:

The curriculum experience during the first 3 – 4 weeks for the pupils was a mixture of lessons in class, on a one-to-one basis outside of class and participation in group activities around the school. EMTAS has recently developed an “Induction and Support Pack for Supporting New Arrivals” – this opportunity was used to use the program and its content. During an eight week period, the pupils had gained vital experience in attending English, Mathematics, Science, PE and DT lessons, use of computers and the purpose of a library; most of these were previously unknown to the pupils. A programme of language support was also incorporated into the pupils’ timetable. These sessions consisted of three mornings per week involving key aspects of reading, writing, listening and speaking in English.

Progress:

The previous 8 – 10 weeks have seen the pupils gain in immense confidence in taking responsibility for their own learning and progress. The keenness in the pupils to “want to know more”, develop their language and communication skills in English and yet at the same time to maintain their own cultural identity is evident for all. Firm links have been established between the school, the foster family, local social link worker and the LA in partnership with the pupils; this has been used effectively to disseminate important strands of information where necessary. Close links have been maintained between the LA and the secondary school to constantly monitor the aspects of the curriculum offered and to constantly provide flexibility with a challenging edge for the pupils to enjoy and progress during this experience.

The realm of uncertainty in relation to their cases with the Home Office has meant that planning for the pupils has had to be on a term-to-term basis. An amount of funding has also been made available by the LA to assist the school introducing new resources and developing existing expertise in light of these experiences. These are currently being arranged and will assist in the continuity of the effectiveness of the service being provided to the pupils. In partnership with South East Grid for Learning (SEGfL) a process of "flash meetings" (web conference meetings) have been arranged. A partner school will be identified with Pashto/Urdu speaking students who will then be linked with our pupils to establish friendships with the aim of language and emotional development at the heart of the arrangement.

The use of ICT in language development is being explored with the pupils. The use of interactive programmes (pre-observed by EMTAS) and material will be incorporated into future support sessions. A project is currently being defined for the pupils to develop. The background to the project is for the pupils to carry out research on their home country and to present this to an audience consisting of teachers and students. This experience will be used as an opportunity for the pupils to develop their language skills and confidence and for the audience to gain an appreciation of their life experiences. The need for whole school training on EAL, cultural diversity and safeguarding vulnerable pupils had been identified and since then been delivered. This will be delivered in partnership with the pupil support department and Senior Management Team.

Case Study 2

'M' came into the care of the Bracknell Forest Council in Sept 2012, when he was 9 years old. He was accommodated under Section 20. Prior to this he had also had a short period of accommodation under section 20 approximately one year earlier but had not been seen by the Virtual School due to the brief period and time of year (summer holidays).

Background

'M' has attended 2 primary schools and has been at his current school since May 2011. He is working slightly below expected levels Maths 3b, Reading 3b, Writing 3c for his cohort (3a) and takes part in school intervention groups.

Primary/Secondary Transition

At the Personal Education Plan meeting in May 2013 it became apparent that no consideration had yet been given to 'M' choice of secondary school. An early PEP meeting was held in September 2013 and information on the secondary schools admissions process shared. Prior to this meeting 'M' with carer and M's mother (separately) had visited the secondary school for which 'M' primary is a feeder school. A plan was made that 'M's' mother would also visit a local academy school at up coming open evening as this is an 'excellent' school. Following this visit the Virtual School spoke with mother and agreed to arrange an additional visit for 'M' to view the school. This was arranged in liaison with the school's designated teacher. A team member of the Virtual School accompanied 'M' and mother on this visit. At the request of 'M' and his mother an additional visit was also arranged to 'M's' feeder school as he felt he had not seen enough of the school on his initial visit. Again accompanied by a member of the Virtual School and arranged with the designated teacher. 'M's' social worker then discussed school choices, in view of 'M's' care plan and supported 'M's' mother in completing the application process.

Through this process both 'M' and his mother were given information to allow them to make an informed decision of his school choice taking into consideration his LAC status and position in the admissions process.

