

# Corporate Parenting Board Meeting

Thursday, 18 January 2018

Dear Councillor

## **CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD - THURSDAY, 18TH JANUARY, 2018**

I am now able to enclose, for consideration at next Thursday, 18th January, 2018 meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board, the following report that was unavailable when the agenda was printed.

<b>Agenda No</b>	<b>Item</b>
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8	<b><u>Virtual School Head Annual Report 2016-2017 (Pages 3 - 32)</u></b>
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	Report of [Darren Martindale, Virtual School Head for Looked After Children and Youth Offending to present report]
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<b>CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COUNCIL</b>	<b>Corporate Parenting Board</b> <b>18 January 2018</b>
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<b>Report title</b>	Virtual School Head Annual Report 2016-2017
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Val Gibson Children and Young People
<b>Wards affected</b>	All
<b>Accountable director</b>	Emma Bennett, Children and Young People
<b>Originating service</b>	Looked after Children
<b>Accountable employee(s)</b>	Darren Martindale Virtual School Head for LAC & Youth Offending Tel 01902 556951 Email Darren.Martindale@wolverhampton.gov.uk
<b>Report to be/has been considered by</b>	Children in Care Council – December 2017 People Leadership Team – 18 December 2017

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**Recommendation for action or decision:**

The Corporate Parenting Board is recommended to consider the attached report and proposals for further development.

## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 To update Corporate Parenting Board on the educational outcomes of Looked after Children (LAC), Care Leavers and young people in the criminal justice system in 2017.

## **2.0 Background**

The Virtual School Head (VSH) for LAC is responsible for ensuring that the local authority effectively discharges its statutory duty to promote the education of LAC. The VSH annual report is a statutory requirement for Ofsted's inspection of the local authority's safeguarding arrangements as part of the SIF (Single Inspection Framework). This report outlines the educational inclusion, attendance and achievement of LAC at all key stages in 2017, as well as the Education, Employment & Training (EET) outcomes for Care Leavers, plus educational achievement of young people in the criminal justice system. It outlines how these outcomes have been supported by the 'virtual school' and its partners, and highlights areas and plans for further development.

## **3.0 Progress, options, discussion, etc.**

- 3.1 The annual report is included as an Appendix.

## **4.0 Financial implications**

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.
- 4.2 Any costs associated with the development of the plan and any future plans that are identified as a result of this report will be funded from existing budgets within the Looked after Children's Service.  
[NM/04012018/Q]

## **5.0 Legal implications**

- 5.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.  
[RB/15122017/M]

## **6.0 Equalities implications**

- 6.1 An equalities analysis will be undertaken if required, in partnership with the Equalities and Diversities Team. As the work that underpins this report is to overcome any inequality, the analysis is aspirational and will need to be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the work.

## **7.0 Environmental implications**

- 7.1 There are no environmental implications.

## **8.0 Human resources implications**

8.1 There are no human resources implications.

**9.0 Corporate landlord implications**

9.1 There are no Corporate landlord implications.

**10.0 Schedule of background papers**

10.1 There are no background papers.  
The report is included as an Appendix.

## Virtual School Headteacher (VSH) Report 2016-2017

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### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report summarises the educational outcomes of children in the care of Wolverhampton City Council for the 2016-2017 academic year.
- 1.2 The report outlines the ways in which the COPE (Corporate Parenting & Education) Team and Virtual School Head (VSH) have worked to raise the achievement of LAC in 2016-2017 and outlines plans for further development.
- 1.3 This report also seeks to inform knowledge and understanding in a number of areas pertinent to the achievement of LAC.

### 2.0 Cohort Information

- 2.1 At 30 November 2017, the following cohort characteristics apply to Wolverhampton's Virtual School for LAC:

Total pupils (Reception – Year 11)	460
Placed in Wolverhampton	215 = 47%
Placed out of city	245 = 53 %
Attending primary schools	220 = 48%
Attending secondary schools	240 = 52%
Attending Pupil Referral Units (PRUs)	8 = 2%
Attending Special Schools	34 = 7%
Identified Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND)	66 – 14%
Total ethnic groups	15
None White British	34%

### **3.0 School Ofsted Ratings**

- 3.1 Statutory guidance states that LAC should attend schools that are rated as either Good or Outstanding by Ofsted.<sup>1</sup>
- 3.2 128 looked-after pupils (60%) who are educated in Wolverhampton attend a good or better school. 158 (64%) of LAC who are educated outside Wolverhampton attend a good or better school.
- 3.3 However, several schools do not currently have an Ofsted rating because they have recently converted to academy status. Therefore, a more representative measure is perhaps the percentage of LAC who attend schools that are rated as Requiring Improvement (RI) or Inadequate. At 30 November 2017, a total of 14.8% of children in virtual school attend a school as RI or Inadequate, so over 85% of children attend a school that is not rated as RI or Inadequate.
- 3.4 Our intention is to place LAC in the best schools available to them. However, it is sometimes appropriate for a pupil to remain in a school rated as less than good or outstanding by Ofsted, for reasons such as placement stability. These factors can be particularly valuable to the wellbeing and success of a looked-after child in school. In such cases, an informed assessment is made in the best interests of the child.

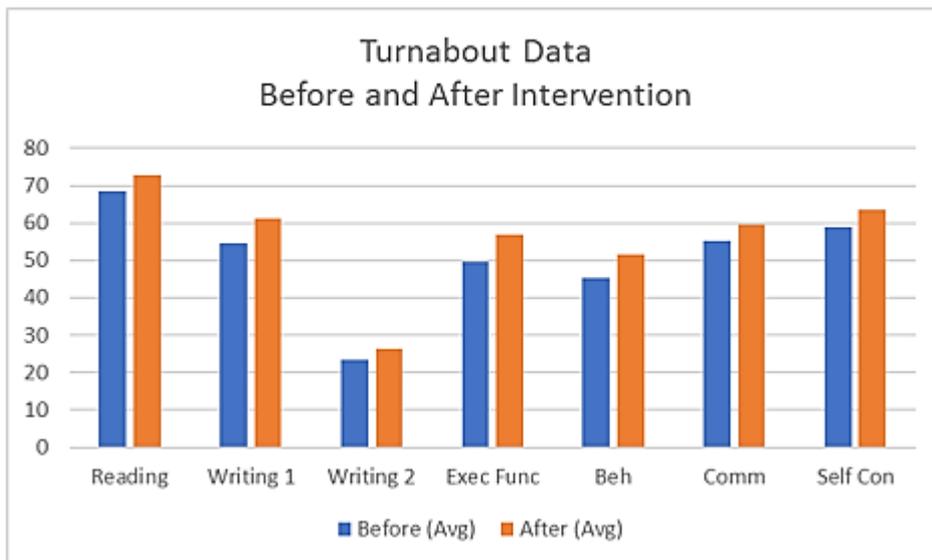
### **4.0 Education Support**

- 4.1 The COPE (Corporate Parenting & Education) Team are committed to improving educational outcomes for LAC through a combination of direct, advisory and strategic work with LAC, schools, social workers, carers and other stakeholders. COPE has continued to build its capacity to support LAC in 2016-2017, effectively utilising pupil premium funding and continuing to strengthen its partnerships with key stakeholders.
- 4.2 Managed by the Virtual School Head (VSH) for LAC, COPE employ one full-time equivalent (FTE) Teacher Advisor, 2.5 FTE Education Support Officers, one 0.5 FTE Data Officer and one full-time Administrator together with the VSH. COPE also benefit from the support of two senior Education Psychologists .9 FTE and a Counselling Psychologist .6 FTE, as well as strong links with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and other key agencies. COPE's Volunteer Co-ordinator manages a team of volunteer drivers who provide a significant amount of home-school transport, ensuring quality and continuity for the young people as well as easing some of the pressure on foster carers.
- 4.3 The COPE Team have an Education Support Officer (ESO) attached to each Wolverhampton school (2.5 FTE workers, covering two localities each). The worker contacts every school on a termly basis and, in most cases, meets with the Designated Teacher for LAC, to discuss the progress of looked-after pupils in their school. Many PEP meetings are also attended by COPE and any issues or actions are addressed without delay. COPE track the school attendance and attainment of all LAC in the virtual school to ensure that interventions are planned in the most efficient and effective way possible.

