

REPORT TO:	Corporate Parenting Panel
SUBJECT:	Annual Report of the Virtual School
LEAD OFFICER:	Shelley Davies Director of Education Sarah Bailey Head of Virtual School
CABINET MEMBER:	Cllr Alisa Flemming Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Learning
WARDS:	All
PUBLIC/EXEMPT:	

SUMMARY OF REPORT: This is the summary of achievements and involvements for the Croydon Virtual School for CLA in academic year 2020-2021.

POLICY CONTEXT/AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON:

Include here a brief statement on how the recommendations address one or more of the Council's Corporate Plan priorities:

[Corporate Plan for Croydon 2018-2022](#)

This report evidenced the impact of the Virtual School's work to ensure that 'Our children thrive and reach their full potential' focusing on those for whom we are their corporate parents.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

None.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Note the annual report of the Virtual School

1. Overview

- 1.1.1 Personal Education Plans (PEPs) completion rate has been at 85% or higher every month this year. At the end of the academic year (August 24th-it was at 98.1% which is above our target of 95 %.)

- 1.2 We have had a significant increase in the number of PEPs judged through quality assurance (QA) as good or better. Our target for 2020/21 was 75% good 25% outstanding and we have exceeded this with 31% being quality assured as 'outstanding' this year. We have also had our highest ever % of plans for young people in post 16 completed in time frame and lowest numbers deferred (72% good or better in August 2021). This remains a focus area for 2021-2022.
- 1.3 Staff capacity within the Virtual School has fluctuated over the year being as high as 32 midyear and now settled at a long term 28 FTE including 5 care leaver apprentices. We no longer have a Deputy Head teacher, UASC Project Manager or a mentoring lead. The Virtual School Head teacher has also had additional duties as the Interim Head of the Learning Access team since December 2020. We have just recruited our full time UASC Office manager.
- 1.4 There was no nationally published data for children in 2020. The last national data set for Croydon children is from 2019 and CLA young people in Croydon are still ranked second overall nationally for KS2-KS4 progress.
- 1.5 Our Summer School 2021 delivered and led by EMPIRE staff operated in person and online; it was attended and highly praised through the evaluation by over 50 young people including a number of our (UASC) young people daily for 3 weeks. This was able to be delivered with effective social distancing in place to safeguard the students. Please see the separate evaluation.
- 1.6 We have maintained our full service delivery during the academic year from home and have been able to offer all our existing services to schools, carers, social workers and organisations remotely throughout each CV-19 period. There has been no change to the support offered by Virtual School other than a switch to remote attendance at PEPs. This has positively impacted on the ability to get the professional network for children, especially out of borough together quickly and easily.
- 1.7 The EMPIRE team (Children in Care Council) are now a thriving part of Virtual School. They now have 65+ members and an active cohort in each age group who take part in a full weekly programme. The team also attend PEPs to ensure the children's voices are captured. They had their highest ever, 101 applications for summer provision.
- 1.8 Our Young Director, Assistant Young Director and 3 other care leavers are all progressing well with their apprenticeships. 1, La'Jay Taylor, has been nominated for a London Apprentice of the year award (July 2021) for his exceptional contribution to the team and EMPIRE.

