

From: Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education
Matt Dunkley, CBE, Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education

To: Children's, Young People's and Education Cabinet Committee – 25 September 2018

Subject: Children placed in Kent by other Local Authorities and the impact upon schools and our services for Kent Children in Care placed outside of Kent

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: None

Future Pathway of Paper: None

Electoral Division: All

Summary:

This report provides members with an update on the numbers of children placed in Kent by other local authorities and how KCC supports Kent Children in Care placed outside of the county.

Recommendation(s):

The Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee is asked to **NOTE** the report.

1. Introduction.

- 1.1 Reporting accurately on Other Local Authority (OLA) Children in Care(CiC) placed into Kent is very difficult. This is because it is the placing authority's responsibility to monitor progress and to inform KCC both when children arrive and indeed leave the county. It is our experience that they seldom do this in a timely way which results in significant disparity in the data held. We know from our management information held by specialist children's services that our records indicate that there are in the region of 1330 OLA CiC placed in Kent. The data suggests 53% are from London Councils, with almost 28% placed by Inner-London boroughs. The scale of these figures gives cause for significant anxiety about their welfare and access to key support, but if we look closely at the school data collated by management information capturing school census data there is a stark contrast to numbers identified. Some of the contrast can also be explained through children being outside of statutory school age or they may be attending non maintained schools but for the purpose of exploring the impact on Kent Schools, the data below is taken from school census.
- 1.2 According to this database, the total number of OLA CiC accessing Kent schools is 521 pupils, no one school has more than 5 OLA CiC in any given year group and the vast majority of schools have fewer than 5 OLA CiC their entire cohort. There are just 4 mainstream secondary schools in Kent that have more than 10 OLA CiC on their roll (Herne Bay High(11), Sittingbourne Community College(12), The Westlands school(16) and St Georges CofE(11)). Challenge over poor practice by some placing LAs appears to be finally resulting in the better informed and planned placement activity.

- 1.3 These more positive figures must however be considered in the context of Kent's own CiC placed into Kent schools and when these numbers are added to those from OLA it is apparent how some of our schools face significant challenges to meet the needs of large overall cohorts of Children in Care. For example, Herne Bay High may only have 11 OLA CiC on roll, but has a further 32 Kent CiC within the school and the support and infrastructure needed to continue to engage more than 40 CiC with varying vulnerabilities in a single school presents compounded challenges.
- 1.4 The volume of placements into the county are not spread evenly across Kent, and numbers can disproportionately impact communities and schools serving those communities particularly in the East of the county with Canterbury, Swale and Thanet particularly where higher numbers of children in care placed into local schools.
- 1.5 It is interesting to note, that numbers of OLA placed into Thanet is now on the decline, driven while they are not in other parts of the county like Swale. The district level school data now revealing that there are more OLA CiC attending Swale schools than there are Kent CiC and more needs to be done to ensure that where there are already high numbers of Kent CiC being placed the balance with other OLA placed children is considered and carefully managed.
- 1.6 The overall impact on education resulting from these placements into the county is hard to quantify, the numbers appear not to be disproportionate for a county the size of Kent but high concentrations of vulnerable learners in deprived communities may have a compound effect on the challenges these schools face.
- 1.7 It is also the case that school place pressures can result from high placement numbers which result in local children potentially being placed in schools further away from home and KCC having to meet the costs of that. The law requires that children in care be given priority for school places due to their vulnerable circumstances and for mainstream learners there is no facility to recover any associated costs. For children accessing SEN Provision and associated transports cost these are reclaimed from the placing LAs. Kent County Council has no duty to monitor the performance of children in care placed into Kent, this remains the responsibility of the virtual headteacher from the placing authority. It does however have a broader responsibility to ensure children access suitable education and this is only being achieved with the ongoing cooperation and support of placing LAs.
- 1.8 Much work has been done to seek to remind placing LAs of the need to understand the existing cohort in schools and to look further than the current Ofsted rating when assessing the suitability of education for the child in their care. The local contact and school contact needs to inform placement decisions for OLA children in the same ways as it does for Kent LAC.

