**Tameside Virtual School Annual Report, Academic Year 2020-21**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Tameside Virtual School and College has increased our capacity to be able to support not only cared for children, previously cared for children and care leavers but also vulnerable children with a social worker and young people within the Youth Justice Service. This work commenced before legislation increasing Virtual School duties came into place in September 2021.

To reflect this, the Virtual School Head Teacher’s role was restructured to report to Director of Education and sit on the Education Management Board and Children’s Leadership Team, enabling strategic improvements within these forums.

Cared for children Year 11 results have significantly improved this academic year and led to greater numbers entering Further Education. The number of young people attending University is also improving year on year.

Despite the obvious additional challenges the pandemic is still presenting us all with, our cared for children have once again demonstrated a resilience and spirit that we can all, as corporate parents, be proud of and celebrate. It is a privilege to be Head Teacher of Tameside Virtual School and College and I hope this report reflects some of the incredible personal achievements of our cared for children and care leavers.

**IMPACT of Virtual School and College 2020-2021**

* The vast majority of our cared for children attend schools that are rated at least GOOD by Ofsted.
* Improved Maths and English GCSE results.
* Greater numbers of care leavers attending Further and Higher Education.
* Immediate and proactive responses to needs of cared for children in schools.
* Extension of duties to include children with a social worker and youth justice service prior to extended duties commencing in September 2021.
* Fluid and responsive interventions to pandemic.

**Priorities for 2021 – 2022**

* Reducing fixed term exclusions.
* Continued focus on attendance.
* Ensuring cared for children have appropriate SEN support at SEND support level or EHCP.
* Stability of school placements.
* Collaborative work with Employment and Skills directorate and Tameside College to improve post 16 EET.
* QA of residential school placements.
* Development of website.
* Improved processes and support for young people in custody or involved with Youth Justice Service.

*“I would like to be a You Tuber and earn money. If not, I might like to be an actor in a movie. I'm definitely going to college but I'm not sure about University.” Year 6. Inspire Academy*

**Virtual School and College Team**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Head Teacher** | Amanda Aylward |
| **Specialist Intervention Teacher** | Sarah Hall |
| **Finance and Information Officer** | Helen O’Connor |
| **Education Welfare Officer** | Rosie Spiers |
| **Education Welfare Officer** | Kath Hankinson |
| **Education Welfare Officer** | Rachael Weeden |
| **Post 16 learning Advisor** | Sally Courtney |

Virtual School and College Head Teacher reports directly to the Director of Education. This follows a redesign to reflect the increased work of the Virtual School and College to support children with a social worker and in the Youth Justice Service, alongside Cared for Children.

**Moving Forward:**

Restructuring of the team to further increase capacity and impact is being worked on, alongside partnership working with Stockport Virtual School, to increase training and expertise.

**2020-21 - School Information Data:**

The following data is taken from a snapshot of a day in July 2021. This data may appear differently in DfE publications as this is based on a day in time and not removing numbers of children who have been in care for less than 12 months. Data is taken from Looked After Call and LCS, it is reliable but unvalidated.

**Schools OFSTED ratings**

*“I like to play outside. I have to do my work first and be good. I like yoga, Cosmic Kids and Hit the Button. I am proud of my writing.”*

The chart above demonstrates OFSTED ratings of school currently attended by our cared for children and the number of children attending schools in each OFSTED category. **The vast majority of our cared for children attend schools that are rated at least GOOD by Ofsted.**

