

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

26 March 2013

Report of the Strategic Director for Children & Younger Adults

VIRTUAL SCHOOL HEAD FOR CHILDREN IN CARE – (Young People)

1 Purpose of the Report

To seek Cabinet approval for the appointment of a new designated full-time Virtual School Head (VSH) for Children in Care (CiC).

2 Information and Analysis

- 2.1 Local authorities have a statutory responsibility to make sure that they promote the educational achievement of the children they look after, regardless of where they are placed. Having a VSH is one of the key ways in which a local authority can demonstrate to inspectors that it is discharging this legal obligation.
- 2.2 The VSH role was successfully piloted by eleven authorities from 2007 - 2009. The evaluation of the pilots published in 2009 found that the role can make a real difference, especially when the VSH has a strategic role and sufficient seniority to influence practice and the use of resources across the authority. Following the pilots, the Government produced a toolkit advising that the VSH role should be undertaken by a person with substantial, current or previous senior level experience of supporting vulnerable children in educational settings, preferably including experience of school senior leadership.
- 2.3 The VSH would be responsible for establishing a virtual school, to include a complement of well trained 'designated teachers' in every school in Derbyshire. These teachers, led by the VSH in conjunction with school leaders would collaborate to ensure that CiC are provided with bespoke support, to enable them to achieve well at all school phases.
- 2.4 In December 2012 the Children's Minister, Edward Timpson, wrote to all Directors of Children's Services (DCSs) and Lead Members about what the Government is doing to promote the education of CiC. His letter announced the Government's intention to make the post of the VSH statutory, and encourages DCSs and Lead Members to champion the work of virtual schools and promote the principles of effective practice, as set out in OfSTED's thematic inspection of virtual schools, published in October 2012.

- 2.5 Derbyshire has included some VSH functions in the 'Access and Inclusion Officer' post since 2009. Since then, some excellent work locally has resulted in gaps closing in Derbyshire at Early Years Foundation Stage (up to 5 years of age) and Key Stage 2 (7-11 years of age).
- 2.6 However, performance at key stage 4 (KS4) (14-16 years of age) is well below the national average, with 24.1% of students in care obtaining 5 good GCSEs (7.2% including English and Maths) compared to 36.8% nationally (15.1% including English and Maths). There is a small number of authorities that are successfully closing the gap for this group at this stage. Warrington tops the league table at KS4 with 40% gaining 5 good GCSEs including English and Maths, whilst Cumbria leads the way from the shire perspective at 25%.
- 2.7 The gap between this cohort and their peers is evident given that nationally 83.2% of young people achieve 5 good GCSEs (58.8% including English and Maths).
- 2.8 Under-performance at this critical stage leads to CiC suffering poor outcomes as they become adults. The statistics below reflect the national picture (peer comparators in brackets):
- Only 6% of care leavers go to university (38%);
 - 1/3 of care leavers are not in education, employment or training (1/8);
 - 27% of adult prison population has been in care and almost 40% of prisoners under 21 were in care (only 2% general population spend time in prison).
- 2.9 Care leavers are also more likely to become teenage parents, become parents to children who are taken into care, rely on workless benefits and be in the receipt of mental health services.
- 2.10 An analysis of the common factors in high performing authorities identified that in those areas there is a very strong culture of accountability by Elected Members and the VSH, and the virtual school is a high profile, high priority part of children's services, with a dedicated team; including VSH, teachers and learning mentors.
- 2.11 Furthermore, the learning from the "Uni-fi" programme, which seeks to test and implement innovations to improve outcomes for care leavers, has identified the intrinsic importance of a strong, high profile and robust leader of education for CiC, to act as a champion with schools, source the opportunities for young people educationally, and to ensure appropriate accountability for the progress of CiC is in place. "Uni-fi's" ambition is for the council to be excellent corporate parents to children in its care and a high profile virtual school, with appropriately resourced strategic leadership being fundamental to this.
- 2.12 As stated above, aspects of the VSH function are delivered only as *part* of an officer's role.

- 2.13 The poor progress in Derbyshire for children in care at KS4, associated poor outcomes for care leavers, learning from local initiatives and high performing authorities; and anticipated new legislation provide a strong rationale for establishing a full-time, senior role to fulfil the VSH function. This will provide leadership and influence practice, resulting in the provision of a high standard of teaching and learning for Derbyshire's CiC.

3 Financial Considerations

The cost implication of the VSH post is £80,945 (including on-costs) and will be funded from existing CAYA budgets.

4 Legal & Human Rights Considerations

Following evaluation of a number of pilot projects, the Government has indicated its intention to introduce legislation to make the Virtual School Head a statutory post.