2. Kent Children in Care placed outside of Kent

- 2.1 Kent County Council currently has 234 Children in Care placed out of its Local Authority boundaries. Of these young people 108 are of compulsory school age (46%), furthermore, 109 of the total cohort are placed within Medway Unitary Authority. Children would be placed outside of Kent for a number of reasons including if they are placed with a family member as a Connected Person arrangement under The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations (2010). Connected Person arrangements achieve keeping the child safely within their birth family with the view to achieving permanency within the extended family and as such ceasing to be "looked after". There are also a small cohort of children and young people with complex needs, where a specialist provision such as a residential placement or secure unit is not available within the current in house or commissioned services in Kent.
- 2.2 Kent have the same corporate parenting responsibility for children and young people placed outside of Kent and they receive the same statutory services as any child in

care and as such, their education needs are supported by the Virtual School Kent (VSK), lead by Tony Doran, Headteacher.

3. Kent Children in Care placed out of county - The Virtual School Kent Service Offer

3.1 Virtual School Kent identified that Kent children in care placed out of county, needed a more targeted support to diminish the educational differences and the impact of being placed in a different authority. VSK responded to this need and created a new specialist role within the service. A Senior Educational Support Officer for Kent Children in care placed Out of County (including Medway) was appointed with a start date of 3rd September 2018. The person appointed has Qualified Teacher Status and Special Educational Needs (SEN) qualifications and is line managed directly by the Virtual School Senior Leadership team in recognition of the case complexity and need for a swift response and escalation process.

3.2 The VSK Headteacher will have overall responsibility for monitoring performance in this area, using the following baseline indicators for measuring improvement:

- Personal Educational Plan (PEP) Quality and holding the school to account for the delivery of the PEP.
- Improving on Attendance and Attainment indicators.
- Establishment of good quality Pupil Premium Plus (PPP+) Support Map for both Medway and other Local Authorities, that identifies quality local provision.
- A clear flowchart for other Local Authorities to use, to access Pupil Premium plus funding, to avoid any delays for our children being able to access this additional support.
- Implementation of a Locality Development Plan for both Medway and other out of county placements with specific targets and measurable outcomes.
- Locality Spreadsheet for Tracking/Monitoring of all children placed outside of Kent.
- A Raising Attainment Plan for each area.
- Progression support for Year 11 Kent CIC in Medway schools, with dedicated work from a Key Stage 4 Progression Advisor.
- Developing the service from an Independent Educational Psychologist for Kent CIC placed in Medway and in bordering Local Authorities.

3.3 The key focus of the work of VSK in this area, will be delivering a good quality education offer for each Kent child in care. Lead by the VSK Headteacher and Assistant Director for Corporate Parenting, we must ensure we become the equivalent of a 'pushy parent' by using knowledge of Educational policies/processes to the best effect for our Kent children placed in different Local Authorities.

4. Current Performance

4.1 **Kent children in care placed in other Local Authorities (not including Medway)**

Personal Education Plan Quality: Good or Outstanding: 88%; Requiring improvement: 5.6%; Inadequate: 6.7%

Attendance:

Indicator	End of academic year data
Persistent Absence (PAF)	15.4%
Fixed Term Exclusions (FTE)	Days lost 69.5

4.2 Outcomes for Kent children in care in Medway schools were:

Personal Education Plan Quality: Good or Outstanding:100%; RI: 0%; Inadequate: 0%

Attendance:

Indicator	End of academic year data
Persistent Absence (PAF)	15.1%
Fixed Term Exclusions (FTE)	Days lost 51

5. Participation and Engagement

- 5.1 VSK have good links with Children and Young People placed in Medway with regard to their involvement and attendance at Participation Activity Days and Events. Although all children placed in Medway are invited to and do attend all activity days that are run in Kent, three days were specially put on this year in Medway and North Kent to ensure that children had a greater chance of attending, these were a cake baking day, water sports and an outdoor pursuits day. The VSK Participation Team has built a good relationship with Medway's Children in Care Council and their care leaver apprentices and have attended events and reciprocated by inviting Medway young people to VSK events. This has helped raise the profile of Kent's Children in Care Councils in Medway.
- 5.2 In 2017/18, seven children who are placed Out of Authority are members of the Super Council or Our Children and Young People's Council (OCYPC) and have attended meetings, focus groups and one has also attended the Corporate Parenting Panel and spoken to Elected Members about her experiences.
- 5.3 A newsletter has been created and sent out to all Out of County Children, with a second edition due to be sent out shortly. Kent Pledge packs and other information and resources are also sent out including a 'question for the team card', social worker business card, competitions and requests for feedback on how children would like us to get in touch with them. Children and Young People placed outside of Kent receive the same offer of equipment of a laptop or iPad for accessing on line learning.
- 5.4 KCC workers and schools are encouraged to nominate Out of County children for our annual Awards Ceremonies and support the children and young people attending.

