



Derby City Council

CORPORATE PARENTING SUB-BOARD
5 February 2013

ITEM 5

Report of the Strategic Director for Children and
Young People

**Proposed Legislative Changes to the Post of Virtual School
Head**

SUMMARY

- 1.1 The proposal for the appointment of a Virtual School Head (VSH) as a statutory requirement for Local Authorities as soon as Parliamentary time allows.
- 1.2 The proposal to make the Virtual School Head a statutory post with responsibility for discharging the existing duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of their looked after children, wherever they are placed
- 1.3 The proposal that the Virtual School Head is a nominated officer in terms of the April 2011 regulations and guidance for looked after children and care leavers (reg. 10)

RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To consider and comment upon the proposals contained within the report.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 To provide Members with the opportunity to consider and comment upon the proposed legislative changes to the post of Virtual School Head



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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 4.1 Edward Timpson, MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary for Children and Families informed Directors of Children Services of his decision to make the post of Virtual school Head statutory as soon as Parliamentary time allowed.
- 4.2 Specific details as to the role have not been provided but Ofsted and the All Party Parliamentary Group have made recommendations that have been endorsed by the Minister.
- 4.3 2.1 Evidence and recommendations from the Virtual School Pilot (2007), Bristol University Evaluation (2009), DfE and the All Party Parliamentary Enquiry: Education Matters in Care (2012) indicate that there needs to be a senior individual who has oversight and responsibility for the educational achievement of children in care. Evidence has shown that the VSH had raised the profile of CiC in schools and local government, heightened the importance given to education by social workers and the local authority and played a key role in helping education and social care services work more effectively together.
- 4.4 Ofsted's 2012 report 'The impact of virtual schools on the educational progress of looked after children' concludes that virtual schools, acting as champions for Children in Care's (CiC) education, play a central role in raising the awareness of all those in supporting CiC. The distinct professional skills and knowledge are highly valued, and not only make a crucial contribution to improved educational achievement but to the enhancement of placement stability and emotional well-being.
- 4.5 Ofsted also concludes that an effective Virtual school is dependent upon the Virtual School Head having the necessary 'clout' to be able to access resources and target it appropriately the ability to work within a well embedded culture of multi-agency working effective cross-border arrangements that meet the needs of children and young people educated outside their home local authority.
- 4.6 Extending and strengthening the role of the VSH allows the VSH to hold schools to account and ensure continuity and quality of learning and support beyond 16.
- 4.7 The All Party Parliamentary Group recommends that Virtual School Heads should retain responsibility for Care Leavers from 0-25. Clearly, this would impact upon early years provision, EET and NEET.

- 4.8 Derby City KS4 results indicate Derby's best ever results for Key Stage Four (GCSEs) - 24.3% of looked after children in Derby achieved 5 or more GCSEs at grades A*-C including English and Mathematics. This is Derby's highest performance seen over the past six years and is performing well above the national figure (15.1%) and comparator authority average (23.0%). The target set for this year was 18.0%.
- 4.9 Training of Teachers, social workers, carers and corporate parents provided through the Virtual School is recognised as a strength of this Service. The APPG recommends that training of partners on supporting education is important.
- 4.10 The APPG strongly recommends that the Pupil Premium and Pupil Premium Plus be allocated to the VSH to ensure that the money is spent in a smart and coordinated way, and most likely, distributed in accordance with the Personal Education Plan process.
- 4.11 More details are expected at the National Conference for VSH in March 2013 and via the National Steering Group Meeting in March.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 Not applicable.

This report has been approved by the following officers:

Legal officer	N/A
Financial officer	N/A
Human Resources officer	N/A
Service Director(s)	N/A
Other(s)	Olwyn Mills – Virtual School Headteacher

For more information contact:	Olwyn Mills 01332 640341 olwyn.mills@derby.gov.uk
Background papers:	All Party Parliamentary Group for Looked After Children and Care Leavers
List of appendices:	Appendix 1 – Implications

	Appendix 2 - letter to DCS 12/12/2012 from Edward Timpson MP Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families EDUCATION – A TOOL FOR LIFE: HELPING LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN ACHIEVE THEIR POTENTIAL
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IMPLICATIONS

Financial and Value for Money

1.1 None arising from this report.

Legal

2.1 None arising from this report.

Personnel

3.1 None arising from this report.

Equalities Impact

4.1 None arising from this report.

Health and Safety

5.1 None arising from this report.

Environmental Sustainability

6.1 None arising from this report.

Asset Management

7.1 None arising from this report.

Risk Management

8.1 None arising from this report.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

9.1 None arising from this report.

