

<b>CREATING OPPORTUNITIES AND TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>	<b>Agenda Item No. 5</b>
<b>16 JANUARY 2012</b>	<b>Public Report</b>

## **Report of the Executive Director of Children’s Services**

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### **EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF CHILDREN IN CARE**

#### **1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 Review of the educational achievement of children in care, who are the responsibility of the City Council wherever they are educated.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1
- Recognise the achievements of this Vulnerable Cohort of Young people for whom we all have a Corporate Parenting responsibility
  - Acknowledge the contribution made by the Virtual School in supporting young people and partners so that they are able to achieve and in the role that it plays in ensuring that Peterborough is able to honour its Promise to Children in Care
  - Recognise the impact that any change in resources will have on the ability of the Virtual School to continue to provide this level of service delivery

#### **3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY**

- 3.1 Peterborough City Council has a statutory duty to Promote the educational attainment of Children in Care – “local authorities as their ‘corporate parents’ should demonstrate the strongest commitment to helping every child they look after, wherever the child is placed, to achieve the highest educational standards he or she possibly can. This includes supporting their aspirations to achieve in further and higher education.” DCSF-00342-2010 Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities March 2010

Specifically in the past the team was responsible for National Indicators 99 to 101.

- The percentage of Children who had been looked after for 12 months or more, educated in their chronological class, who achieved level 4 or better in Key Stage 2 English
- The percentage of Children who had been looked after for 12 months or more, educated in their chronological class, who achieved level 4 or better in Key Stage 2 Maths
- The percentage of Children who had been looked after for 12 months or more, educated in their chronological class, who achieved level 5 or more A\* to C grades at GCSE

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 Peterborough City Council is responsible for 320 children who are in Public Care. Of these 240 are of statutory school age. The Council is also responsible for young people who have recently left the care system. Currently 10 of this group are completing Higher Education Courses. There are also 32 children from other Local Authorities who are educated in Peterborough schools and colleges. The educational achievement of these children is supported by the Virtual School for Children in Care, previously the Education Team for Children in Care. In addition to promoting educational achievement, the Virtual School is also responsible for improving the wider opportunities offered to our children in care, for participation activities and for the management of the Children in Care Council.

The team currently consists of 4 members of staff; the Virtual School Head, 2 Advisory Teachers and the Children in care Participation and Rights Officer.

The reports in Appendices 1 to 3 summarise the working of the Virtual School for the calendar year 2011 and analyse the results at Key Stage 2 and GCSE.

Appendix 4 represents a snapshot of case studies to give a flavour of how the school supports children in care education

## **5. KEY ISSUES**

- 5.1
- The results achieved by Peterborough children in care reflect favourably with the national average result, given the nature of the cohort of children taken in to care.
  - The level of achievement in almost every case reflects or exceeds the predicted level from the school attended by each child in care.
  - To date we have successfully ensured that almost every child in care has a school place within statutory time scales. Those children for whom we have not achieved this are commented on in the report (Appendix 1).
  - The level of children with Statements of Special Educational Needs for this cohort of children is exceptionally high and therefore there are implications to levels achieved by some of these children.
  - A very significant proportion of our children in care are educated outside the City as this is where they live. The educational achievement of these children is much harder to influence.
  - The success of the children in care must be seen as a result of the close working relationship between the Virtual School, Children's Social Care, The Foster Carers or Residential Workers, the schools and the young people themselves.
  - As a result of Central Government Policy and the decisions made by Peterborough City Council the Virtual School has experienced a considerable drop in funding. There has also been a loss of control about how additional resources are targeted on our children in care.
  - The structure, staffing and resourcing of the Virtual School will be a key consultation issue in the restructuring of Children's Services during the spring of 2012

## **6. IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1
- The implications of the work of the Virtual School directly relates to the life chances of individual children in care. However, this does have wider implications for the wider Council and the UK as a whole. Improved education achievement means that children in care are less likely to be homeless, unemployed, have criminal records and will form better social networks. In addition their children will be less likely to become known to Social Care Services. Therefore the work that we do now with these vulnerable children is likely to pay dividend in the future and save future tax payers money.

## **7. CONSULTATION**

- 7.1
- No Consultation has taken place regarding the educational achievement of children in care, although the Corporate Parenting Panel receives a report on an annual basis that related to the working of the Virtual School for Children in Care. Cllr Holdich is responsible for the scrutiny of the work of the Virtual School as Educational Champion for Children in Care.

The structure and function of the Virtual School will feature in the Consultation that will take place in the spring (2012) as part of the reorganisation of Children's Services. The current plan is to reduce the staffing by the Two Advisory Teachers, with the Virtual School Head post reduced to a four day a week appointment allowing for the appointment of a part time co-ordinator of Personal Education Planning for children in care

## **8. NEXT STEPS**

- 8.1
- Members of the committee and all Elected Members as part of their Corporate Parenting role should consider the impact that the proposals for reorganising Children's Services will have on

the ability of Peterborough City Council to discharge its Statutory Duties towards the educational achievement of Children in Care. Then need to be aware of the affects that the proposals will have. This should be considered against the backdrop of an increasing number of Children in Care and the increase in the age when children can leave full time education or training.

**9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

- 9.1 DCSF-00342-2010 Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities March 2010

**10. APPENDICES**

- 10.1 Appendix 1 Virtual School report – January 2012 to cover the educational work streams of the Virtual School  
Appendix 2 SATs results at Key Stage 2 for 2010/11  
Appendix 3 GCSE results for CiC 2010/11  
Appendix 4 Illustrative case study

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