

4 September 2014		ITEM: 5
Corporate Parenting Committee		
Improving outcomes for looked after children: Implementing Electronic Personal Education Plans and Pupil Premium Plus Grant		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A	
Report of: Keeley Pullen – Head Teacher for Virtual School		
Accountable Head of Service: Mike Peters, Interim Strategic Leader, School Improvement, Learning & Skills		
Accountable Director: Carmel Littleton, Director of Children’s Services		
This report is public		

Executive Summary

The Virtual School is implementing a new process structure and ICT system through Electronic Personal Education Plans [EPEP] to enable a more robust and cost effective Personal Education Plan [PEP] system. The overall aim being to improve the outcomes of Looked After Children by ensuring that schools and the Local Authority target the best support for every individual pupil.

The Department for Education has made the role of the Virtual School Headteacher, statutory. It has given Local Authorities greater responsibility and accountability for using the Pupil Premium Plus Grant to raise the educational outcomes of LAC. This grant has increased significantly to £1,900 per child. The Virtual School has become responsible for ensuring that all schools who teach Thurrock LAC pupils are accountable for demonstrating the positive impact on educational outcomes that his extra funding should provide.

- 1. Recommendation(s)**
 - 1.1 Members are asked to note progress on the Electronic Personal Education Plans to improve educational outcomes for children and young people.**
 - 1.2 Members are asked to note the progress made in implementing statutory requirements around the allocation and administration of Pupil Premium Plus.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 One of the statutory responsibilities for the Virtual School is to Quality Assure [QA] the standards of Personal Education Plans [PEP] for every Looked After Child [LAC] in the Local Authority [LA]. This involves ensuring that the targets for pupils are robust, SMART and are having a positive impact on the young person's learning.
- 2.2 The current PEP process is completed using the Liquid Children's Services [LCS] system. This contains all of the information and processes that social care use to record their involvements with LAC. This system has a clear structure and process mechanism which has been established to ensure that all LA statutory functions for LAC are followed. At times some aspects of this have proved to be a barrier for social workers when completing the Personal Education Plan. For example, if the social worker has not activated the care plan section before opening the PEP section they are then not able to open it and complete the PEP paperwork.
- 2.3 In order to prevent a delay in the Quality Assurance of PEPs the Virtual School has been accepting word documents of these and has advised social workers that it is permissible to load these documents as an attachment to the pupil's individual files to ensure there is an electronic record. This has meant that compliance figures are greatly improving week on week.
- 2.4 This is an interim measure before EPEP becomes live as this system will replace the use of LCS to record PEPs but it will not replace the general functions of LCS which social workers will still use.
- 2.5 The current LA arrangement for schools receiving Pupil Premium funding for LAC pupils involves the provision of a single payment of the full funding in the October of the financial/academic year. The schools are not required to communicate how this money will be spent on our LAC pupils or the proposed impact of this spending. As a Virtual School it is a challenge to obtain the relevant information to measure the allocation and impact of this funding on the educational outcomes and attainment of our LAC pupils. Schools have a statutory responsibility to publish on their website how they allocate their pupil premium funding, but this also includes free school meals funding and has historically been a generalisation of their spending. For example, to fund an intervention programme. As a Local Authority we must be able to pin point the allocation and impact on LAC and improve accountability for pupil progress and attainment at all levels.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 The EPEP is being provided through the company E-Care Solutions. They provide a range of EPEP formats throughout the country and have worked closely with a range of LAs to create bespoke systems. The consultation and implementation of Thurrock EPEP has been a long process to ensure that the system is set up correctly and that it fulfils all functions required by the LA.