Case Study 3

'A' came into the care of the Bracknell Forest Council in March 2006, when he was 9 years old. He was accommodated under Section 20. After a brief period with a local authority carer he was sent to a specialist children's home in a neighbouring borough. At the time he joined, two of his siblings were already placed there. One moved out in 2006 and the other in 2011.

Primary School

'A' finished primary education at his then primary school, despite living out of the borough. 'A' was described by school as "average" at this point. His Key Stage 2 levels were:

English	Level 3
Science	Level 3
Mathematics	Level 4

Secondary School and Challenges

For Year 7, 'A' moved to a secondary school near his placement, where he remained until the end of Year 11. In Years 10 and 11, 'A's' behaviour changed dramatically at school. Up until this point he had not been operating at his full potential and a frequent reference was made as to how disorganised he was with his school work. He became quite disruptive in class and also easily distracted by others. This was relatively low-level, there were no fixed-term exclusions, but it did have an adverse effect on 'A's' learning.

Virtual School and Adviza Support

Support was stepped up by the Virtual School over this period. Extra PEP meetings were held to monitor progress at school and a tutor was provided to help at home. 'A' had always expressed an interest in entomology and said he might ultimately like to study the subject at university. A member of the Virtual School Team took 'A' to visit the Biological Sciences Department at Reading University and also to look at an animal care course at Basingstoke College as a next step.

Adviza (formerly known as Connexions) were also involved at this point. An Adviza worker attended PEP meetings for 'A' at school. They also visited 'A' and helped to construct a revision timetable with him as his exams approached. This included helping him to tidy and rearrange his room to make it a more suitable study area. The Adviza worker also took 'A' to visit Berkshire College of Agriculture (BCA) to look at a similar course to the one provided at Basingstoke.

A particular area of concern for 'A' at school was science. He had been switched from GCSE to BTEC in Year 10 and had not completed the necessary coursework. A member of the LACES Team helped 'A' to complete some missing assignments and showed him what was required for the others that remained.

GCSE outcomes

In the summer exams of 2013, 'A' obtained 6 GCSEs at A*-G and 2 BTEC passes, including science. He is currently on a Level 2 animal care course at BCA. The Virtual School remain in contact with him. These outcomes are considerably better than they might have been at one point and reflect consistent and coordinated work with 'A' by the school, carers, Virtual School and Connexions.

5. Personal Education Plans

Every Looked After Child is required to have a Personal Education Plan (PEP). In Bracknell Forest, PEPs are monitored very closely at a local level and reported on monthly to ensure that they are reviewed on a six monthly basis. Social Workers seek the advice of the Virtual School on complex issues and a member of the Virtual School attends every scheduled PEP meeting. The PEP format was been updated during the academic year 2012/13 and again in 2013/14 following six monthly audits of it's quality and content. The improvements to the PEP were put together in consultation with Designated Teachers in the schools, SiLSiP (Bracknell Forest young people in care council), IRO's and Social Workers. From feedback received it is clear that the new format is fit for purpose and that more importantly the young person has a better opportunity to voice how they feel about their education. It also empowers the school with individualised information to draft and implement relevant plans to enable the young person to progress and achieve in line with their potential as well as to enjoy their time at school.

Members of the Virtual School have attended social care team meetings to explain the importance of a good PEP and the features of a good one. Newly qualified social workers are supported by the Virtual School at PEP meetings for their cases so that they can observe good practice. Comprehensive guidance has been written to help Social Workers with the planning that is required before a PEP meeting, how to conduct a PEP meeting and the information required from schools and what to do after a PEP meeting, to ensure completed PEPs are disseminated to schools and foster carers in a timely manner.

