Erasmus+

Multi-Agency Working

Collaborating for Positive Outcomes

Securing the best education outcomes for young people in Devon – an example of multiagency working from the perspective of the Devon Virtual School

Aims of this presentation

- Provide some background information about the Virtual School and broad characteristics of children in care.

- Identify some of the agencies that often work together to meet the varied needs of children in care to Devon.

- Describe some of the structures and mechanism in place to enable effective multiagency working.

- Describe some of the practices needed for effective multiagency working.

Some background Information

- The Devon Virtual School's core work is with young people aged 3 – 18, all are in care to Devon County Council.

- Being in care to Devon means that Devon County Council and those working for the council are the corporate parent to the young people in their care. Being the corporate parent means that the council and its employees should act in the way that any responsible parent would to secure the best outcomes for the young person. Devon Virtual School has a central corporate parent role to secure the best education outcomes possible for theyoung people in care to Devon.

- Currently there are 817 young people in care to Devon – there are about 80,000 children in care nationally – in January 2020 this figure reached a 10 year high … this was before the effects of the pandemic.

- The majority of the school age children in care to Devon attend Devon Schools but a significant number attend schools in other local authorities or are educated other than at school. In total Devon Virtual School work with 370 different schools and education provisions.

- Of the group of young people in care to Devon of school age, 50% are recognised as having a special educational need and of these 28% have an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP). Nationally of all children 15% have an identified special educational need and of these 3.1% have an EHCP.

Multi-Agency Working - Collaborating for Positive Outcomes

The most common primary need recognised on the EHCPs for children in care to Devon is Social Emotional and Mental Health needs.

- GCSE data (outcomes at end of Yr11, usually those aged 16) Nationally (2019) 40% of children achieved a good pass (grades 5 -9) in English and Maths compared to 4% for those in care.

- Young people in care are around five times as likely to have had a period of fixed term exclusion from school putting these children at risk of permanent exclusion or school break down. The Timpson report points out that "… the end of Key Stage 4 in 2015/16 shows just 7% of children who were permanently excluded and 18% of children who received multiple fixed period exclusions went on to achieve good passes in English and maths GCSEs, qualifications that are essential to succeeding in adult life."

- Statutory education finishes at the end of the school year when a young person is 16 (Year 11). Nationally 27% (March 2020) of 17 year olds in care were not in education, employment or training (NEET) 31% of 18 year olds were NEET and for care leavers aged 19 – 21 years 39% were NEET – this compares with 13% of all young people aged 19 – 21years.

- National data suggests that about 25% of the prison population have had a period in care compared to 2% of the population in general.

- A general characteristic of the young people is that many have lived through multiple and prolonged adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).

Impact of ACEs

ACEs can be barriers to healthy attachment relationships forming for young people. This can have a significant affect on engagement with school and on education outcomes.

ACEs can:
- Compromise a young persons ability to recognise and manage different emotions.
- Negatively affect the young persons capacity to make and keep healthy friendships and other relationships.
- Lead to difficulties for a young person to manage behaviour in school settings.
- Difficulties coping with emotions safely without causing harm to self or others.
- Perfect and colleagues (2016) identified 44 studies that examined cognitive functioning, 34 that examined academic functioning and 24 that examined socialemotional-behavioural functioning. Their findings suggest that young people who have experienced trauma are at significant risk for impairments across various cognitive functions, including IQ, memory, attention and language/verbal ability; poorer academic performance and school-related behaviours such as discipline, dropout and attendance; and higher rates of behavioural problems and internalising symptoms.

Virtual Schools

In England each local authority has a Virtual School whose existence recognises the particular vulnerability of children in care to underachievement in school and the effect this can have on later life chances.

Devon Virtual School's aims are:

Aim	Description
Promote	High aspirations and excellent educational outcomes
Support	Children and young people, carers, schools and settings
Challenge	Anyone who does not deliver on our aspirations
Celebrate	All our successes

To achieve these aims a core part of the Virtual Schools work is to work with other agencies to coordinate and ensure the right support is in place for a young person in care to secure positive education outcomes.