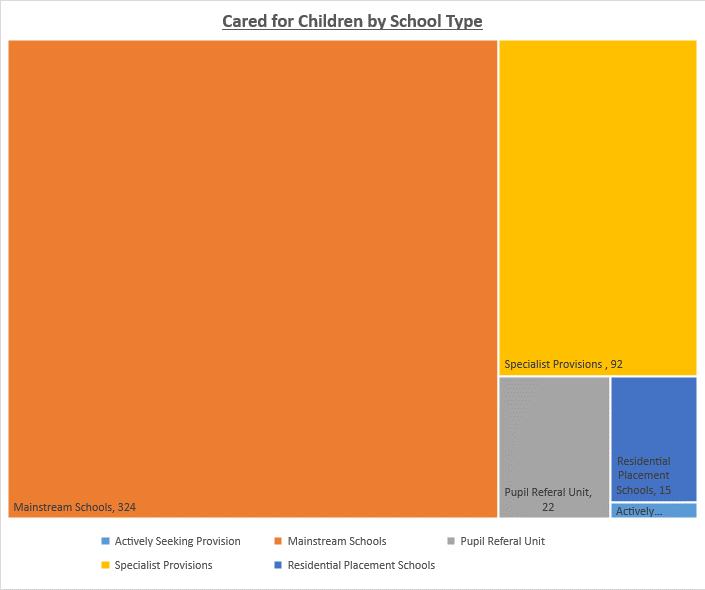
Tameside Virtual School and College recognise that educational stability is key for successful outcomes. We work with schools and carers to ensure they are able to provide the best support for our young people and, if a school’s Ofsted category changes whilst our children are attending, we offer enhanced support where necessary.

Tameside Virtual Head teacher attends social care placement panel and ensures that school is considered and proactively managed when a placement move is necessary, highlighting that where possible, children should remain at their current school.

**Moving forward:**

School stability is a key focus for the upcoming academic year.

**Types of School**

As of July 2021, we had 455 cared for children in Reception to Year 11. The chart below shows the distribution of cared for children from Reception to Year 11 by establishment type.

**Pupil Numbers by year group**

As of July 2021 - Tameside has 583 cared for children Reception to Year 13. The distribution of cared for children in each age groups has remained broadly similar. For the second consecutive year, the year group with the most cared for children in 2021 was year 12, but there has been a slight reduction in the numbers of cared for children in this age group. However, there has been an increase in the numbers of cared for children in years 7, 11 and year 13.

**Pupils in Further and Higher Education**

A priority of our service has been to support Post 16 cared for children and care leavers to increase the numbers who continue into further and higher education. We have met with some success in this over the last 12 months as this data demonstrates.

**Moving forward:**

It remains a priority to continue and extend this essential work to ensure that our cared for young people have the best chances available to them. Collaborative work with Employment and Skills Team, Tameside College and Leaving Care Team will be expanded. More information on this is detailed further in the report.

**2020-21 PEP Information**

The completion and return of PEPs is consistently high. The charts below give a comparison of PEP returns both by year and by term.

Despite the impact of COVID, PEP return rates continued to increase and, although further lockdown in spring affected the Term 2 returns, we saw a recovery in Term 3. Even with this dip in returns, the spring term saw 439 COVID PEP’s being quality assured. This high level of return and quality assurance affords us a clear picture of how schools are supporting our cared for children and allows us to offer further support if this is deemed necessary.

**Moving Forward:**

Our QA still demonstrates we can improve the voice of the child and also greater representation in PEP meetings from social workers and parents where appropriate. To do this we are working with the IRO service who have the same focus in cared for children reviews alongside training.

**Pupil Premium Plus Spending**

There have been a wide range of strategies employed by our schools to support cared for children in their education and to help ensure they have not been detrimentally affected by COVID. Last year there was an increase in requests for funding to support cared for children’s emotional needs, alongside an increase in support to address deficits in core subjects. This is most likely in response to the effect of three lockdowns and the missed hours of education.

**Moving Forward:**

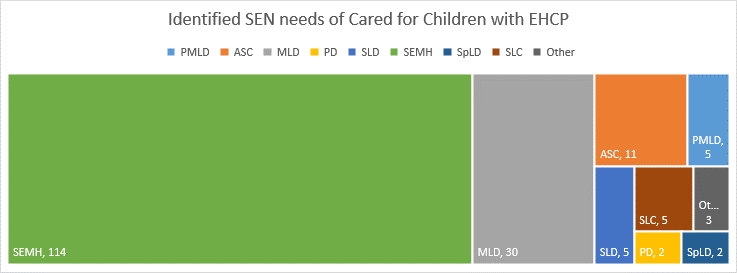
As always, many of our schools use the PP+ grant in a creative way to support our cared for children to realise their potential and we are always open to new suggestions of how to use funding, provided it can be demonstrated how it will impact and improve attainment.

