



**Open Report on behalf of Heather Sandy, Executive Director - Children's Services**

Report to:	<b>Corporate Parenting Panel</b>
Date:	<b>20 January 2022</b>
Subject:	<b>Lincolnshire County Council Virtual School Annual Report Academic Year 2020-2021</b>

**Summary:**

This Annual Report covers the work of the Virtual School Head to support the promotion of educational outcomes for Children and Young People in Care for the academic year 1st September 2020 to 31st August 2021. It is a statutory requirement and serves to update the Corporate Parenting Panel on the Educational Progress of Children and Young People in Care aged 3-18.

**Actions Required:**

Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are requested to consider the attached Virtual School Annual Report 2020-2021 and endorse the recommendations for the academic year 2021-2022.

**1. Background**

The role of the Virtual School is to promote the educational achievement of children in care. Whether educated in Lincolnshire or placed out of the authority, the Virtual School Team works to support our children and young people to fulfil their potential and access opportunities on the same basis as their non care experienced peers. The team supports our children and young people on a case work basis, endeavouring to build strong relationships and to develop the confidence, self-esteem, and resilience of our students. There is a requirement to maintain an up-to-date roll and have robust procedures in place to monitor the attendance and educational progress children in care. Academic progress is monitored through a termly school survey. The Virtual School Head (VSH) must also inform head teachers that they have a child on roll that is looked after by the Local Authority. In addition, the Virtual School should ensure that each child has an up to date, effective and high-quality Personal Education Plan (PEP) that focuses on the improvement of educational outcomes.

The Virtual School Head has primary responsibility for ensuring that there is suitable education in place for all Lincolnshire children in care. This includes oversight of admissions, managed moves, and education moves brought about through changes of care placement. The Virtual School Team also provides advice and information to the parents and schools involved in promoting educational outcomes for Children Previously in Care.

The Virtual School and Virtual School Head have a statutory role in promoting the educational achievement of children in the Local Authority's care. Providing support and challenge that encourages high aspirations and individual achievement, with a minimum of disruption, is central to improving immediate and long-term outcomes for children in our care. In addition, the Virtual School should ensure that social workers, designated teachers and schools, carers, and Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) understand their role and responsibilities for initiating, developing, reviewing, and updating each child's PEP.

The Virtual School is also responsible for the allocation to schools of the looked after children Pupil Premium Grant (PP+) and is required to report regularly to the Corporate Parenting Panel.

This is the statutory annual report of the Virtual School Head and Virtual School for children in the care of Lincolnshire County Council. The report highlights the work of the Virtual School, the Local Authority, and partner agencies to improve outcomes for children and young people in care aged three to eighteen. The report covers progress and attainment at all key stages from Early Years to Key Stage Four. It further covers the quality of provision and engagement for post 16 and, most importantly, how the voice of the child and young person is considered to influence practice.

The purpose of this report is to outline the activity of the Virtual School Head Teacher and the Virtual School, and to report upon the 2021 educational outcomes for our children in care. It reflects on achievements and identifies areas of development to achieve the best outcomes for children in our care.

Data contained in this report, is for children who were in the care of Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) for a year or more as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.

## **2. Conclusion**

### **2.1 Key messages within this report are:**

- The Lincolnshire Virtual School Team continues to be ambitious for all of our children in care. We understand that promoting better educational outcomes is

everyone's business and we provide: training, challenge, advice and support to schools, children's services colleagues, foster carers, parents and others so that they can better advocate for the learning of children and young people in their care.

- There remains a continued and growing emphasis on the development of "Learning Homes" where our carers become increasingly skilled to support learning and our schools are committed to creating an environment where the specific emotional and educational needs of our children and young people are understood and their potential fulfilled.
- The majority of our children and young people aged 3-18 continue to attend schools graded good or better by Ofsted.
- Pupil Premium is allocated to schools in a timely way and is linked to targets outlined in the Personal Education Plan. Personal Education Plans are reviewed three times per year or more if appropriate for all children and young people aged 3-18. Personal Education plans and support for transition continued throughout Lockdown and recovery and the Virtual School worked with schools and LCC colleagues to commission additional tuition to support Children in Care wherever possible.
- Early intervention is key to promoting outcomes and consequently all children in care or entering care aged 3-13 continue to receive support from our Specialist Teachers so that schools are better informed of strategies to improve communication and language needs if appropriate.
- The Virtual School Team continued to work effectively and in cooperation with carers, parents, schools and Children's Services colleagues to support the education of Children in Care throughout the period of Lockdown and recovery up to August 2021.
- The team works closely with our children and young people with the specific aim of developing strong and effective working relationships. The voice of our children and young people is heard. We celebrate successes and provide opportunities for them and their families to be better understood. We endeavour to stick with them when things don't go so well and put any potential setbacks into context.
- Despite the many challenges that our young people and their carers have faced over the Covid pandemic, lockdown, school closures and uncertainty around exams, our children and young people achieved in line with previous years and in line with historic national and regional comparators with many achieving outstanding results at GCSE in 2021.

### 3. Consultation

#### a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

### 4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Lincolnshire County Council Virtual School Annual Report Academic Year 2020-2021

### 5. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Kieran Barnes, Head of Virtual School, who can be contacted on 07854877844 or [kieran.barnes@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:kieran.barnes@lincolnshire.gov.uk).