

Promoting the Education of Children with a Social Worker

November 2021

Introduction

Following the pandemic, Virtual School Heads were formally requested by the DFE to provide strategic support for early years settings, schools, colleges and social care leaders to create a culture of high aspirations that helps all children with social workers to make educational progress. In providing this strategic leadership support, Virtual School Heads will help drive the benefits of attending an education setting, as well as ensuring mechanisms are in place to offer advice and support to teachers and social workers, with the aim of narrowing the attainment gap between children with social workers and their peers.

This non statutory duty is in addition to the Virtual School's existing statutory responsibilities to promote the educational attainment of children looked after; and previously looked after children.

Defining the cohort of children with a social worker: The cohort that this non statutory duty applies to is all young people who have been assessed as being in need under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 and who were assessed as needing a social worker at any time due to safeguarding and/or welfare reasons, which includes all those subject to a Child in Need plan or a Child ; and those who have previously had a social worker. Children aged from 0 up to 18 in all education settings will benefit from this support. The support will include children who are disabled and have an allocated social worker.

This document sets out to clarify the expectations of all parties to ensure the Virtual School operates effectively in delivering this new non statutory duty.

For clarity, this means that the Virtual School are not being asked to:

- work with individual children and their families
- respond to requests from parents or carers to offer advice, intervention and support in relation to individual children with a social worker
- take responsibility for children with Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) who do not require or need a social worker, as defined above

RELATED CHAPTERS

[Education of Looked After and Previously Looked After Children](#)

Development of this offer

This offer was developed by the virtual school in collaboration with care experienced young people and a multi-disciplinary team including colleagues from social care, education services, education safeguarding, early years and post 16 specialists. A scoping activity was undertaken with a team in family support and child protection to understand the challenges faced by children with a social in relation to education; and the training and development needs of social care practitioners.

Aim

As the strategic leader for children with a social worker, Virtual School Heads will bring greater awareness to the disadvantage that this cohort of children can experience, promote engagement in education, and help to narrow the attainment gap.

We aim to achieve this by offering advice and support to key professionals to help children make progress, including through increasing their confidence in using evidence-based interventions. We will also support to further identify the needs of the cohort and address barriers to poor educational outcomes and ensure pupils make educational progress.

In achieving our goal, the following are possible topics professionals will be supported with to ensure we create that culture of high aspirations that helps all children make outstanding educational progress.

1. Attainment, achievement and educational outcomes
2. Target setting
3. Attendance
4. Curriculum
5. Assessment
6. Grading systems

7. Exclusions
8. Behaviour
9. Wellbeing and positive mental health
10. Interventions
11. Special education needs including children with an EHCP
12. Elective Home Education

Plan

To address the points above, the following strategies and interventions will be put in place:

Social Worker drop in sessions

Weekly sessions to be arranged on a given day and time where social workers (SWs) can drop in and get advice, information, and guidance from the assigned VS consultant. This will be for SWs with children and young people up to the age of 18. If the assigned consultant is unable to offer advice, they will get the information needed and forward to SWs outside of the sessions. Each session will focus on a particular Key Stage of education on a rolling basis. This will be reviewed once a pattern emerges where a particular key stage is more in demand.

Outcome – Improve the educational knowledge of SWs so that they can advise and advocate for their families and children/young people. Improve their understanding of educational terminology so that SWs can identify correctly educational progress or the lack of it.

Post 16 NEET Panel

To assist SWs with young people who are NEET, the VS will be part of the Post 16 NEET Panel (Back on Track Team). This panel will take place monthly and will have both professionals from Lambeth as well as external providers to provide support and advice to SWs to get their young people into EET status.

Outcome – Multiagency approach to tackling young people who are NEET. Providers present who can give appropriate, and at times immediate solutions.

Training

The VS will extend all forums and training to include all SWs. The training will address all issues faced by children and young people. The training will not only cover educational items but issues such as trauma and attachment.

The VS will be part of the Newly Qualified Social Work induction programme delivering educational training.

The VS will deliver training to Lambeth School Governors with special emphasis on Children with a Social Worker.

Outcome – For schools to improve their awareness of all children with a Social Worker with understanding of the main barriers to educations. Training for the governors ensures that this is prioritised from the top so that appropriate challenge and accountability is present.