To Deliver the Aims the Devon Virtual School will:

- Listen and give a voice to all children in care of statutory school age in Devon schools and to give a greater sense of input and control over what happens
- Ensure a full time school place is available for every child in care
- Support all children in care in Devon to achieve their potential and celebrate their success
- Oversee and monitor educational provision, academic and personal achievements and outcomes
- Understand, support and promote what children in care want to achieve in life
- Encourage and support an excellent education, high standards and personal achievement
- Champion and strengthen greater understanding, better communication channels and effective working between all professionals involved
- Provide an 'advocate' role: someone who acts as a link between children and young people, schools, parents and carers and partner agencies to help achieve the best possible outcomes
- Ensure educational continuity and consistency; working to ensure any transition between schools is as smooth as possible and that learning is as uninterrupted as possible
- Ensure a Personal Education Plan (PEP) is in place
- Promote and support full time attendance and reduce exclusions
- Promote and encourage lifelong learning.

Multi Agency Working

To achieve the best education outcomes for the young people the Virtual School works closely with a range of other agencies.

Here are some examples of the other agencies that the Virtual School regularly work with:

- Schools, mainstream and special provision– Designated Teachers, School Leaders, Class/ Subject teachers, Pastoral Support, SENDcos
- Social Care – Social Workers, Team and Social Care Leaders, Edge of Care Team
- REACH (Reducing Exploitation and Absence from Care or Home)
- Y-SMART (Drug and Alcohol Service for under-18s)
- Education Welfare Service – attendance at school issues
- Careers advice and support – CSW (Careers South West), Step Forward
- Youth Offending Service
- 0-25 Team - who manage and over see Education Health Care Plans
- Foster Carers and Supervising Social Workers
- Education Psychology Team and Social, Emotional, Mental Health Team
- Speech and Language therapy service
- Health – Children in Care Nurse, CAMHS,
- Police
- Youth Worker Support/Mentors
- Alternative Provision – to support a mainstream school place or when a school place is being arranged. Eg 1:1 tutors,

Mechanisms used to enable positive education outcomes through multi agency working

- PEP (Personal Education Planning) The PEP forms the education part of a young persons care plan. PEP meetings are held each term by the school and attended by the Virtual School, carer, parent (where appropriate) Social worker and any other relevant professionals.
- Pupil Premium Plus – to recognise the particular needs of young people in care each child in care from Reception to the end of Year 11 has £2300 (per year) of additional Pupil Premium Plus funding to be spent on improving their education outcomes. The funding is held by the Virtual School and distributed to schools often to buy in support from other agencies. This funding is also used by the Virtual school to commission additional provision from agencies such as the Educational Psychology team and Speech and Language Therapy team and training for schools.
- The Virtual School and key school staff are included in the wider planning for a young person through involvement in meetings run by other agencies such as Child in Care Reviews, Risk meetings, Stability meetings and EHCP reviews.

An example of Partnership Work - Devon Virtual School and the Educational Psychology Service
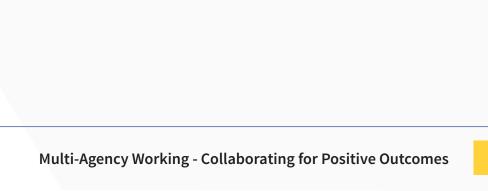
Recognising the vulnerabilities of young people in care in Devon, the Virtual School work closely with the Babcock Educational Psychology team to provide targeted support for schools.

This includes structured interventions to:
- Reduce exclusions from school
- Reengage young people who are struggling to attend school
- Provide Attachment Based Mentoring (training for key staff)
- Support schools and young people who may struggle with a transition to a new school setting
- Develop (with key school staff) bespoke Relational Plans for young people
- Develop relational whole school policy
- Reduce the risk of a young person becoming NEET

Features of effective multi agency working

- Ensure all agencies involved have a shared understanding of a young person's needs and ensure the young person's views and best interests* are at the heart of decision making.
- Multi agency working requires coordination and clear regular communication pathways
- There needs to be a shared understand of the role of each agency and how each agency can contribute towards improving outcomes for a young person.
- It helps to have a shared understanding of the working practices and processes of other agencies and the language that is particular for each agency.
- Ensure actions for each agency are shared, understood and followed up in a timely manner.
- Good relationships between agencies are key to securing the best outcomes – good relationships will enable challenge between agencies while maintaining a positive focus on improving the outcomes for a young person.