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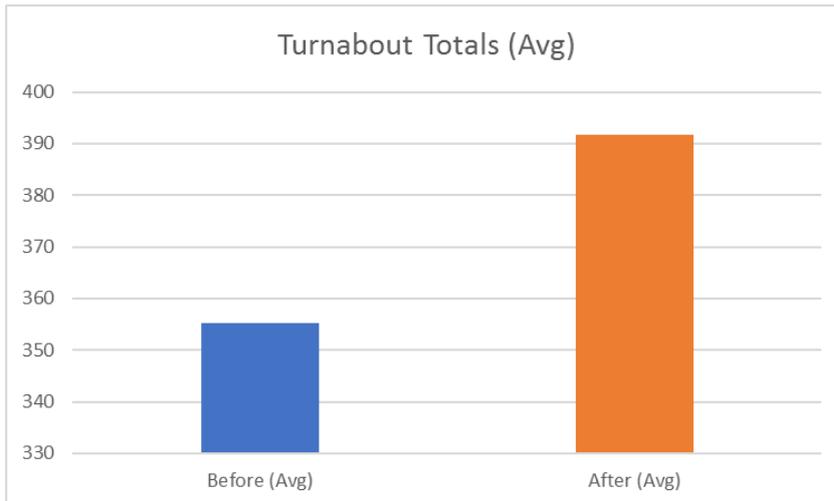
<sup>1</sup><https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-the-education-of-looked-after-children>

- 4.4 In 2016-2017 the Virtual Head has employed a full-time ESO to work specifically with LAC educated outside Wolverhampton, as a response to the lower attainment of this cohort (compared to in-city LAC) in 2015-2016. This has supported a marked improvement in the attainment of out-of-city LAC, as outlined in the Attainment section below. In another development, the role of one of COPE's .5 FTE ESOs has been designated to support LAC in early years (age three to reception year), effectively addressing another of our key priorities.
- 4.5 ESOs provide 1:1 study support for LAC in schools, focussing on key areas such as literacy at Key Stage (KS) 1 and LAC who are in assessment years. One of the key interventions delivered by the team is the Turnabout Programme, an intensive programme (two-three weekly sessions for eight weeks) which helps younger pupils (usually KS2) to overcome barriers to learning and develop their own problem-solving strategies.<sup>2</sup>
- 4.6 Pupils are assessed by teachers at the start and end of the Turnabout programme in key areas – reading, writing, executive functioning, behaviour, communication and self-confidence. Pupils shown good improvement in all areas following this intervention, and feedback from schools and carers has generally been excellent.



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<sup>2</sup> Pupils following the Turnabout programme are assessed by their class teacher at the start of the programme, and again at the end, using 6 key indicators, which were reading, writing, executive functioning, behaviour, communication and self-control (or self-regulation). Pupils are given a score out of 100 for each indicator.



4.7 COPE have received many compliments for our support, and the positive outcomes of this work in 2016-2017. Ofsted, in its 2017 inspection of Wolverhampton Safeguarding Children’s Services, complimented our “strong and effective” virtual school. A few other comments from stakeholders are quoted below:

- *A herself has stated that the work you have done with her has been invaluable...both academically and socially, you have been able to demonstrate to her the improvement she has made, this has instilled so much confidence in her...Your work has been instrumental in bringing about this confidence for her and I trust that Wolverhampton will continue to assist the Young People in their care with as much enthusiasm and professionalism as you have shown working with A.*
- *I hadn’t seen these boys for six months and it really feels like there has been a little miracle! They have a great team of professionals who work together well.*
- *I just wanted to thank you for the work you have done with C with the turnabout programme - we really appreciate it. C has really enjoyed his time with you and has grown in confidence. There has definitely been an improvement in his reading and writing skills and his concentration in keeping himself on tasks... He really does value the relationship he has built with you...*
- *In 16 years and 17 children I’ve never seen such good information as what J has provided. I was really impressed and it stopped me in my tracks, J really investigated it well. I thought “Wow, that’s fantastic,” and I wanted to thank her because she has found all this information out.*

4.8 The activities of the Educational Psychologists (EPs) and Counselling Psychologist working within COPE include:

- **Consultation** with social workers, teachers and other stakeholders
- **Assessment** of LAC, both in-city and out
- **Interventions** relating to learning, social, emotional and mental health needs
- **Training** for professionals and carers
- Attending **multi-agency meetings** where specialist input is required, along with **reflective practice and solution focussed cases meetings**.

Breaking their work down into hours spent on the delivery of each of these five priorities, COPE psychologists delivered the following in 2017-2018:

- Consultation: In City: 108 Out of City: 102
- Assessment: In City: 237 Out of City: 239
- Interventions: In City: 43 Out of City: 72
- Training: In City: 56 Out of City: 25
- Meetings: In City: 195 Out of City: 150

- 4.9 The VSH has also employed two **Assistant Educational Psychologists** 1.5 FTE in 2016-2017, funded by the Pupil Premium Grant. These colleagues support LAC in year 11 who are at risk of underachieving by providing extra support with coursework, revision, exam preparation etc, and supporting training for foster carers in promoting education. From September 2017 this support was extended to include LAC in years 8 and 9. It has been identified that a number of LAC start to under-achieve through KS 3, ultimately resulting in a widening attainment gap at KS4. This additional, targeted support will help to prevent that eventual drop in attainment for older LAC.
- 4.10 A new method of measuring the impact of psychologically based interventions has recently been introduced to the work of our Educational Psychologists; TME, or targeting, monitoring and evaluation, forms will be completed to illustrate impact with individual looked after children. The resulting data will be published in the 2017-2018 VSH annual report.
- 4.11 The **Aspire2Uni (A2U) Programme** is now in its third year and continues to raise aspirations, as well as supporting improved attainment and creating exciting bespoke opportunities for LAC. The VSH manages the project from a Wolverhampton's perspective, and all members of the COPE team provide staffing, organisational and administrative support.
- 4.12 A partnership project with the University of Wolverhampton and the "Creating Chances Trust", alongside the four Local Authority Virtual Schools participating in the project - Sandwell, Stafford, Walsall and Wolverhampton - the programme is embedded into wider strategies for raising aspirations, attainment and progression. A2U is targeted at LAC who are reaching expected standards at the end of KS2. Three cohorts are now following the programme, which are in years 7, 8 and 9 Wolverhampton has between six and 12 LAC in each cohort.
- 4.13 There are three main elements to the programme:
- **Outreach** - the University organises a series of university visits and other events, designed to raise aspirations, break down barriers and inform progression to higher education.
  - **Mentoring** - a dedicated mentor is allocated to the young people and works with them in their home; this ensures they do not miss valuable lesson time and also engages the child's carers and home network with the programme. Children see their mentor either once per week or once per fortnight.

- **Work Experience and Enrichment** - Working with local businesses, Creating Chances Trust raises funds and accesses high quality, bespoke work placements for individual children, where appropriate. In addition, the trust sources enrichment experiences, such as visits to the theatre or outward-bound experiences, to broaden horizons and build confidence.

4.14 In a consultation, completed by the young people, on the impact of their first year on the A2U programme:

- 67% felt that their attitude to learning had improved
- 44% felt that their ability in English had improved
- 78% felt that their ability in maths had improved
- 89% had noticed improvements in other subjects
- 90% said that they knew more about university than previously
- 90% wanted to go to university in the future.