6. Further developments for this academic year

- 6.1 In July 2018 work has started to develop a 'virtual' Children in Care Council. With the help of the IRO Service, young people in neighbouring councils are being identified by Independent Reviewing Officers as possible young people who would be interested in signing up to become a member of our virtual Children in Care Council. Arrangements are being made for the VSK Apprentices to visit these young people and seek their views and opinions on the best way to link up with them. Social media is being investigated as a method to interact with young people who live outside of Kent.
- 6.2 The Kent Cares Town website has been updated and refreshed and is nearing completion with a launch date of mid-September 2018. The new website will contain a dedicated section for out of county children and young people with ways they can get in touch, feel involved and have their say. A new 'Online' version of the Challenge Card will be available to them to ensure they have a voice in being able to challenge and question KCC as their corporate parents and influence the design and future of our services for children.

7 Summary

- 7.1 Children placed outside of Kent are identified as a particularly vulnerable group, as are likely to be further away from their extended family, local community and peer group. Due to the distance to some provisions, it is more challenging to provide emergency support through additional social worker visits. The work of the virtual school will need to enhance the support we can provide to children and young people placed outside of Kent. There are clear targets and plans in place to raise the educational attainment and achievements for these children and increase their participation within our services.
- 7.2 In most schools accommodating OLA CiC the numbers are balanced and proportionate. This can be compromised however when placing OLA do so into schools already heavily populated with Kent CiC and officers continue to work to highlight these concerns with the Department for Education and with placing LAs.

Recommendations:

The Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee is asked to **NOTE** the report.

Background Information.

Appendix 1 Data for children in care placed by other Local Authorities into Kent and Kent children in care placed outside of Kent.

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Appendix 1

Summary of OLA LAC Placed in Kent as at 31/08/2018

Other Local Authority	Number of Children
Medway Towns	122
Greenwich	111
Lewisham	75
Surrey	67
Southwark	55
Bexley	53
Bromley	43
East Sussex	36
Sutton	28
Lambeth	28
Waltham Forest	24
Hackney	23
Thurrock	22
Barking and Dagenham	21
Buckinghamshire	21
Hounslow	19
Islington	19
Reading	17
Southampton	17
Oxfordshire	17
Cambridgeshire	16
Tower Hamlets	16
Essex	16
West Sussex	16
Croydon	16
Haringey	16
Ealing	16
Newham	15
Wandsworth	15
Hampshire	15
Havering	14
Swindon	13
Brighton & Hove	13
Luton	13
Hillingdon	13
Brent	12
Harrow	12
Hertfordshire	11
Coventry	10
Barnet	9
Bracknell Forest	9
Southend	9
Hammersmith & Fulham	9

Redbridge	8
Kingston-upon-Thames	8
Peterborough	8
Jersey	7
Westminster	7
Slough	7
Kensington & Chelsea	7
Richmond-upon-Thames	6
Bristol	5
Merton	5
Derby UA	5
Warwickshire	5
Leicestershire	5
Portsmouth	5
Bedford Borough	5
Lancashire	5
Norfolk	5
Suffolk	4
Camden	4
Northamptonshire	4
Isle of Wight	4
Nottinghamshire	3
Derbyshire	3
Enfield	3
Herefordshire	3
Devon	3
Windsor & Maidenhead	3
West Berkshire	3
Guernsey	3
Wokingham	3
Leicester UA	3
East Riding of Yorkshire	2
Bedfordshire	2
Newport	2
Nottingham UA	2
Milton Keynes	2
Kingston-upon-Hull	2
Cornwall	2
Lincolnshire	2
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	2
Salford	2
Stoke-on-Trent	2
Bradford	2
Stockport	2
North Tyneside	2
Worcestershire	1

CF OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITY	1
Sandwell	1
Torfaen	1
Cheshire West and Chester	1
Blaenau Gwent	1
Oldham	1
Wakefield	1
Middlesborough	1
Blackburn with Darwen	1
Cardiff	1
North Yorkshire	1
Dorset	1
Rotherham	1
Neath Port Talbot	1
Northern Ireland	1
Bournemouth	1
Shropshire	1
Cumbria	1
Poole	1
Telford & Wrekin	1
Wiltshire	1
Walsall	1
Somerset	1
Merthyr Tydfil	1
Wirral	1
Scottish Borders	1
Liverpool	1
Wolverhampton	1
Torbay	1
North Somerset	1
Grand Total	1330