2. Detail of the report

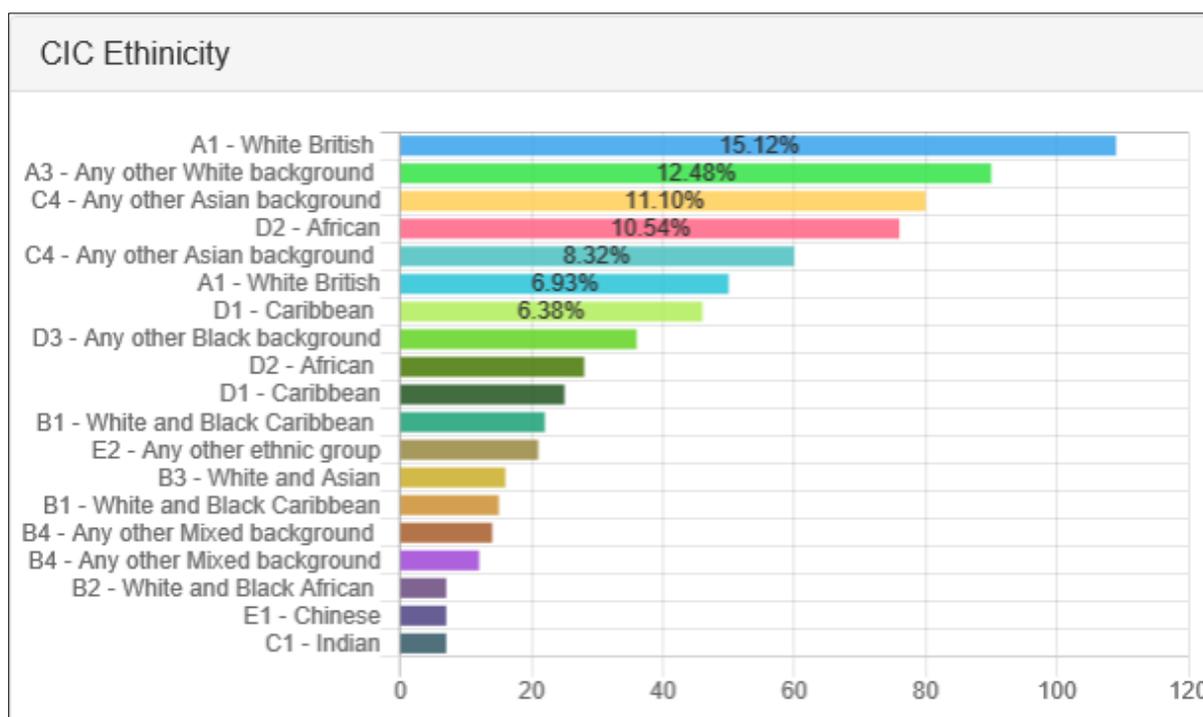
THE CROYDON CLA COHORT 2019-2020 (Overall Numbers and Demographics)

- 2.1 During the last academic year September 2020 - July 2021, the Virtual School worked with 652 children and young people who were in care (CLA) continually

for the whole 12 months (including relevant Care Leavers). Virtual School works on behalf of all children and young people of 'educational age' which means ages 2-19 (in school years, nursery to Year 13.)

- 2.2** A total of 745 children and young people were in care at the end of the academic year on August 24th 2021. This is 116 children fewer than at the end of last year. These figures show a substantially reduced numbers- partly due to a change in Croydon and the Home Office treatment of UASC.
- 2.3** There were 344 statutory school age (SSA) children (reception year - Year 11 age 4-16) in care at August 24th 2021. This is 148 children fewer than at this time last year showing a reduction overall in numbers of SSA young people in care over the year- in line with Children's Social Care improvement plans.
- 2.4** During 2020-2021 a total of 53% of children and young people attended schools in borough and 47% were placed in schools out of borough. This remains very similar to last year and is placement driven. The Virtual School has weekly representation at the Care Panel, where social care present any changes in placement so we can influence and inform those decisions.
- 2.5** 256 CLA between ages 2 to 19 were identified as having SEND needs in August 2021. This was **34%** of the cohort. Of these, 15 (**%**) had an EHCP, **144** (19%) **were** classified by schools as receiving SEND support. These figures are slightly up on last year and represent increased advocacy on behalf of CLA for EHCPs where needed, also supported by our Educational Psychologist.
- 2.6** 92% of CLA attended good or outstanding schools during the academic year. This remained consistent between 91 and 92% all year. Of the remaining 8% - 7% attended schools with no rating yet and 1% attended RI schools with risk assessments made as part of PEP process.
- 2.7** At the end of July 2020-2021, the total number of children and young people in care (744) consisted of **479** males (64%) compared to **265** females (36%).
- 2.8** At end of academic year 2021, 482 children and young people were recorded as locally looked after compared to 262 UASC (Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children). This represents a marked decrease in UASC numbers when compared with the previous year (452), due to the National Transfer Scheme for UASC being back in place and aiming to spread the cohort nationally.
- 2.9** Unaccompanied asylum seekers (UASC) young people represent **22** nationalities at present. The majority of our UASC are from four main countries, Albania (30%), Afghanistan (21%), Vietnam (20%) and Eritrea (9%). (Please see the full ethnic breakdown of the CLA cohort for 2020-2021 (below). They range from 12-19 years of age on arrival. Our Afghan cohort are experiencing difficulties relating to the current concerns in their country. Emotional support and counselling has been offered via the refugee network and Off The Record. The advisory team are doing weekly check ins and an event for showing solidarity is being planned for September 2021.