Young people's comments on A2U included:

- *A2U has helped me build more confidence and make new friends*
- *We had a careers meeting at A2U and it really helped us decide whether we wanted to go to university and what we wanted to do in the future ahead*
- *Thank you for everything*
- *Before I came to Aspire 2 University I was very unconfident, but my friends always stayed by my side – Thank you for helping me grow in confidence Aspire 2 University. I just want to say you have made me a lot happier.*

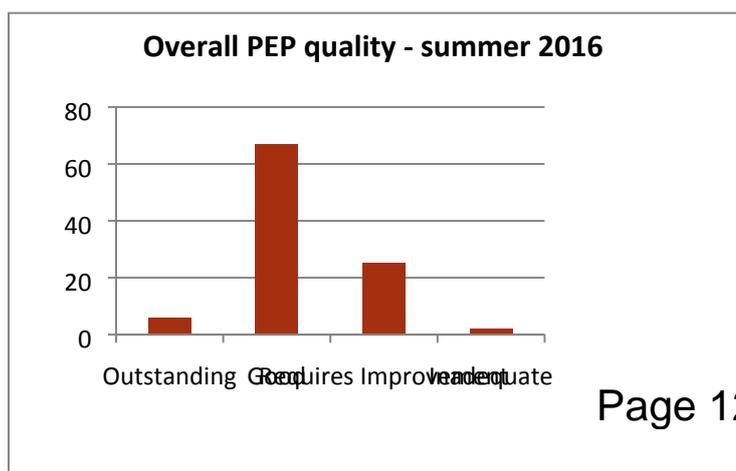
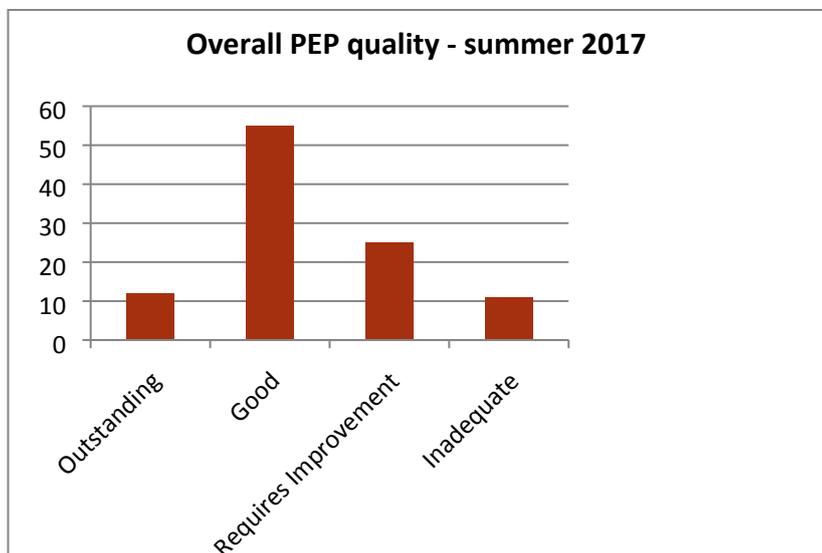
4.15 COPE have also invested in an online learning programme called “My Own Tutor” in 2017, which is provided to young people to complement their studies and/or help to plug any temporary gaps in education (for example when a LAC moved placements in an emergency). The VSH has also provided “Britannica School”, an online version of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, to all our foster carers to support their children's homework and revision. This is an extremely useful tool which can be translated into any language (so useful for our pupils for whom English is not their first language) and is much more secure than other tools or search engines. These resources, therefore, support e-safety as well as home study.

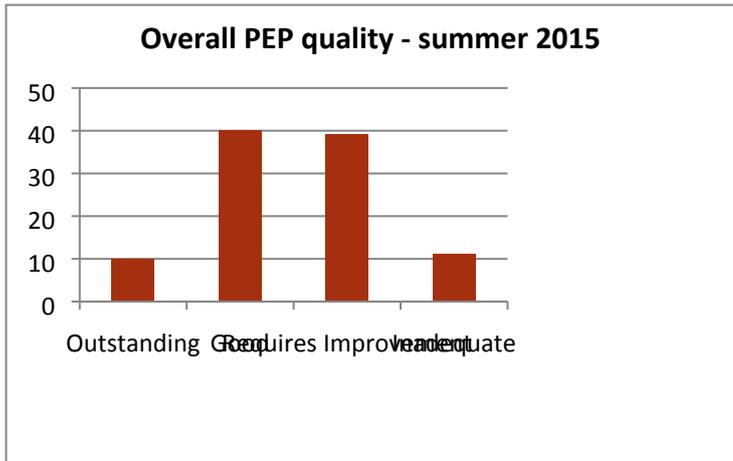
## **5.0 Personal Education Plans & Pupil Premium Plus**

5.1 It is a statutory requirement of local authorities to ensure that all LAC have a quality, up-to-date Personal Education Plan (PEP). However, the quality of PEPs is frequently uneven and sometimes poor. This is a reality often highlighted by Ofsted.

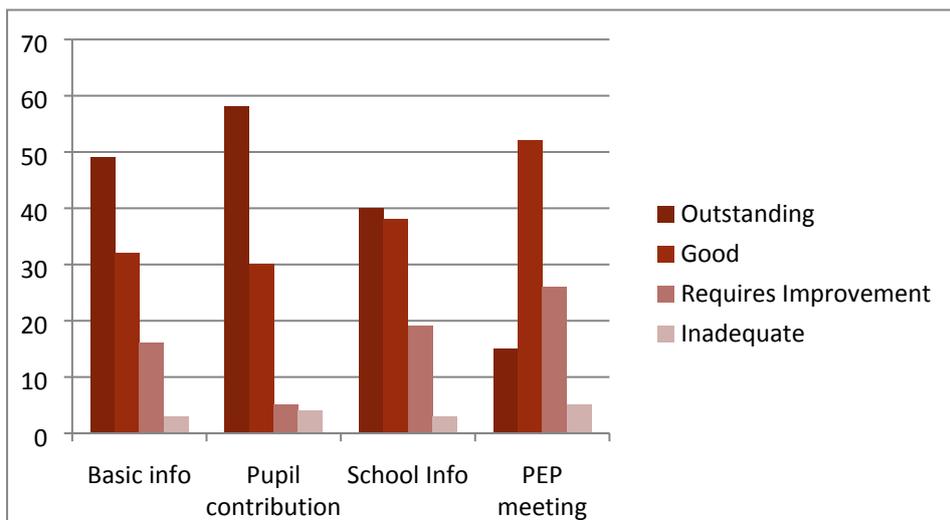
5.2 To help to address this, the COPE audit PEPs for quality. Approximately 50 PEPs are being audited each month. Different children are audited each time, so that all LAC will have had at least one PEP audited by the end of the year. Individual audit results are sent to social workers and Designated Teachers for their information and guidance. The VSH provides a termly summary report for the attention on senior managers.

- 5.3 This report covers the 2017 summer term and makes comparisons with summer 2016 and summer 2015 audit reports to track progress over the last two years.
- 5.4 In terms of **overall quality**, of the PEPs audited:
- 12% were outstanding
  - 55% were good
  - 25% were requiring improvement
  - 6% were inadequate.
- 5.5 73% were either good or outstanding. This a slight improvement on the 2016 spring term audit and a clear improvement on 2015.
- 5.6 A “good” judgement is still by far the more common judgement on overall quality, with inadequate being by far the least common.
- 5.7 83% of selected PEPs were available to be viewed in CareFirst (discounting files that could not be accessed). This is a significant improvement on the 66% that were available during the spring term audit, and the 63% that were available in the autumn term 2015. The lower numbers in previous terms indicated that some PEPs, though completed, had not yet been scanned onto the child’s file and therefore could not be viewed.
- 5.8 The overall quality of PEPs audited in the summer term 2017, as well as 2016 and 2015, are illustrated below:





- 5.9 The comparison above shows a slight dip in overall quality since summer 2016, with more outstanding judgements but also more inadequate PEPs in 2017, and fewer good judgements but very similar PEPs requiring improvement. However, summer 2017 was a significant improvement on summer 2015, which had a greater percentage of PEPs that were inadequate or requiring improvement and fewer good ones. Also, summer 2017 shows a better overall picture than spring term 2016, for instance, and all previous audit reports.
- 5.10 It can be said, therefore, that we have seen a general improvement in PEP quality over the last two years, but also that this improvement is perhaps tapering off.
- 5.11 The **four key elements** of the PEP are:
- Basic information (pupil, child, carer, social worker details)
  - The pupil's views on their educational progress
  - Specific educational data provided by the school – attainment, attendance etc
  - The PEP meeting itself, including the setting of individualised learning targets for the pupil.
- 5.12 An analysis of the quality of each key PEP element in the summer 2017 audit reveals the following (percentage of PEPs rated under the four rating categories):



	Basic info	Pupil view	School data	PEP Meeting
Outstanding	49	58	40	15
Good	32	30	38	52
RI	16	5	19	26
Inadequate	3	4	3	5

5.13 The strongest area of performance is the pupil's view. This is pleasing as capturing the child's voice in the PEP is a key priority.