6. Pupil Premium Grant

In 2011/12 financial year, the government introduced the allocation of a Pupil Premium Grant for Looked After Children who have been looked after continuously for at least six months and who are in Reception to Year 11 during the financial year. The full year premium for LAC in the financial year 2011/12 was £488 and this rose to £623 in 2012/13 and to £900 for 2013/2014. In 2014/15 the Department for Education introduced a higher rate of £1,900 for LAC and extended the eligibility criteria to include those pupils who have been in care for one day or more, compared with the six months in care

For children in care schools can be very challenging places. Gaps in learning due to various reasons and their complex needs are often not always fully understood. This can lead to a lack of sufficient challenge from lessons, and unplanned school moves and other transitions can also cause problems. The Pupil Premium is therefore a valuable tool in ensuring that children in care are well supported and that some of the known issues, such as low levels of educational attainment and progress and low attendance levels are mitigated. The Bracknell Forest Virtual School uses the Pupil Premium to help build children's confidence and provide opportunities for tailored

support. Unlike in previous years, there is no requirement for the authority to pass on a set amount of funding to the school. Instead the money must be managed by the Virtual School to be used to improve outcomes as identified in the Personal Education Plan (PEP) in consultation with the designated teacher. This puts the child's needs at the centre, managed through high quality PEPs. The Bracknell Forest Virtual School aims to use the Pupil Premium Plus to improve outcomes for children in the following areas:

- Academic achievement and progress
- Wider achievement e.g. in an area in which the child is gifted and talented
- Attendance
- Inclusion (by reducing internal and external exclusion)
- Transition (e.g. between key stages or between schools)
- Mental health (overcoming the effects of attachment and developmental trauma) where this affects learning

This is done through support for learning and providing personalised learning resources. The process of administering the grant takes into account identifying the needs of individual pupils as the key to making the most effective use of the Pupil Premium. With this level of knowledge the school is able to tailor the use of the Pupil Premium to the exact needs of its recipients. The Virtual School also works closely with Early Years in developing their procedures around administering their allocation of the grant and to ensure that young people fully benefit from its use.

Case Studies

The following case studies summarise some of the opportunities for the creative use of the Pupil Premium Grant. However, it is worth noting this is still at an early stage and more time is needed to have a clear view of the impact the grant is having on outcomes for young people.

Child A was experiencing severe challenges outside school which had an emotional impact on his health and well-being towards the end of December 2013. His foster carer was finding it increasingly difficult to encourage him to maintain a healthy diet, and school teachers had noted a worrying trend of unhealthy eating habits, and a lack of focus in school. This carried over into the start of January 2014 and as a result at a planning meeting held in school further actions were agreed. In partnership with the Headteacher, it was decided that he will arrive at school earlier to have breakfast at school, and will stay in school for lunch as well. In addition to this, 1 to 1 sessions were set up for 2 afternoons a week lasting an hour each time to support him in English and maths. These were to help him prepare for his forthcoming exams and the plan was funded by the pupil premium. By attending each breakfast and lunch session between January and May 2014, he developed healthier eating habits, became visibly happier, was more engaged with adults for a professional purpose and also attempted all of his summer exams.

Child B had experienced severe relationship trauma from an early age. This resurfaced when suitable adopters were identified which also tied in with a change in school (not in Bracknell Forest). The need for a key adult in his new school was identified who would spend dedicated time each day with him. The Headteacher subsequently advertised for a relevant professional and made an appointment during the initial days of Child B joining their school. This arrangement was for the 2013 - 14 academic year. The school's commitment in meeting the needs of the young person were further reflected in the fact that despite limited funding being available through the Pupil Premium Grant, they met the difference through their own budget and found further areas of engagement for the Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA). Child B

was supported in class by the HLTA (under teacher direction) for the morning and final hour in the afternoon for the autumn term and for the morning during the spring term. He was also able to see her at any point during the school day if he was concerned or anxious about anything. The summer term focused on this latter ad hoc opportunity for Child B. The emotional confidence he has developed during this period has enabled him to develop independence skills and take responsibility for his own learning. He is now a keen learner who looks forward to school. He has also been recorded as making 3 sub levels of progress across Reading, Writing and mathematics which is in line with the expected levels of progress and the targets that were set for him at the start of the year.