Table 1: Ethnicity of Croydon CLA 2020-2021



3. Attainment and Progress data 2020-21 (Pending and COVID amended)

3.1 Like the previous academic year- there is still no national published data or standardised results. There will be no formal, external published data or league tables of comparison for any key stage this year due to the impact of school closures under cCovid-19. We are in the process of finalising our Virtual School cohort's results.

No examinations took place for any pupils. Formal grades were not submitted to examination boards by schools for EYFS, Year 1 pupils or KS1 pupils. This data will all be collated and analysed internally over the autumn term by Virtual School and an updated data report will follow.

Our general termly (live) tracking of attainment data is done through ePEP. We have summary data that tells us the % of children and young people on track for their end of year expectations. This can be broken down into lots of detail for Senior Leaders to really understand and identify the needs of their cohorts.

An example summary graph (below) shows all pupils and % meeting targets (averaged across subjects) in the summer term.

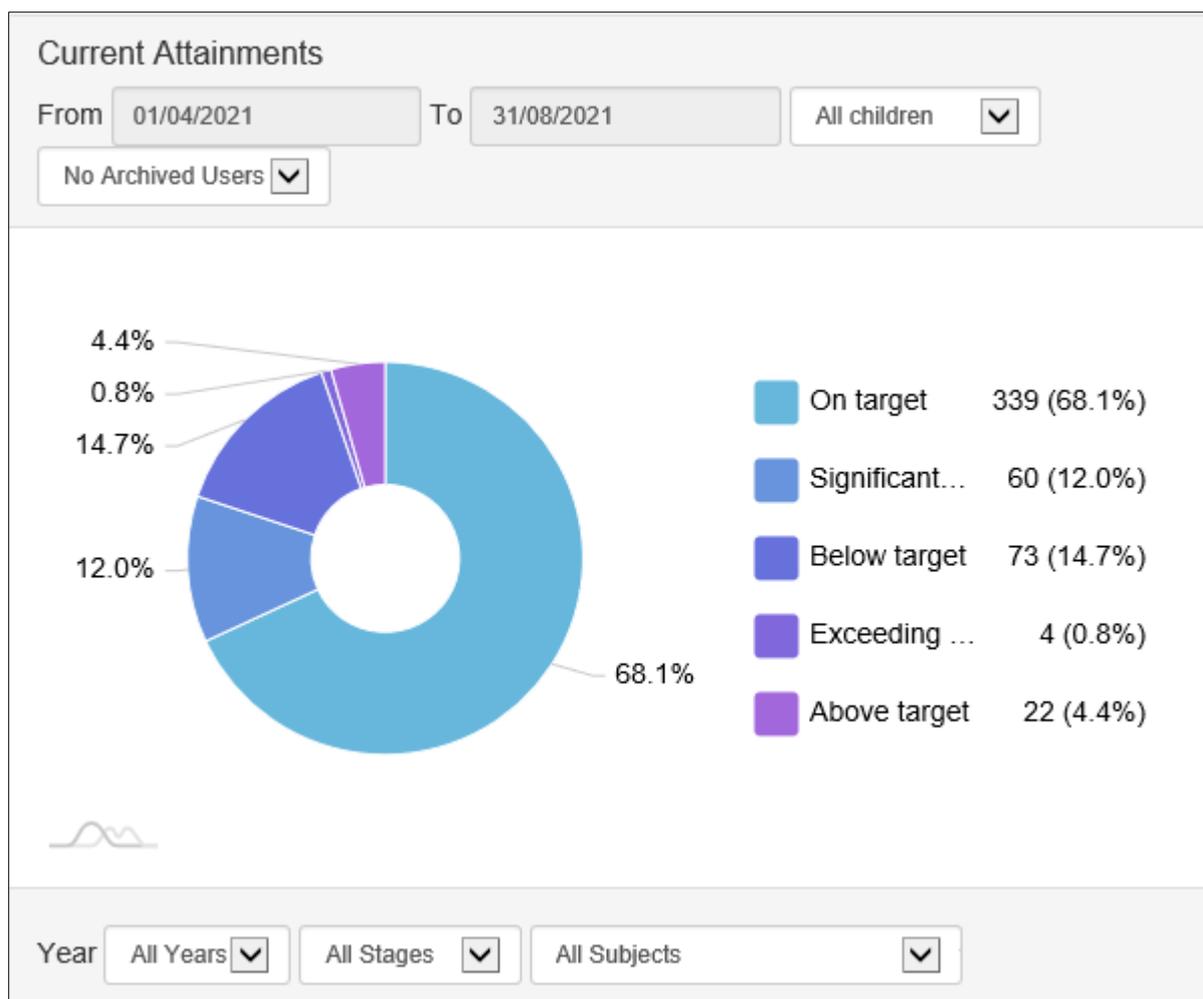


Table 2 Attainment wheel from IT dashboard- sample

End of Key stage results

EFYS

3.2 EYFS data has not been submitted by schools due to COVID meaning this reception cohort missed significant periods of schooling. An EYFS update will follow for our cohort in late October when our specialist Advisory Teacher has liaised with schools regarding each child's progress outcomes.

KS1 attainment:

Year 1 phonics screen

3.3 We had 14 children in this cohort. 6 have identified SEND with 2 having EHCPs already.

3.4 5 passed the screen (with a mark of 32+ out of 40). 1 other child was close to passing. The remaining 8 children will re-take their screen in y2 following support and intervention from their schools and our team.

Key stage 1 (year 2)

- 3.5** We had 19 pupils (Year 2) in the cohort (15 of whom had been in care for more than a year at the time of year end.) This age group did not take any formal tests or SATS this year. Schools submitted teacher assessed grades.
- 3.6** Of these pupils 11/19 have SEND needs, 3 have EHCPs and 8 are on school level support plans. This is clearly a factor affecting attainment. However 16/19 of the pupils met their teachers and school's own targets for the year.
- 3.7** 10 of our Year 2 pupils retook their Y1 phonics screen and 9/10 passed at this stage which is really pleasing and will likely show as progress in reading over time. This is extremely positive for Virtual School as our holiday school at ARC zoo provision focussed on this for pupils identified as needing additional intervention and also our Advisory Teacher supported schools and carers across the year to ensure our cohort were grasping their phonics.