5.14 The PEP meeting itself presents a very mixed picture with more good PEPs than other areas, but also fewer outstanding and more RI/Inadequate. Interestingly, this section was weaker overall in summer 2016 than in summer 2017. In some cases, this is an issue with accuracy of minute-taking; the final PEP document may not always be a true reflection of the quality of the conversation that has taken place.

5.15 Given the imperative to make our **PEP targets** more SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-related), as highlighted in Ofsted's 2017 inspection of our children's safeguarding arrangements, COPE have made a judgement of this aspect of the PEPs audited in summer 2017. The results were:

- 50% were SMART
- 19% were partially SMART (usually some targets were SMART, but not all)
- 30% were not SMART.

5.16 As said, there is evidence that PEP quality has improved over the last two years and, while some elements are still improving, quality is still not as good as we would like and progress appears to be slowing. The percentage of PEPs with SMART targets is also not nearly high enough.

5.17 The new electronic PEP form, launched on 1 November 2017, has various mechanisms within it to drive up quality. However, the VSH recommends the following additional measures:

- Many social workers and managers have still not completed the learning module on PEP quality on the council's online learning hub. This should be addressed by social care management to ensure that the module is given the same priority as other mandatory courses.
- PEP quality should be scrutinised specifically in social worker supervision and LAC reviews.
- The VSH delivered a training session on setting SMART PEP targets at the 2017 spring term Designated Teachers' Forum, and will continue to address this with social workers and schools. The VSH also aims to make the online PEP training available to Designated Teachers.

5.18 The VSH manages the **Pupil Premium Grant (PPG)** for LAC, known as the Pupil Premium Plus (PP+). Most of the grant - approximately £1800 per pupil - is allocated to schools in termly instalments, and its use is monitored via the PEP process and through COPE's auditing of PEPs and daily work with schools. COPE and the VSH continually provide challenge and support to schools to ensure that the use of each looked-after pupil's funding is clearly linked to their individualised learning targets.

5.19 The VSH has utilised the retained portion of the Pupil Premium Plus to fund specific projects and resources, which are targeted at the Virtual School's strategic priorities. This, and the total expenditure, is illustrated in the table below:

Intervention	Reason / Priority	Amount
Termly allocation to schools	Supporting PEP targets	828000 (460x18000)
Assistant EPs (.5 FTE)	Raise attainment at KS3 & KS4	49000
KS4/5 Transition support	Support LAC into EET at 16+	48000
Out-of-city Education Support	Improve attainment of out-of-city cohort	40000
CPD (DTs/COPE/carers/EPs)	Building capacity to meet the needs of LAC	4000
Beanstalk Volunteer Reading	Improve literacy at KS1/2	10000
ICT & other resources	Improve attainment	12000
Additional need	Flexibility & respond to need	76800

## 6.0 School Attendance

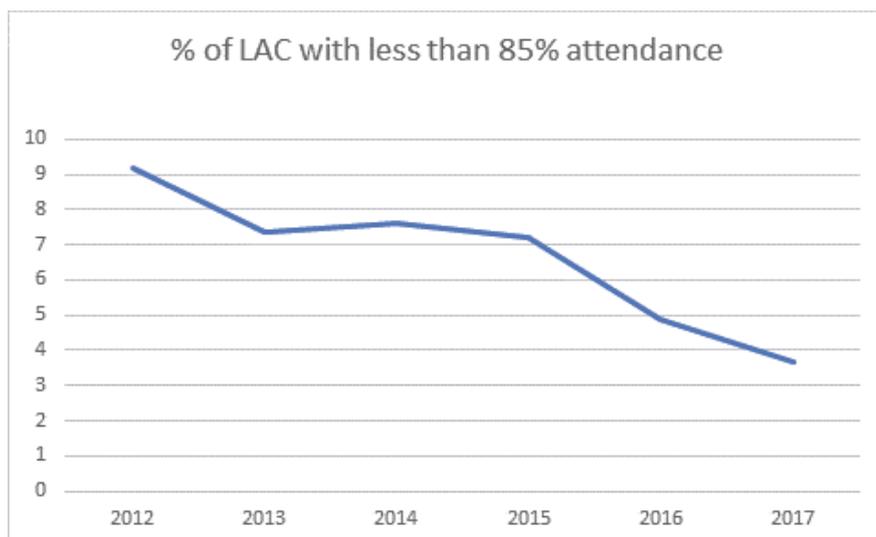
6.1 Monitoring school attendance has always been more difficult for LAC educated outside Wolverhampton, which was concerning as they can be a more vulnerable cohort. To address this, from the summer term 2017 the Virtual Head started to commission 'Welfare Call', a company specialising in attendance monitoring who work with many virtual schools

around the country, to monitor the attendance of all our out-of-city LAC on a daily basis. While this is now providing much more comprehensive and timely attendance data, it did result in a small gap in attendance reports (the early part of the summer term for out-of-city LAC) while we changed to the new system early in the summer term. This is the reason for the gaps in the attendance data below.

- 6.2 Allowing for this short implementation dip, and based on the data available from schools, we know that school attendance is very high for most of our looked-after pupils – an average of 96% overall for 2016-2017. The average attendance of pupils educated outside Wolverhampton was 97% (the same as the previous year), while the average for LAC in Wolverhampton schools was 96%, which is 2% higher than 2015-2016 and 4% higher than 2014-2015.
- 6.3 The table below illustrates levels of persistent low attendance - the small minority of pupils whose attendance was less than 85% in 2015-2016 – based on available data:

In City				Out of City			Combined		
	No with < 85% attendance	Total No. of Students	Percentage with <85% Attendance	No with < 85% attendance	Total No. of Students	Percentage with <85% Attendance	No with < 85% attendance	Total No. of Students	Percentage with <85% Attendance
<b>Autumn</b>	13	213	6.10%	6	228	2.63%	19	439	4.32%
<b>Spring</b>	23	225	10.22%	7	223	3.13%	30	448	6.70%
<b>Summer</b>	22	218	10.09%		223		*	441	*
Rolling% 8.84%				Rolling% 1.93%			Rolling% 3.69%		

- 6.4 Persistent low attendance has continued to drop sharply in 2017, when compared to previous years, and is showing a clear year-on-year improvement as illustrated in the table below:



- 6.5 The above attendance data relates to all LAC in years 1-11, regardless of time spent in care or when they entered care. Data published by the Department for Education focusses only on LAC that have been care for one year or more, which is why DfE figures will differ from the ones above.

- 6.6 While attendance continues to improve generally, it is still better for LAC placed outside Wolverhampton; a reversal of the trend in attainment. There is a spike in persistent absence for the in-city cohort which will be analysed to identify any trends or contributory factors.
- 6.7 We are aware, however, that a high number of persistent low-attendeers also had particularly complex needs, especially in terms of SEMH (social, behavioural and mental health) difficulties. They have often experienced disruptions to their schooling as a result of these issues, and disruptions were linked, in some cases, to changes to care placement. It is therefore critical that firm challenge and support, as well as quality training, are provided for schools to help them to support pupils with complex needs. Access to alternative provision is made available for LAC without delay in Wolverhampton, when it is required, but we need to make sure that schools are aware of what support they can and should seek, when they are struggling. The quality and appropriateness of care placements is also a key factor.