Child C is a keen drama student and has aspirations of pursuing her acting interests in the future. She is progressing in line with her targets and is a "bright student" according to her form tutor. The foster carers were struggling to meet the costs of Theatre Train (a drama school) but were equally keen for her to attend. Following discussions with the Headteacher, the school matched the pupil premium allocation to ensure that financial arrangements were in place for future years as well provided that the foster carers made relevant transport arrangements and that Child C continued her positive contribution at school. These positive outcomes showed Child C how professionals around her wanted her to be successful and support her ambitions. She now benefits from a more positive relationship with her foster carers, has met her end of year targets for all of her subjects and continues to develop her acting and drama skills through the professional support she receives. An attendance figure of 98.3% (for 2013/14) further represents a positive change in attitude (up from 91% for 2012/13 which was mainly due to a lack of engagement with foster carers and school in general).

Increasingly, more examples of the effective use of pupil premium are being reported. However, there appears to be a general trend amongst settings who have adopted a successful approach when working with LAC:

- Pupil Premium funding is ring fenced to spend on the target group
- A high level of expectations are maintained for the target group
- Schools thoroughly analyse which pupils are underachieving and why
- Schools use evidence to allocate funding to big-impact of strategies
- High quality teaching is vital, rather than interventions to compensate for poor teaching. Up-to-date evidence of what interventions work is found on <http://educationendowmentfoundation.org/toolkit/>
- Effective use of achievement data to check interventions' impact and to make adjustments where necessary
- Highly trained support staff
- There is a senior leader with oversight of how Pupil Premium funding is being spent
- Teachers know which pupils are eligible for Pupil Premium
- The school is able to demonstrate impact
- Governors are involved

We consistently and constantly strive to support our schools in develop their practices to ensure we learn from those that are effective.

7. Support for Looked after Children through transition to Adoption

Early childhood experience can impact on the ability of any child to learn and form relationships with peers and adults. A secure home environment, responsive carers and stable experience of school are crucial factors in children's health, and physical and emotional development.

Adopted children may present particular challenges as a consequence of early trauma. Many experience multiple losses, for instance, loss of their birth family, of one or many foster families, friends, and previous schools etc. A popular perception is that babies who are adopted are the 'lucky ones' who do not notice 'change' and that all adopted children settle in their new families and do not exhibit any difficult behaviours. However all adopted children, whether they are babies, toddlers or older, are affected in different ways by grief, loss and trauma. As a result, the difficult behaviours and attitudes they can exhibit at times can feel like an impossible challenge to overcome and parenting, caring for or teaching them may have little or no reward. It may feel like you are taking one step forward and two steps back. Adopted children often have the emotional needs of a much younger child and as such may need to make up for what they missed out on during their early years.

The Bracknell Forest Virtual School continuously provides schools with advice on aspects of creating a strong school and family partnership particularly focused on supporting children who have been adopted. Some of these are:

- arrange regular progress meetings where targets are set for the child. Ensure they are achievable, measurable and manageable to suit the child's levels/needs
- consider having a named person in school the child feels comfortable and safe with for the times when the child needs reassurance
- it is helpful if the school is aware of when birth family contact and any 'tough' anniversaries are due, as these may affect the child's emotional state and behaviour in school
- look out for patterns in behaviours and learn what triggers these so you can learn what makes a child "tick"
- adults around the child may need to help them to learn how to recognise their feelings and triggers. Use encouraging words such as "I wonder if you are feeling worried because the work was difficult?"
- communicate and share the personal achievements with one another even if they are small and don't just focus on any negative incidents. Ensure the message is the same from school and home. Do not battle against one another. The child will pick up on this and could be confused or play one against the other
- plan for change and anticipate its impact on the child. Changes to school routine need to be supported such as beginnings and endings.
- try putting them at the front of the class or next to the teacher as a consequence then they are still part of the group and the feeling of rejection is not there
- parents need to have a clear understanding of the school policies and discipline procedures and explain these to their child, on their level. It would be useful for parents and teachers to discuss the impact of school policies on the child and agree how to work with these

- share any triggers or emotional outburst between one another, including exploring how it was dealt with to find what does and doesn't work for the child
- try not to tell them not to be 'silly' or that 'it doesn't matter'. It may seem trivial to you but to the child it may really matter.
- Parts of the curriculum have the potential to trigger difficult emotions and memories of distress for an adopted child. In order to help them prepare for and manage these emotions, we recommend parents and teachers get together to discuss a child's needs and how their respective styles can complement one another to help build children's confidence in their skills. They should have support when they find participation difficult and should feel valued and included at all times.