The particular duty of local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children is set out in Section 22 Children Act 1989. The Designated Teacher (Looked After Pupils) Regulations 2009 provide that every maintained school must have a designated member of staff responsible for promoting the educational achievement of looked after children. Local authorities are required to keep a list of designated teachers, and a roll of all the authority's school age CiC. All CiC must have a Personal Education Plan and the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 require any changes to the school placement of a KS4 looked after child to be approved by the local authority's nominated officer. The Conditions of the Pupil Premium Grant for 2013/14, made under Section 16 Education Act 2002 also require the VSH to be consulted on how sums paid to schools, or allocated for children in non-mainstream settings will be spent. The local authority also has continuing duties under Section 22 Children and Young Persons Act 2008 in respect of education and training assistance for former looked after children up to the age of 25.

5 Human Resources Considerations

- 5.1 The evaluation of pilots and review of best practice nationally has confirmed that the VSH role should operate at a senior level within the council's structure. This is reflected in the grade of the post, which is commensurate with the remit of the role (job profile, appendix i) and the accountability via the Assistant Director (Schools and Learning) through to the Strategic Director (existing structure, appendix ii; proposed new structure, appendix iii).
- 5.2 The establishment of the new role necessitates a realignment of the duties of the 'Access and Inclusion Officer' post. This will be subject to a separate review.

6 Other Considerations

In developing the proposal to establish a new full time designated VSH, the following factors have also been considered: Prevention of Crime & Disorder, Equality of Opportunity; and Environmental; Health; Property and Transport considerations.

7 **Background Papers**

Looked After and Learning - Evaluation of the Virtual School Head Pilot, DCSF, 2009

The Impact of Virtual Schools on the Educational Progress of Children in Care, Ofsted, 2012

Letter to DCSs from Edward Timpson, MP; December 2012

8 **Key Decision?**

No.

9 **Is it required that Call-in be waived in respect of the decisions being proposed in this report?**

No.

10 **Officer Recommendation**

It is recommended that Cabinet approves the establishment of a new full-time designated Virtual School Head.

IAN THOMAS
Strategic Director Children and Younger Adults

JOB PROFILE

Job Title:	Virtual Head Teacher for Children in Care	Ref: DCC/10/
Department:	Children and Younger Adults	
Section:	Schools and Learning	
Job reference:		
Job Family:	Leadership	Job grade: L19 – L23

Purpose of this role:

- To have lead responsibility for the Local Authority's statutory duties relating to the education needs, provision, and outcomes, for Children in Care.
- To have strategic responsibility for ensuring that children in care are appropriately tracked and their educational outcomes monitored.
- To lead and manage appropriate services for children in care.
- To identify and deploy additional support to meet the needs of target children.
- To work with schools and other education providers to ensure additional support and resources for target children are used effectively and efficiently in line with departmental priorities and performance indicators.

Key relationships:

- To champion the needs of children in care on behalf of the Strategic Director for Children and Young Adults (DCS)
- Accountable to and line managed by the Assistant Director Schools and Learning, with direct access to DCS as required
- Corporate Parenting Committee
- Strategy Group for CiC
- Virtual School Governing Body
- Headteachers and Designated Teachers at all phases
- Member of the Senior Leadership Team for Schools and Learning.
- Provide reports, briefings, and communications for Members and support their decision making process.
- Liaison and collaborative working with the Programme Manager (Children's Transformation)
- Advise and provide support to:
 - Children and Young People,
 - Head teachers and school staff
 - Governors
 - Head of Service for Children in Care,

- Senior Managers within Children & Young Adults and the council,
- Senior Advisers and School Improvement Partners,
- Social Workers,
- Foster carers and residential staff,
- Partners in the voluntary, independent, and private sectors,
- LAs Derbyshire children in care are being educated.

Key result areas include:

- Leadership and expertise to champion the needs of children in care, promoting their continued attendance in schools and education & training and ensure that all children have the opportunity to achieve.
- Ensure up to date information is maintained and monitored on educational provision and admissions for all school age children in care, to ensure they have school and other placements which best meet their needs and have an up to date and appropriate Personal Education Plan (PEP).
- Ensure that the educational needs of children in care are properly identified and supported by schools and educational establishments and their educational progress is rigorously tracked and monitored both by schools and the LA.
- Ensure improvements in attainment for children in care through working with School Improvement Partners and measures to promote positive behaviour, good attendance, and reduce fixed term exclusions.
- Ensure appropriate and timely advice and support is provided to schools and stakeholders to motivate and generate enthusiasm and commitment to challenge underperformance and ensure continuous school improvement.
- Ensure that the needs of children in care are being met through collaborative arrangements with the 14-19 partnership and FE providers.
- Ensure social workers adequately consider the educational needs of children in care when making decisions about moving placements and promote the importance of stability in schooling
- Ensure that effective systems are in place to support a successful transition to adulthood through engagement with appropriate staff and partners.
- Proactively disseminate good practice on working with schools which have children in care on roll, especially in relation to supporting schools and social workers to have high aspirations of them during their school career and in progression to further and higher education
- Ensure appropriate and timely reports, briefings, and communications for Members, the Strategic Director, Children's Trust Board, Local Authority Safeguarding Board, Managers, stakeholders, and others as appropriate.
- Ensure effective and efficient management, deployment, and monitoring of allocated budgets resources, and the work of the Education of Children in Care team to ensure that work and outcomes is aligned with the strategic responsibilities of this post, the Children and Young Adults Department, and the Council.
- Ensure the views of children and young people are fully considered in decision making and developments relating to service provision.