## **7.0 Inclusion**

- 7.1 There were 84 recorded temporary exclusions for LAC in Wolverhampton schools in 2016-2017. This is higher than 2015-2016 (57 exclusions) and 2014-2015 (67 exclusions). 34 children experienced a temporary exclusion and 20 had more than one exclusion. Two exclusions were from Special Schools and 49 exclusions were from PRUs (16 children).
- 7.2 Welfare Call are now monitoring out-of-city exclusions, therefore complete exclusions data on this cohort will be available from 2017-2018.
- 7.3 While exclusions for in-city LAC have not risen as sharply as for all pupils in Wolverhampton (permanent exclusions for all pupils roughly tripled between 2015 and 2017), due to the additional monitoring and support that is in place for LAC, it has nevertheless increased significantly in the last year. The proportion of exclusions from special schools and PRUs - 61% - has also risen.
- 7.4 The most common reasons for temporary exclusion were Persistently Disruptive, Physical Assault against a Pupil and Verbal Abuse/Threatening an Adult.
- 7.5 One contributory factor is likely to be the increasingly strong challenge to schools around 'grey' or unofficial exclusions. This is ensuring that illegal exclusions do not happen and that any exclusions are recorded properly, meaning that issues can be quickly and effectively addressed.
- 7.6 The high proportion of pupils who were excluded more than once, and the high percentage of exclusions from PRUs indicates that many exclusions were experienced by a minority of pupils with complex and challenging needs. In some cases, these pupils later moved on to a more specialised provision which better met their needs.
- 7.7 A significant number of exclusions, and potential exclusions, are avoided through the support that COPE offer to looked-after pupils, and the VSH had several permanent exclusions rescinded in 2016-2017. COPE will continue to be as proactive as possible in our support and challenge to schools. We will identify ways to work more intensively with PRUs, as part of the 2017-2018 LAC/YOT Attainment Action Plan.

- 7.8 Only one looked-after pupil was permanently excluded from a Wolverhampton school in 2016-2017, and none from the out-of-city cohort. This is a 50% decrease on 2015-2016 and a very positive outcome considering the sharp rise in permanent exclusions for pupils generally. The VSH continues to provide the strongest possible challenge to all permanent exclusions for LAC and several permanent exclusions (and near-permanent exclusions) were withdrawn or avoided due to VSH/COPE intervention.
- 7.9 At 4 July 2016, nine looked-after pupils had an education offer of less than 25 hours. The pupils with less than 25 hours provision usually have very complex needs which tend to result in instability of education provision. In such cases, home tuition and other tailored packages of support are arranged in as timely a manner as possible. All pupils without a full-time offer have an action plan detailing how their provision will be extended toward 25 hours, overseen by the VSH and managed by COPE in partnership with key partners.
- 7.10 COPE work closely with School Admissions, and with schools and admissions and teams in other local authorities where LAC are placed outside Wolverhampton, to ensure that appropriate school places are secured for LAC as quickly as possible. In one case in 2017, where an academy in another area of the country had refused to admit one of our LAC, the VSH challenged the school and successfully applied to the Secretary of State to have the school directed to admit the pupil. This is the first time that a VSH has successfully done this to the best of our knowledge, and certainly the first time that a West Midlands Virtual Head has secured an academy direction.

## **8.0 School Transition & Stability**

- 8.1 Research shows that young people in care who changed school in years 10 or 11 scored over five grades less than those who did not<sup>3</sup>. COPE and the VSH work closely with social workers, schools and carers to maintain existing school placements for LAC, wherever possible and appropriate. If a change of school is the best option, then COPE help to ensure a successful transition through in-class support, mentoring and close partnership working with all key agencies.
- 8.2 Social workers are expected to consult the VSH prior to any change of school for a LAC. The new electronic PEP will help to ensure that this is happening more reliably by triggering an automatic message to the VSH whenever a child is expected to change schools. This requirement is also highlighted in the PEP e-learning and other guidance. COPE regularly provide support for LAC if they do have to move schools, ensuring a successful transition through mentoring, in-class support, and close partnership working with all key agencies.
- 8.3 The transition from primary to secondary school can be particularly difficult for many LAC. COPE ensure that all LAC are supported with a successful transition through 1:1 meetings with year 6 LAC and their teachers, before & after secondary induction sessions, as well as helping to ensure that looked-after pupils are given their preferred choice of secondary school. This is followed up with additional meetings in the new secondary school. Out-of

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<sup>3</sup> [http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/EducationalProgressLookedAfterChildrenKeyMessages\\_Nov2015.pdf](http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/EducationalProgressLookedAfterChildrenKeyMessages_Nov2015.pdf)

city LAC are given additional information and support and a new full-time Education Support Officer will be recruited by the VSH to provide additional support to this cohort.

## 9.0 Attainment & Progress

9.1 This report summarises the educational outcomes of children in the care of Wolverhampton for the 2016-2017 academic year. The report considers outcomes at all key stages, and compares attainment for LAC educated in Wolverhampton schools with those educated outside the city, and between LAC and their peers.<sup>4</sup>

9.2 In accordance with Department for Education reporting, the report only considers the performance of 'eligible' LAC, or those who were in care for at least a year between 30 April 2016 and 1 March 2017. Additionally, only LAC who attend schools that enter at least one pupil for national end of key stage assessments (some special schools do not, for example) are counted in totals. As this is a slightly different methodology to previous years, alongside national changes to the GCSE grading system in 2017, plus the fact that random fluctuations in small cohorts make year-on-year comparisons problematic, this report does not compare 2017 results with previous years. Instead, it focusses on comparisons between LAC and their peers in Wolverhampton schools.

9.3 This brings LAC attainment and progress data in line with the way that the same data is aggregated for all pupils in Wolverhampton, enabling a fair and equal comparison between the two cohorts. This approach will support closer collaborative working between the VSH/COPE and School Improvement in Wolverhampton, as School Improvement Advisors will ensure an additional focus on areas where the achievement gap is greater.

## 9.4 Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

The table below summarises outcomes for LAC attending early years settings in Wolverhampton in 2017. The results show an improvement on 2016, although 2017 performance remains the same as 2016.

Year	Cohort	% achieving a good level of development in reading, writing & number
2015	21	33
2016	16	38
2017	36	38

9.5 The table below summarises outcomes for LAC in the **year 1 phonics** test in 2017. The performance of Wolverhampton LAC was comparable to that of all pupils in Wolverhampton.

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<sup>4</sup> The data in this section of the report is un-validated, due to validated data not being available at the time of writing.

Cohort	Number of Pupils	% achieving the age-related expected level in year 1 phonics
In-city LAC	7	70
OOO LAC	8	80
All LAC	15	75
All Wolverhampton pupils		80

9.6 At the end of **Key Stage 1 (KS1)**, the following percentage of eligible LAC achieved the age-related expected level, or above, in teacher assessments:

Cohort	Maths	Reading	Writing	math/read/writ
In-city LAC (6 pupils)	83	83	83	83
OOO LAC (14 pupils)	78	67	44	44
All LAC (26 pupils)	80	73	60	60
All Wolverhampton pupils	75	74	66	62

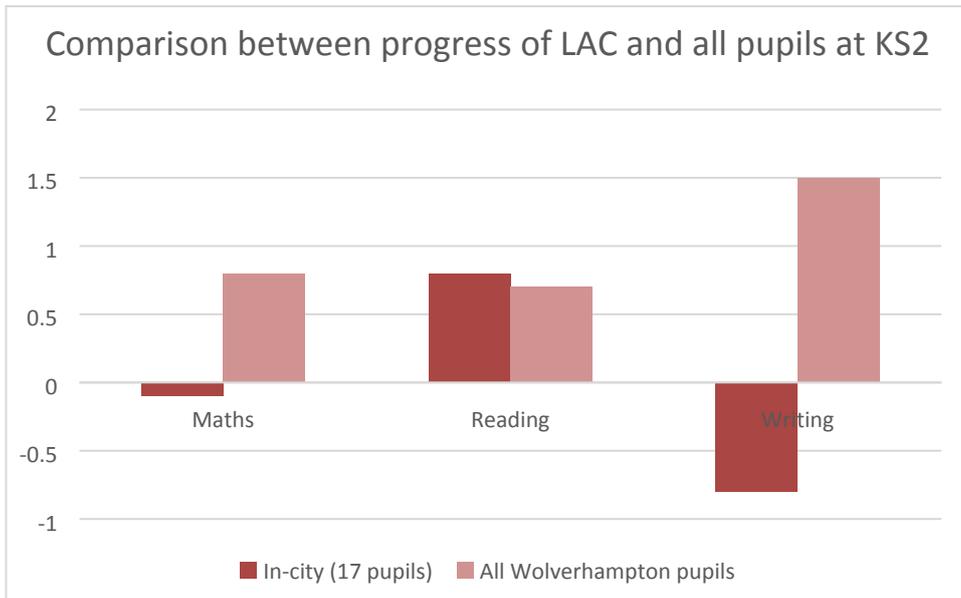
9.7 At the end of **Key Stage 2 (KS2)**, the following percentage of eligible LAC achieved the age-related expected level, or above:

Cohort	Maths	Reading	Writing	Maths/read/writing
In-city (17 pupils)	47	47	47	35
OOO (18 pupils)	39	44	44	22
All LAC (35 pupils)	43	46	46	29
All Wolverhampton pupils	76	70	78	60

9.8 The following table and chart compare the **progress made by LAC in Wolverhampton schools, from the end of KS1 to the end of KS2**, with the progress made by all Wolverhampton pupils:<sup>5</sup>

Cohort	Maths	Reading	Writing
In-city (17 pupils)	-0.1	0.8	-0.8
All Wolverhampton pupils	0.8	0.7	1.5

<sup>5</sup> A score of 0 is the average rate of progress for a child with a similar starting point; above 0 is above average and a minus score is below average



9.9 At the end of **Key Stage 4 (KS4)**, the following percentage of eligible LAC achieved GCSEs in English (language and/or literature) and maths at grade 4 (equivalent to a C grade in previous years) or above. Also included is the 2017 average Progress 8 and Attainment 8 scores:<sup>6</sup>

Cohort	GCSE English & maths level 4 & above	Progress 8	Attainment 8
In-city (13 pupils)	23	-1.1	22.65
OOO (18 pupils)	22	-0.5	21.58
All LAC (31 pupils)	23	-0.8	22.04
All Wolverhampton pupils	57	-0.06	44.6

## 9.10 Summary / Conclusions on the attainment and progress of LAC

9.10.a. The attainment of LAC continues to present a generally encouraging picture – although EYFS is the same overall percentage as 2016, the introduction of an Education Support Officer for Early Years to COPE, in 2017, should improve performance in this area from 2018 onward. EYFS was also a significantly bigger cohort than usual in 2017.

9.10.b. KS1 shows clear improvement on 2017 and the performance of in-city pupils in maths is actually better than the performance of all pupils in Wolverhampton. Although there has been a dip in attainment at KS2, progress at KS2 is likely to be better than average for LAC, based on national data from previous years. Some pupils who didn't achieve the age-

<sup>6</sup> Attainment 8 is the average attainment of all pupils in the cohort across all 8 main subjects, while Progress 8 is the average progress made across the 8 main subjects from the start of year 7 to the end of year 11, in relation to pupils' individual starting points (to give a value-added measure)

related expected level made better than average progress, which indicates that they are doing well in relation to their individual starting point.

- 9.10.c. As illustrated in the chart above, LAC in Wolverhampton schools are making slightly better progress than their peers in reading. They are making slower progress, however, in maths and writing, with writing showing the biggest gap. Given that writing is usually the weakest area, at primary level for LAC, this is an area of high priority for 2017-2018.
- 9.10.d. Some pupils at KS4 have done exceptionally well, including several in very challenging circumstances. The average Progress 8 score for LAC is also only slightly lower than that for all Wolverhampton pupils, and significantly better than the average score for LAC nationally in 2016 (1.14). The numbers of Care Leavers entering higher education also continues to be a strength for Wolverhampton.
- 9.10.e. Out-of-city LAC are also doing better generally than in 2016, when their achievement was far lower than the in-city cohorts. The addition to the COPE team of a dedicated Education Support Officer for LAC placed out-of-city in 2017, has supported improving outcomes for this cohort.
- 9.10.f. There will always be fluctuations in the performance of relatively small cohorts. Nevertheless, performance at KS2 is clearly a priority in 2017-2018, particularly in writing. COPE will be monitoring the progress of years 2 and 6 more closely than ever, prioritising these year groups for 1:1 tuition and other uses of premium funding etc. The VSH will also work more closely than ever with School Improvement in 2017-2018, ensure that our schools are subject to the strongest possible support and challenge regarding looked-after pupils, particularly in writing at primary level.
- 9.10.g. COPE have conducted an analysis of the year 6 cohort to understand any trends or factors that may have impacted on attainment. The results are as follows:

- **School attendance and OFSTED ratings**

The average attendance for Wolverhampton LAC is 95%. In this cohort, 83% were above this average, with only 17% below the average. The 17% consists of one 2-week fixed exclusion and medical appointments. 83% of the relevant schools were rated good or outstanding. This would indicate that attendance and Ofsted ratings (while important in themselves) were not a key factor in underachievement.

- **Academic progress**

Despite the apparent dip in attainment, this cohort had made above-average progress in reading and writing since the end of KS1. Progress was slightly below average in maths. However, we can see that this cohort made substantial progress since KS1.

- **Stability**

78% of this cohort had a change of social worker within the academic year. Of those who did not meet the expected level in any core subjects, more than half of these

had experienced changes in care placement and some experienced school changes. Of those that passed all three core subjects, none of them experienced changes in school or care placement. This indicates that placement stability was key to academic success, and closely mirrors our findings in 2016, when there was a strong correlation between stability (of both school and care placement) and academic achievement.

- **Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND)**

Despite the improved performance of the OOC cohort, 44% of that cohort had identified SEND and 22% had an EHCP. Several other children were being assessed for an EHCP during the period, all of which indicates a very high level of SEND (around 12% of Wolverhampton LAC usually have an EHCP).

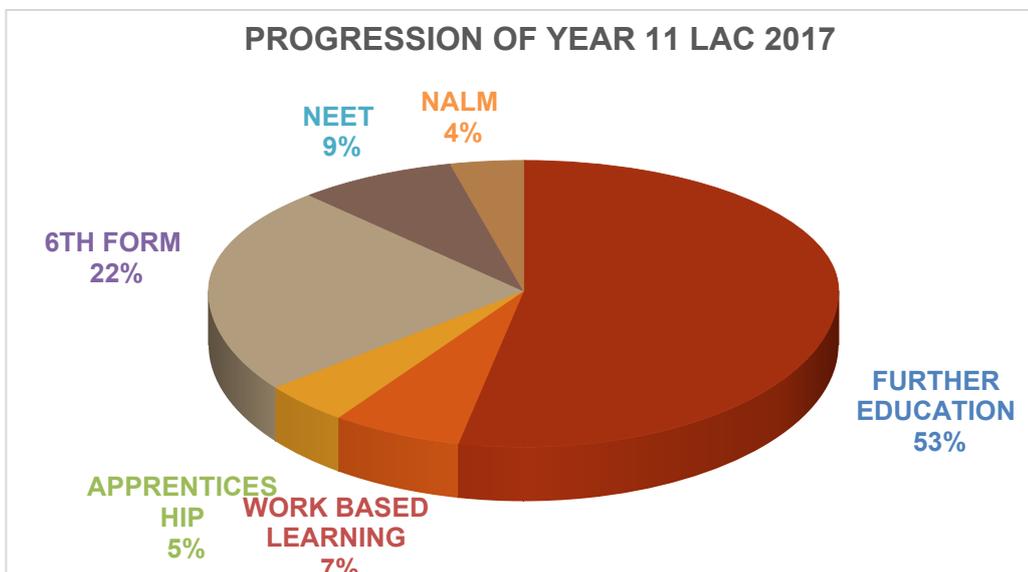
9.10.h. We should not overlook the many broader achievements of these remarkable children and young people. Many of our LAC worked extremely hard and achieved very well, in relation to their starting point and previous outcomes, even if some did not achieve expected academic levels in relation to their age etc.