**2020-21 – Cared for Children Attendance**

Unsurprisingly, attendance data for this academic year has been significantly impacted by the effect of COVID; national lockdowns; bubble closures and isolation due to being exposed or testing as a result of symptoms. It is therefore difficult to make meaningful comparisons to other academic years. However, it is encouraging to see that the overall attendance figures for cared for children is not significantly below previous years.

The chart below shows the year on year trends for fixed term exclusions and the numbers of pupils these fixed term exclusions involved. There has been a slight increase in the number of days of learning lost to fixed term exclusion and the number of individual pupils this involves. The Virtual School recognise the damaging effect multiple fixed term exclusions can have and we continue to work in partnership with our schools to address the issues leading to exclusions before they occur.

**2020-21 – Cared for Children SEND Information**

The number of cared for children with an Education Health and Care Plan has been increasing year on year. The chart and data table below highlights how the most common category of need has changed. The most significant part of this data is highlighting the number of cared for children who have better identified social, emotional and mental health needs. This is in part down to better identification and responses to difficulties faced by cared for children, who by the very nature of becoming cared for, are likely to have suffered trauma. It is also a reflection of the national mental health picture and demonstrates why so much intervention is focused on providing social, emotional and mental health support to our young people. This further chart demonstrates more clearly the distribution of need of our current cohort of cared for children.

*“(I) am enjoying…year 4 especially because the work is getting harder … (I like) a challenge. I love maths but my favourite subject is English. I can be really creative…” Year 4, Corrie Primary*

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**2020-21 GCSE Attainment and Post 16 Information**

The table below summaries the un-validated GCSE data for cared for children in the academic year 2020-21, in comparison to that in 2020. As we know the last two years have seen significant disruption to formal exams and comparison of data is therefore a challenge. However this data clearly shows the hard work and dedication of many of our young people for which we want to congratulate them. It is encouraging to see the considerable increase in pupils achieving a good pass in English and Maths.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **GCSE 2021 Summary:** | | | | 2020 results | |
|  | Totals | % | RAG | Totals | % |
| 1 GCSE Grade | 38 | 63.3 | +2.1% | 41 | 61.2 |
| Pass in E/M (Grade 4+) | 30 | 50.0 | +20.1% | 20 | 29.9 |
| Pass E&M (Grade +) | 18 | 30.0 | +18.1% | 8 | 11.9 |
| 1 Grade 6 or higher | 10 | 16.7 |  |  |  |
| Grade 6 + E/M | 9 | 15.0 |  |  |  |
| Grade 6 + in E&M | 3 | 5.0 |  |  |  |
| 1 grade 7 or higher | 4 | 6.7 |  |  |  |
| 1 grade 8 | 3 | 5.0 |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Total students** | **60** |  |  | **67** |  |
| **Total with EHCP** | **21** | 35.0 |  | **28** | 41.8 |

**Year 11 2021 – GCSE Results summary**

* There were 60 young people in this cohort. 21 had an EHCP
* 18/60 (30%) gained both Maths and English at Grade 4 or above. This is an increase of 18% from last year
* 30/60 (50%) gained Grade 4 or above English or Maths. This is an increase of 20 % from last year
* 38/60 (63%) achieved at least 1 GCSE grade. This is broadly similar to last year
* 10/60 (17%) achieved at least 1 Grade at 6, 7 or 8

**Moving Forward:**

Virtual School and College workers scrutinise and target KS4 learners and even prior to COVID provided additional, specific GCSE tuition to support any gaps in learning. The Virtual School and College’s aim is always to support the learner in addition to the extensive support systems provided by the schools, who we work with in an individual and collaborative way to ensure the best outcomes for each young person.