- 3.2 A business plan was written to allocate the £17,600 needed to install and maintain this system. This amount was funded through the Virtual School budget 13/14.
- 3.3 The Virtual School team are working closely with the ICS Implementation Manager to ensure that all access rights and ICT policies are followed to maintain strict standards of ICT and information sharing protocols.
- 3.4 Two days of taster sessions in May 14 were provided for Designated Teachers and Social Workers to introduce this system to them. The Virtual School will be providing additional training and support for social care, foster carers and schools to facilitate the implementation for an expected live launch in September 2014.
- 3.5 The EPEP is an online system which can be accessed by all stakeholders involved with the LAC. Each individual will have their own log-in with certain access fields. Those using the EPEP will have restricted user access according to their role, thus ensuring ICT safety and information security protocols are met.
- 3.6 The online nature of this system means that schools, the pupil, the foster carers and social workers can complete their relevant section before the PEP meeting has taken place and that his key information can be discussed as part of the PEP meeting. Schools will be able to update attendance and assessment information on at least a termly basis, enabling the Local Authority to closely monitor the quality of education provided and target support where needed. The EPEP will enable a great transparency of information sharing which will support the educational outcomes of the LAC.
- 3.7 The most significant aspect of this system is the pupil voice. Their section is an interactive and fun way of gauging the child's views about school and their education. It has been devised to accommodate different age ranges and includes facilities for children with SEN or communication difficulties.
- 3.8 The overall outcome of the EPEP system will be to achieve compliance in all aspects of the Personal Education Plan process.
- 3.9 The Virtual School Headteacher has met with the Interim Strategic Leader, School Improvement, Learning & Skills and Interim Finance Manager to plan the allocation of the Pupil Premium Plus Grant.
- 3.10 The Virtual School will become responsible for the allocation of this fund to schools. Each school will get the full amount of £1,900 for the financial year 14/15. This will be distributed across the school year rather than in a single payment. Two payments will be made in October and the remaining amount will be paid in February.

- 3.11 The basis of this is twofold. Firstly, to support pupils who may move school in the academic year, ensuring that the funding follows the child rather than requiring the receiving school to try to claw back funds from the previous school, which may have already been spent. Secondly, schools will be required to provide information relating to how they have spent this funding to improve the educational outcomes of their LAC and the impact of this on the child's educational achievement. The Virtual School will hold the schools to account as the Corporate Parent and ensure that funding is targeted in the most appropriate way.
- 3.12 This process will enable the Virtual School to be more informed and improve LA accountability for the outcomes of LAC.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The Committee is asked to approve the recommendations to secure the effective use of Pupil Premium funding and the improvement of educational outcomes through the use of the EPEP.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 A process of consultation took place between the Virtual School and the ICS implementation manager to analyse the viability of the EPEP system.
- 5.2 Consultation with a sample of Designated Teachers and Social Workers took place to gauge ideas and the feasibility of adopting this new system.
- 5.3 Department Managers were consulted for their validation for changing to a new system and the implications for all service providers.
- 5.4 Shelagh Cosgrow, retired headteacher, was employed by the Virtual School on a consultancy basis to consult with E-Care Solutions to establish the EPEP system.
- 5.5 A robust business plan was submitted to Interim Strategic Leader, School Improvement, Learning & Skills and Director of Children's Services which was authorised.
- 5.6 Consultation for the Pupil Premium Funding Grant included discussion with the Interim Strategic Leader, School Improvement, Learning & Skills, Director of Children's Services and Interim Finance Manager.
- 5.7 The Virtual School headteacher has also presented to the headteachers associations TASS (Thurrock Association of Secondary Schools) and TPHA (Thurrock Primary Heads Association) to explain the process to Thurrock schools.
- 5.8 All schools with LAC both in and out of borough will be informed of the LA process via a letter from the Director of Children's Services which has been

prepared with the Virtual School and the Interim Strategic Leader, School Improvement, Learning & Skills.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

6.1 Impact of the EPEP system will improve the current system for recording of PEPs for every LAC and improve compliance and quality assurance processes.

6.2 Impact of greater accountability for the spending of the Pupil Premium Plus Grant will enable the LA to have greater control and responsibility for ensuring that LAC obtain the best possible educational outcomes.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Kay Goodacre**
Interim Finance Manager

The funding of the EPEP has been allocated and identified through the budget of the Virtual School and other areas within the School Improvement budgets.

There are no further financial implications for the EPEP system, unless upgrades are identified as time goes by.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Chris Pickering**
Principal Solicitor

As this report is for information and noting only, there are no direct legal implications resulting from it. The report highlights a change to the statutory framework, making the Personal Education Plan a statutory requirement for all looked after children, as is the role of the Virtual School Headteacher.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Teresa Evans**
Equalities and Cohesion Officer

The EPEP is designed to provide access to all looked after children and enables those with a disability to also contribute to their plan. It will be expected that the plan can be translated into other languages should that be a requirement for those where English is not their first language.

7.4 **Other implications**

Not Applicable

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright): All DFE website.

- The Pupil Premium – Analysis and Challenge tools for schools – Ofsted Jan 13
- Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children – DFE June 14
- Pupil Premium and the role of the Virtual School Head 2014-15. Frequently Asked Questions March 14
- Pupil Premium 2014 to 2015: conditions of grant – DFE February 14

9. **Appendices to the report**

- None

Report Author:

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