9.10.i. At the same time, however, many of the above outcomes are likely to be above regional and national averages for LAC in 2017, when national data is published in 2018. This would continue the trend in 2016, when the attainment of Wolverhampton LAC at KS2 and KS4 was generally well above average when compared to regional, national and statistical neighbours – described as “a significant achievement” by Ofsted. At KS2, for example, performance in 2016 was ranked 13th nationally for LAC, as illustrated in the chart below:



## 10.0 Post-16 outcomes

- 10.1 **Progression of LAC from year 11;** The cohort is made up of the 45 eligible LAC who completed year 11 in 2017. They have been closely monitored and supported with a positive education, employment or training (EET) offer post-16.
- 24 young people have progressed into Further Education College (53%)
  - Three young people have positively transitioned into Work Based Learning (7%)
  - 10 young people have positively transitioned into 6th form provision (22%)
  - Two young people have transitioned into apprenticeships (5%)
- 10.2 **14** young people in the above cohort have identified SEN or Education Health & Care plans (EHCP), 12 of which are positively engaged in education employment and training.
- 10.3 **Four** young people are Not Engaged in Education, Training or Employment (9%).
- 10.4 **Three** of these young people have been referred to Connexions to the designated personal advisor for LAC, two of hold an EHCP. One is in custody and awaiting a move to enable him to engage in education.
- 10.5 **Two** young people are categorised as NALM (Not available to the labour market due to either being pregnant or a young parent).
- 10.6 NEET support is delivered in partnership with Connexions and Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) and led by the EET Coordinator, a post within LAC Transitions which is supported and partly supervised by the Virtual Head.



- 10.7 **LAC/Care Leavers who completed year 13 in 2017** (the traditional stage of completion for further education - turning 18 during that year) - this cohort of 47 young people achieved the following outcomes:
- 10 achieved entry-level qualifications
  - 14 achieved BTEC/Diploma qualifications – Four at level 1, four at level at 2, six at level 3
  - Two achieved A-levels

- One passed a GCSE resit
- 13 are continuing into the following year of their course
- Two Care Leavers achieved a degree – one 2:1 and one 2:2
- Eight Care Leavers have entered university.

10.8 The LAC service, and its partners, supports Care Leavers to access **Higher Education (HE)** and raises their aspirations to aspire to go to university. This is reflected in the support package on offer and the high numbers of care leavers accessing HE.

10.9 The number of Care Leavers accessing Higher Education has increased year on year with data being collated from 2013, as follows:

- 2013 two university starts
- 2014 three university starts
- 2015 eight university starts
- 2016 ten university starts
- 2017 ten university starts.

10.10 The above increase in progression to HE is with the support of our local university outreach work, foster care training to raise the aspirations of LAC, increased knowledge of social workers and young person's advisors, staying put options to support the Care Leaver during semester breaks and the increased amount of student finance available to Care Leavers. The EET Coordinator also visits all our HE students and completes PEPs and other progress review meetings where appropriate. We can also see how the additional support that LAC have received at school is supporting these positive outcomes; for example, one young person who had guitar lessons funded via Pupil Premium, while at school, is now studying music at university.

10.11 There are currently 26 Care Leavers studying in HE, all but one are studying at a university (25) and one is studying a HND in Further Education.

10.12 There is a varied choice of subjects being studied but there is an increased interest in social sciences. Currently the cohort is studying the following subjects:

- English Literature
- Media
- Adult nursing
- Sports coaching/secondary physical education
- Primary education studies
- History & philosophy
- Psychology/Sociology (x6)
- Sports science
- Business (x2)
- Sports development
- Health Studies
- Criminology/social policy (x2)
- Social Science, Social Policy.

- 10.13 Wolverhampton Care Leavers are attending universities all over the country. However, the geographical spread of this cohort is across the country often accessing the university that has the best ranking for subject choice and the acceptable realistic grade boundary (UCAS tariff) or the closest to home.
- 10.14 Two Wolverhampton Care Leavers graduated with degrees in 2017: one from Kings London who has achieved a 2.1 in Philosophy and religion who is currently working for Vidal Sassoon. She is exploring options and costs to complete a MA. The other achieved a 2.2 in Psychology; he had hoped to progress on to a MA in social work but due to his grade he is having to explore and gain further experience in the social care sector (currently employed and he has just been offered a fixed term contract in the LAC Transitions Housing Support Team).

## **11.0 Participation**

- 11.1 Wolverhampton has an excellent Children in Care Council (CiCC), as highlighted by Ofsted in 2017 who described the CiCC as “anything but tokenistic” and as “impressive, well-integrated and influential... providing tangible evidence of its impact”. The CiCC benefits from close links with the Youth Council and with councillors and is actively involved in participation at a regional and national level, enabling the CiCC to act as a real force for change and the improvement of services.
- 11.2 The CiCC have been attending the newly-formed regional CiCC Conference, which is championed by the Children’s Commissioner. This termly event, which began in September, addressed key issues affecting education such as young people’s experiences of sharing their views in PEPs.
- 11.3 One highlight of the year was the a joint residential with young people from the CiCC, Youth Council and the Be Safe Team (Junior Safeguarding Board) to Woodlands in Walsall. This event was funded by the Big Lottery and supported by the Headstart team, and aimed to build confidence, resilience and team working skills.
- 11.4 The Virtual School Headteacher Report was shared with the CiCC in November 2016 and educational issues, such as the PEP process, are regularly discussed. The CiCC were pleased with the direction of the 2016-2017 report and the achievements of young people. They expressed concern about the lower writing levels at KS1 and the percentage of LAC in year 11 who achieved good GCSEs. These areas are addressed in the 2017-2018 LAC Attainment Improvement Plan.
- 11.5 The new electronic PEP, which was launched in November 2017, and other participation tools such as MOMO (Mind of my Own) are being used to enable the voice of children and young people to be better heard through electronic/online access.
- 11.6 Wolverhampton’s annual LAC Awards Ceremony, the I-Awards, saw 420 young people receive recognition for their successes throughout 2016-2017. Educational success (the Intellectual award) is a key award category alongside other achievements. COPE’s Corporate Parenting and Participation specialists led on the organisation of this evening which was once again an excellent success.

## 12.0 Education of Young People in the Youth Justice System

12.1 In 2016, the role of the VSH was extended to support the Youth Offending Team (YOT). The VSH's role is essentially to improve partnership working between YOT and schools/education providers, to promote inclusion and attendance, and ultimately to raise educational achievement. The VSH is also a member of the YOT Management Board. This development was recently commended during the SIF OFSTED Inspection.

12.2 The VSH's involvement has supported the following developments:

- **Monthly PNIFTED** (pupils not in full time education) meetings are held, involving all key partners, to discuss all school-age YOT cases of school age who are not attending full-time education and to agree actions to increase engagement. The Head of Service (HOS) and VSH are now regular attendees of this meeting, helping to ensure that scrutiny is rigorous and support plans are robust.
- A similar **EET meeting** concerning the post-16 cohort commenced in August 2017, to enhance monitoring and support for the post-16 commenced.
- The Wolverhampton **Model School Policy** has been expanded by the VSH to include young people open to YOT. The policy promotes stronger partnership working to support the inclusion and achievement of the most vulnerable pupils and recommends that the Designated Teacher for LAC also acts as a single point of contact for YOT. The response of Designated Teachers has generally been positive and so YOT now have a single point of contact in every Wolverhampton school.
- The model policy, and the needs of the cohort generally, have been discussed at length at the Designated Teachers Forum as well as School Leadership Briefing and School Governors briefings. This is helping to raise awareness and promote stronger partnership working.
- Where young people who are open to YOT are also looked-after, the YOT Case Manager will now be invited to that young person's **Personal Education Plan (PEP)** meetings. A copy of the completed PEP will be forwarded to YOT to inform their intervention plan and to support joined-up working. In such cases, the PEP should be reviewed at least termly. Wolverhampton's PEP policy has been updated to reflect these developments.
- Additional staffing has been allocated to focus on the educational engagement of the school-age cohort (a YEI - Youth Employment Initiative - service has also been commissioned to provide additional support to the 16 cohort).
- The VSH is informed by YOT and/or the Vulnerable Young Person's Team whenever a young person in this cohort has been permanently excluded or is at risk of permanent exclusion. The VSH will challenge the exclusion, where appropriate, and help to explore every alternative.