*“House of dreams: To be an astrophysicist which is someone who studies space. To work for NASA. To go to space. To get some books about space to read in ERIC time in school” Year 6. Longford Park SEMH School*

**Post 16 Further and Higher Education**

A priority of our service has been to support Post 16 cared for children and care leavers to increase the numbers who continue into further and higher education. We have met with some success in this over the last 12 months as the data demonstrates. It remains a priority to continue and extend this essential work to ensure that care experienced young people have the greatest opportunities available.

* 19 young people are attending Higher Education and 1 is completing a Master’s Degree from September 2021. 8 of these young people attend Russel Group Universities.
* 5 young people transitioned to Higher Education from Year 13 provision this academic year
* The number of young people entering both FE and HE has been increasing over the last three years:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2019/20** | **2020/21** | **2021/22** |
| Numbers in FE | 56 | 78 | 99 |
| Numbers in HE | 12 | 15 | 20 |

* Alongside college advisory roles, care leavers receive comprehensive support from Virtual School and College worker who is part of GM Higher group and provides additional visiting opportunities, connecting with care leaver champions within the Universities. This ensures there is a smooth transition with a key worker at the chosen University who will ensure appropriate finance, housing and pastoral support is in place.
* More young people are entering FE year on year and are completing courses at different levels. We have an increasing number of young people entering FE at level 3.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2019/20** | **2020/21** | **2021/22** |
| Entry | 15 | 23 | 29 |
| Level 1 | 8 | 15 | 10 |
| Level 2 | 12 | 14 | 14 |
| Level 3 | 14 | 22 | 31 |
| Level 4 | 0 | 0 | 2 |

* **Year 13** - 5 young people have confirmed places on FE courses or training. A further 5 are in employment. (Tracking Data – Sept 2021)
* **Year 12** - 64 young people have confirmed places on FE course, apprenticeships or training. (Tracking Data Sept 2021)
* Virtual School and College worker based in Tameside College supports all students in Further Education at all institutions. They attend PEPs and track attendance. We believe a key to better completion of FE courses has been due to their advice and guidance around course suitability and intervening early when any concerns from either student or staff arises.

**Moving Forward:**

The number of care leavers in education, training or employment continues to be a priority for Tameside. Virtual School Head, Head of Leaving Care and Head of Employment and Skills are working together to co-ordinate opportunities to provide intense additional support which will raise the profile of care leavers in FE; improve the attendance of care leavers in FE; and better support the delivery of PEPs.

This wrap around model will include:

* Capacity, already in place, from our Post 16 Care leaver Achievement Co-ordinator, will be increased through an Education Welfare Officer to:
  + Track and monitor attendance.
  + Manage caseloads of cohort who are not attending or engaging in FE and complete direct work with them alongside Social Worker/Personal Advisor.
  + Coordinate tutoring requirements and additional interventions including Planning for Success and/or CSCS.
  + Source and co-ordinate additional 1:1 tuition for English/Maths/ESOL and any other subjects requested.
  + Work with Social Worker/Personal Advisor of young person around emerging needs.
  + Work with SEN team for young people with an EHCP.
  + Collect, monitor and QA all PEPs for this cohort.
  + Attend PEP meetings where required.
* Each young person will have access to a minimum of 8 hours personal tuition. English/Maths and ESOL will be prioritised however course related tuition would be available if required.
* All Y13, or Y12 if on a 1 year course, interested in a career in construction will be offered the CSCS course in their final term as an incentive to sustain within FE.
* Wrap around support and additional careers advice.

**2021-22 – continued response to COVID**

COVID has affected young people and schools differently and our approach as a Virtual School has been to listen to what schools and carers have said they need to support their young people and where possible facilitated this. Tutoring has increased significantly to provide academic support for cared for children and also to support carers with the increased challenges of more school working from home.

The emotional needs of our young people has always been at the forefront of our support and this continues. We recognise that a blanket approach to emotional support, where all cared for children must follow specific pathways, increases the risk of cared for children feeling different from their peers. Therefore, we are committed to providing individual approaches to education which address the specific needs of the child or young person, thereby minimising this risk.