Rehearsal and role play of possible situations may help the child make the right choices when they are presented with challenging areas such as:

- family trees or family history;
- child's personal/first memories and timelines;
- sex and relationship education;
- growth and development;
- photographs or baby/early years topics;
- changing in front of others for PE may be challenging;
- themes which include loss, failure or loneliness;
- PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education);
- guest speakers who discuss topics such as drugs, alcohol, personal safety and the law, their uniforms could trigger memories and emotions;
- celebration dates, religious beliefs and anniversary such as father's and mother's day, Christmas and Easter celebrations.

Bringing these matters to the attention of schools has enabled them to develop their plans around creating a safe and comforting learning environment for young people who have experienced similar challenges in their life. It also provides relevant settings with an opportunity to consider appropriate strategies when planning uses for the Pupil Premium Grant which they receive for children that are entitled to this by virtue of either an Adoption Order or Special Guardianship Order by a British Court (£1,900 per child).

8. Designated Teachers Forum

Every school has a Designated Teacher whose role is to:

- identify areas of underachievement and put intervention strategies in place;
- ensure Personal Education Plans (PEPs) are up to date and progress is monitored;
- act as an advocate for Looked After Children;
- coordinate support and liaise with foster carers, school staff and agencies;
- report to the school's governing body on the achievements of the school's Looked After Children; and
- have high expectations for a child's educational and personal achievement.

Every term a designated teacher training forum is held to provide a multi-disciplinary opportunity to share practice and receive statutory training. This is generally well attended by those schools who have a Looked After Child on their roll or previous experience of working with children in care. Each Designated Teacher also has

access to “Supporting Looked After Children, A Guide for Schools” which has been produced by the Virtual School and provides important information and guidance for all settings working with Looked After Children.

9. Working with Care Leavers

Within Bracknell Forest there has been a positive attitude towards young people as they leave care. Young people will remain looked after until they are 18 or, for those accommodated under s20 and chose to leave care, they continue to be offered support as care leavers. Workers maintain contact with young people until they are 21, or beyond if they remain vulnerable and need that extended support. There are, however, some young people where it has been more difficult to keep in contact, such as where the young person rejects involvement or have chosen to live at a distant location, often because they were placed there and have developed links.

To support care leavers in making appropriate education choices the remit of the Virtual School was extended in April 2014 to reflect its commitment. Each Care Leaver is supported at the point of transition from Key Stage 4 to post 16 by a member of the Virtual School. This is coordinated by a member of the Virtual School and information is shared with relevant colleagues. We have found that young people benefit more from having direct and prompt access to specialist advice and support when needed. This has been regular theme across the 2013 – 14 academic year. A member of the Virtual School has accompanied Care Leavers to open days at colleges and universities, helped in completing application forms for various services and provided advice and guidance on relevant matters. One of the most prominent aspects of the impact of this level of flexible support has been that all Care Leavers stayed on their chosen courses throughout the academic year and regularly feedback how they found this support to be valuable. Attendance and progress data is tracked and monitored in the same way as is the case for LAC by the Virtual School.

In addition to tracking pupil progress, we also work with relevant settings to ensure their designated teacher is provided with suitable professional development opportunities. They will form an integral part of the termly Designated Teacher Forum which is coordinated and delivered by the Virtual School.