- 12.3 **School engagement levels** in the first quarter of 2017 (1/4/17 – 30/6/17) show the highest-ever engagement for the school-aged cohort (82%) and the best overall figure for the last five last years (63%):

ETE engagement – April-June 2017	No.	%
No. of U-16 YP	17	
No. of 16+ YP	21	
No. of YP	38	
No of U-16s meeting 25 hr target	14	82%
No. of 16+s meeting 16 hr target	10	48%
Total No. of YP meeting target	24	63%

- 12.4 **Comparative data:** the table below compares the rate of engagement with education, employment and training in March 2017, for both school-aged and post-16 young people in Wolverhampton, with a number of its neighbouring authorities. Wolverhampton is above average for both cohorts.<sup>7</sup>

ETE - Case Level Data April - March 2017				
	Region	School Age Young People	Post-16 Young People	Total Young People
		% yp Supervised in ETE	% yp Supervised in ETE	% yp Supervised in ETE
Birmingham	Midlands	72%	53%	59%
Coventry	Midlands	27%	30%	29%
Dudley	Midlands	53%	38%	43%
Sandwell	Midlands	73%	63%	68%
Solihull	Midlands	36%	52%	46%
Staffordshire	Midlands	46%	29%	36%
Walsall	Midlands	23%	32%	29%
West Mercia	Midlands	50%	49%	49%
Wolverhampton	Midlands	52%	47%	49%

### 13.0 Strategic & Partnership development

- 13.1 The Virtual Head has a statutory duty to make training available to schools and other key stakeholders, to develop strong working partnerships, and to strengthen policy and procedure to promote the educational success of LAC.
- 13.2 The VSH is fully involved in the 'Attachment Aware Schools' initiative, through which Virtual Heads are developing teachers' awareness of attachment theory and the effects of early trauma in schools across the country. Training on Attachment & Trauma for Designated

<sup>7</sup> Data provided by the Youth justice Board (YJB) 2017

Teachers was delivered in the spring term 2016. COPE have continued to promote emotionally-intelligent approaches to behaviour management, such as 'Emotion Coaching', in schools and and other key partners.

- 13.3 In addition to the above, in 2015-2016 COPE and the Virtual Head delivered:
- A termly Designated Teachers' Forum and two training sessions on the role of the Designated Teacher.
  - Termly updates for head teachers as part of the School Standards leadership briefings.
  - Training sessions on supporting education for foster carers every half term.
  - Two training sessions for Chairs of Governors in schools.
  - An e-learning module on ensuring PEP quality which went live in the summer and was made mandatory learning for all social workers.
  - Regular briefings and updates to social care teams.
- 13.4 The Designated Teachers' Forum attracts between 30 and 40 attendees on average, highlighting the strong partnerships between COPE and schools in Wolverhampton.
- 13.5 The Children & Social Work Bill 2017 extends the role of the VSH and Designated Teacher for LAC to include children with Adoption and Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs). Although the statutory VSH role will be limited to making information and advice available, this will potentially be a significant expansion to the Designated Teachers' role, particularly in light of the recent suggestion that adopted children could be up to 20 times more likely to be excluded than their peers.<sup>8</sup> In response to this, the VSH has delivered two briefings at the Designated Teachers' Forum, and disseminated information and advice to Designated Teachers about meeting the needs of adopted children. This will continue to be an area for development in 2018 and beyond.
- 13.6 VSHs have continued ongoing work with Ofsted in 2015/16, to increase inspectors' understanding of the needs of LAC and so increase their focus on the cohort during school inspections. Termly meetings have been held and the West Midlands Ofsted team have a lead HMI for LAC. Ofsted are now placing increased expectations on schools regarding their support for their looked-after pupils. Schools are increasingly aware of these responsibilities and it is now possible for the VSH to be consulted by Ofsted as part of a school inspection.
- 13.7 The VSH helped to organise and deliver the third annual conference of the West Midlands Virtual Schools Teams in the summer term 2017, as well as the national Virtual Heads conference in Birmingham in the spring term. He delivered a workshop on "Innovative Use of the Pupil Premium Plus" at both conferences. A section from this workshop (on the characteristics of effective learning interventions for LAC) has been used by the Department for Education as part of their (currently draft) revised Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities, and for Designated Teachers, on Promoting the Education of LAC.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.tes.com/news/school-news/breaking-news/adopted-children-twenty-times-more-likely-be-excluded>

- 13.8 Strong and improving partnership working between the VSH and other key services in Wolverhampton means that LAC are genuinely given top priority for school places, alternative provision is provided in a timely fashion where appropriate and drift or delay in these areas are not tolerated. COPE and the VSH function effectively as a 'bridge' between education and social care and to promote a collaborative approach and the VSH is now performing the same function for YOT.
- 13.9 The VSH is involved in ongoing work, led by the Principal EP, to reduce school exclusions across Wolverhampton schools, as well as a drive to create a more coherent and joined-up approach to SEMH (Social, Emotional & Mental Health) support. The training that COPE deliver in attachment/trauma and Emotion Coaching, in partnership with the Educational Psychology Service, is a key component of that support.

#### **14.0 Conclusion & Next Steps**

- 14.1 Once again, there is much to celebrate regarding the educational achievement of the children in our care. A very small percentage of LAC are attending schools which are rated as requiring improvement or inadequate by Ofsted. Attendance continues to improve and permanent exclusions for LAC are extremely rare. Attainment has continued to improve in several areas, with some outcomes for LAC equalling or surpassing those of their peers. A high percentage of post-16 LAC are in education, employment and training and a high number of Care Leavers are attending university. There is evidence that the quality of PEPs is improving. The virtual school data set also continues to develop with much better data on LAC placed out-of-city.
- 14.2 The educational engagement of young people open to the YOT has also increased significantly in 2017, with the highest school attendance for several years.
- 14.3 As always, however, there are areas for further development. Writing at KS1 is an urgent priority for out-of-city LAC, for example, and there is still an unacceptable attainment gap at KS4 in particular, mirroring the historical and national picture. The VSH will work very closely, as outlined above, with School Improvement to address these shortfalls in our work with Wolverhampton schools, while continuing to strengthen resources to support LAC educated out-of-city. Temporary exclusions are rising and the VSH is working with inclusion teams in Wolverhampton to address this issue while helping to build capacity within schools to support LAC with more complex needs.
- 14.4 However, there is also a need for a broader approach to the growing issue of school exclusion – for all pupils, and particularly the most vulnerable - across the city. In recognition of this, the VSH is involved in two pieces of cross-directorate work which are led by the Principal EP Rob Hart. One is to strengthen support for Social, Emotional & Mental Health (SEMH) needs in schools across the city. The other is a strategic approach to addressing the increase in exclusions from Wolverhampton schools (a problem which mirrors the national trend). This work is ongoing and the VSH strongly agrees with the recommendations that Mr Hart delivered to Education Leadership Team in December 2017:

- We need to engage with schools collectively to ensure that there is joint ownership of the issue, and that school-to-school support can be used to help pupils who are at risk of exclusions.
- We need to ensure that parents [and carers] are supported to challenge exclusions, where they may be unlawful.
- School Improvement and Inclusion Support should develop a menu of interventions to support and challenge schools where exclusions are an identified issue (e.g. whole school behaviour audit).
- We need to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils (e.g. those who are looked after and those with SEND) are not permanently excluded.

- 14.5 The school attendance of young people in the Youth Justice System is clearly improving. However, the involvement of the VSH, YOT Education Officer, PNIFTED group etc., while valuable, is there to support (not supplant) the ongoing work of YOT Case Managers and their partnerships with schools and other stakeholders. We must ensure that current YOT processes fully embrace the significance of engagement in education, employment and training as a protective factor. There is also a clear need for YOT and children's social care teams to work closely together where applicable, which is why the PEP policy for LAC now includes an element of YOT involvement.
- 14.6 Within this culture of strengthening partnerships, the local authority should consider commissioning or developing additional local provision for pupils with very complex needs, particularly SEMH. SENSTART should also work toward reducing the time taken to complete assessments for EHCPs when a person is in care or in the Youth Justice System.
- 14.7 To reiterate, however, we should be very proud of the achievements of our LAC and other vulnerable young people. While some of those outcomes can be measured in terms of academic success, many LAC and other disadvantaged children have made great strides in their wider development; for example, in terms of their confidence, resilience, social skills or independence. Indeed, the most recent meeting between West Midlands Virtual Heads and Ofsted focussed on how we can measure the 'wider progress' of LAC. There is an acknowledged need to identify more intelligent and holistic ways of demonstrating the impact of virtual schools.
- 14.8 The LAC Attainment Improvement Plan outlines how the VSH, COPE team, and its partners will continue to promote high standards, challenge low expectations, and strive to improve the life chances of LAC, Care Leavers and young people in the criminal justice system.

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