General Responsibilities:

People Management

Lead, organise, develop, and motivate, employees within the Children in Care Education team.

Management of performance, discipline and grievance, training and development requirements, absence management, recruitment and selection.

Equality and Diversity

Develop and role model a culture that supports the authority's Equality and Human Rights policy to ensure integration into everyday business.

Health and Safety

Ensure your own compliance with authority's Health & Safety policy/procedures and that of any resources you have responsibility for.

Risk Management

Embed risk management into service planning and ensure awareness amongst employees.

PERSON PROFILE

Job Title: Virtual School Head Teacher for Children in Care

Ref: DCC/10/

Job Family: Leadership

Job Grade:

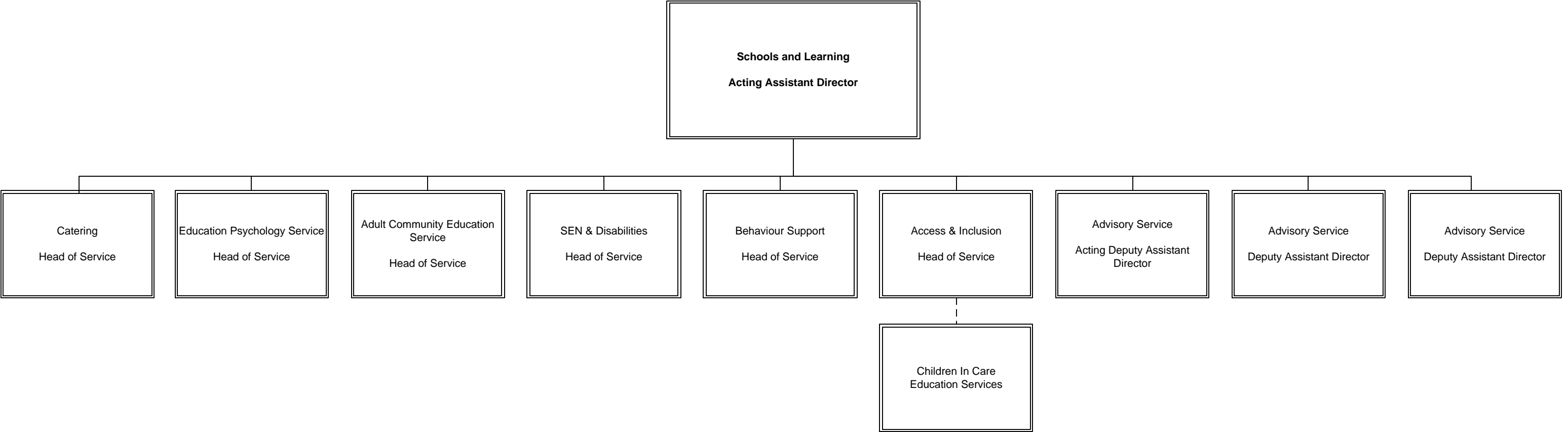
Department: Children and Young Adults.

	Essential	Desirable	Evidence
Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Substantial current or previous senior level experience of supporting children in care in educational settings• Experience of leading and managing change• Working with children in care within a multi-agency context• Evidence of successful resource and financial management including evidence of formulating budgets, resolving conflicting priorities and applying monitoring and control procedures• Experience of writing or contributing to strategic plans• Experience of establishing effective communication and negotiation with partners including schools, a wide range of stakeholders, and agencies working on behalf of the government• Experience influencing and gaining commitment from	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experience of school senior leadership linked to school improvement practices• Evidence of leading successful service development.	Application and Interview

	<p>people establishing high levels of trust and credibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of commitment to own and others' continuous professional development • Provide evidence of successfully managing performance 		
Skills and knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of the importance of good inclusion practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sound knowledge of 'people management' preferably with a management qualification (including motivation, performance and capability) 	
Personal Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of successful school or service improvement. • Commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people. • Vision and passion for delivery of high quality services and standard setting • Ability to work collaboratively with colleagues in partner agencies • High level communication skills and ability to motivate and persuade others • High level of analytical and planning skills to deliver outcomes which meet specific objectives • Valid driving licence or access to public or other transport in line 		

	<p>with the Disability Discrimination Act.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfactory CRB Enhanced Disclosure • Flexible approach to work including some work outside of normal office hours • The post holder will be working closely with schools so it is expected that as far as practicable leave will be taken during school holiday periods • Able to demonstrate commitment to equality and diversity. 		
Qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A degree or equivalent graduate qualification • Qualified Teacher Status 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NPQH • Post graduate qualification • Management qualification 	

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