Monitoring and scrutiny of attendance, whilst more complicated, was increased and improved. Priority groups were established; such as our own residential homes, children with an EHCP and children attending the PRS; and these were monitored by individual Virtual School workers.

Increasing the capacity of the Virtual School & College was a response to the need to respond quickly and efficiently to school needs for cared for children. It gave us capacity to be monitoring and working with children and young people involved in the Youth Justice Service and on the edge of care in advance of the Department for Education bringing this in as extended duties of the Virtual School.

*“I am thinking about Ashton 6th form / Tameside College to study Photography - models. I would like to go to University.” Year 10, Fairfield*

**Life Story Work**

In line with the corporate parenting focus of improving life story work for cared for children, the PEP document has been adapted to reflect new life story guidance. Schools have been requested to attach children’s successes, such as certificates, alongside school reports to ensure there is a chronology of positive memories and achievements.

**Collaborative Working**

Tameside Virtual School and College believe the key to successful outcomes for cared for children is to work collaboratively with all agencies involved in their lives to encourage a seamless and cohesive approach. We also embrace regional and national partnerships to ensure our practice is fully informed and relevant to local and national situations.

Summary of partnership working across agencies within Tameside and National organisations is:

* VSH Youth Justice Board, Tameside and Stockport
* VSH education representative in DV Strategy Group
* VS representation on SEN assessment panel
* VSH PRS Governor
* VS representation as a Tameside Primary School Governor
* VS representation at social care placement tracking panel, legal gateway, permanence and residential panels alongside IRO and VS monthly overview
* VSH member of NAVSH
* VSH active member of North West Virtual Head network
* VSH member of Education Management Team and Children’s Leadership Team
* VSH member of Tameside Association Secondary Heads
* Provide induction training for all social care new starters

**Training**

Regular training and updates are provided from Virtual School to foster carers, designated teachers, governors, social workers and managers.

**Moving Forward:**

A new website is being developed and launched in Term 1 with the aim of providing quality resources, useful links, news stories and opportunities to children, parents/carers and professionals.

**Reading Resources**

All primary school aged children were sent books or comic packs through the post to encourage love of reading and as an opportunity to read with parents or carers. In addition, all year 6 children were sent the Marcus Rashford book “You are a Champion” as they transitioned to high school.

With inspirational quotes such as, “YOU ARE A CHAMPION”, “THERE ARE NO LIMITS TO WHAT IS POSSIBLE IN THIS LIFE” and “I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT I BELIEVE IN YOU” we wanted to inspire our young people to recognise that even when faced with adversity, they have the ability to achieve their dreams and goals and inspire them to never stop working towards them, whatever they may be. One of the young people who received the book and also wants to be a footballer said; “*He’s come from a poor background so no matter where you’re from you can make what you want from your life if you work hard enough”*. Two carers commented how their children who are not normally confident readers had picked up the book immediately and enjoyed it.

**Extended Duties of Virtual School and College**

From September, Virtual Schools are now having oversight of education of all young people with a social worker in their local authority. Statutory duties for cared for children remain the same but Virtual School workers will also be offering advice and monitoring attendance and outcomes for all children with a social worker. In Tameside we had already started to do this where possible and we welcome the approach. We can see the benefit of assisting with young people who are at CIN and CP and if possible aim to avoid them becoming cared for. Clearly this is a significant increase in numbers for all Virtual Schools and in our case we are going from a cohort of 700 cared for children to around 2500 cared for, CIN and CP. The link to the DfE guidance of the new duties is here:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/994028/Promoting_the_education_of_children_with_a_social_worker.pdf>

As part of these extended duties we will continue to work collaboratively with our Youth Justice Service and Pupil Referral Service as a key vulnerable group.

**Moving Forward:**

Tameside Virtual School is working alongside Stockport Virtual School to develop training programmes in addition to increasing capacity to provide an excellent advisory service for children with a social worker in both local authorities.

*“School has been a success… (I) did not think I would come this far…” Year 10, Great Howarth.*