A key indicator is to monitor those young people who are now aged 19 years and who were looked after when aged 16 years and are in a form of education:

2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
10	10	10	20	15

This is to ensure that young people are not only supported in making appropriate education choices when leaving school but are also constantly advised during the course of their chosen program of study.

One of the significant aims of the work of the Virtual School is to increase numbers of care leavers entering and staying on in Higher Education. The trend for recent years has been:

Year	No. of Care Leavers in HE
2011 -12	3
2012 -13	2
2013 -14	4

There has been a significant increase in the number of Care Leavers who are either in further or higher education. This can be seen by the following figures:

Academic Year	No. in FE	No. in HE	Total	Change
2012 - 2013	20	4	24	
2013 - 2014	34	8	42	increase of 75% on previous years number

Bracknell Forest Care Leavers are currently experiencing a range of learning opportunities that not only meet their individual needs but also provides them with a clear path to their chosen ambitions.

Another important factor to aid this work is the role of the specialist advisor for LAC through Adviza (formerly Connexions). Whilst each young person has a Personal Adviser up until the age of 24, the Adviza specialist is an additional resource aimed at providing enhanced and focused support for relevant Care leaver. This is a dynamic worker and who is involved with a high number of the cohort; working intensively with around six young people at any one time and a further 20 on a lower intensity. As well as direct work she signposts young people to other specialist Adviza workers. Adviza works with young people up to the age of 19 but will extend this for care leavers where there is an established relationship. The focus of the work is to engage young people in education, training or employment and the service is not able to offer the full Personal Advisor role as set out by legislation.

Post 16 worker (transition worker)

The transition coordinator provides support for all young people who are either NEET or at risk of becoming NEET. Interventions are provided either directly through the work of the transition coordinator or through commissioned services. The range of support includes 1:1 support, particularly leading up to and through the transition into post-school participation, mentoring, extended work placements, work pairing, taster sessions and support in applying for education, employment and training. Currently the team work with young people aged 16-18 and care leavers up to the age of 21. All young people regardless of their vulnerability have access to the same level of support; however, the opportunities for education and training for young people over the age of 19 are limited due to eligibility rules from the funding agency.

9. Recognising Achievement

An annual awards event is held to recognise and celebrate the achievements and contributions of young people in care. This is proven to be an effective source of motivation both for the young people and their foster carers as it gives all those involved a good opportunity to reflect on the positive experiences of the past 12 months and share these with others in a similar situation to them. The event is also symbolic experience of the collaborative efforts of the different arms of the Local Authority that are involved in the life of a Bracknell Forest Looked After Child and our continued commitment as a caring, ambitious and dedicated Corporated Parent.

11. Objectives for 2014 - 15

The service is always seeking to improve and is striving to ensure Looked After Children are given the maximum opportunity to reach their potential and achieve their goals.

Our objectives for next year include:

- 1) Support IT colleagues to develop better systems for recording and monitoring Personal Education Plans. This will provide us with important management information to enable future planning of the service.
- 2) Continue to develop a robust system to track progress and attainment and monitor attendance for all LAC and Care Leavers. This will enable us to better identify those children in need of additional support.
- 3) Develop further training and network opportunities for Designated Teachers and other relevant professionals.
- 4) Monitor the use of the Pupil Premium Grant particularly in light of the increase and support schools in understanding how to implement and account for their plans.
- 5) Support schools to ensure they all have a nominated governor for Looked After Children and are kept aware of the latest developments affecting their role.
- 6) Continue to ensure that all Looked After Children are effectively at point of transition (irrespective of its nature) so that the most appropriate plan is developed for them. This is also relevant for Looked After Children when making post 16 decisions so that they make informed decisions and the choices made to enhance their life chances.
- 7) Further action to ensure Looked After Children attend the best possible school by monitoring schools attended against their Ofsted rating.
- 8) Continue to support other Virtual Schools when they place their Looked After Children in Bracknell Forest Schools.
- 9) Review the delivery of training to all partners to ensure they receive the best possible advice and guidance.
- 10) Develop systems to provide more detailed outcomes of work undertaken by members of the team.

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