- 3.8** 2 pupils achieved Greater depth in reading, one in writing both of which are impressive achievements – especially with so much time in lockdown due to CV -19.

Table 3: KS1 attainment (19 pupils)

	RWM		Reading	Writing	Maths
Year 2	16%		42%	21%	32%
15 NI101	13%		33%	20%	27%

The 16 and 13% here respectively represent 3 (and 2 in NI101) pupils who attained the expected standard in Reading Writing and Maths. They are 2 of the 5 pupils with no identified SEND needs.

KS2 attainment and progress (year 6):

- 3.9** We had 25 reportable pupils in KS2 this year and 28 in our whole cohort.
- 3.10** 60% Croydon CLA n101 cohort (15/25 pupils) and 17/28 (61) % of whole cohort (28 pupils) were working at the combined 'expected standard' in Reading Writing and Maths. This is remarkable- compared with a most recent average for CLA of 35% nationally. And almost in line with national (2019) for all pupils (65%). We are delighted to report that this cohort are a group of whom 25/28 pupils have been in the Virtual School for 3 years +. This stability seems to help schools promote better outcomes.

Key Stage 2 results	2020 27 pupils	2021 28 pupils
% pupils achieving expected standard in Reading/Writing/Maths combined	37% 0 GDS	47% + 3% GDS (1pupil)
% pupils achieving expected standard in Reading	70.4% 0 GDS	47% +9% GDS
% pupils achieving expected standard in Writing	44.4% 0 GDS	47% +3% GDS
% pupils achieving expected standard in Maths	55.6% 3% GDS	57% +12% GDS
% pupils achieving greater depth in one or more areas	4%	7% Inc. 1 pupil with 4 GDS

Table 4: KS2 attainment 2020-2021

3.11 These results show very pleasing increases in the combined measure which suggests more careful tracking of success across subjects was done by schools- this was a focus of PEPs where children showed potential to achieve in all subjects.

3.12 Within the cohort of 28, 17 pupils have identified SEND needs, including 3 who have EHCP and 2 with plans almost complete. 12 who have school level support. Of these 17, 3 made the expected combined measure and 5 more made Expected standard in 1 or more subjects. This shows careful building by schools on the strengths of these pupils. PEP tracking and targets written by the advisory team focus on where a subject needs intervention or funds to assist progress, or resource to support specific learning needs for children without EHCP.

3.13 We maintained our focus on developing our Advisory Teachers understanding of the SEND needs of the cohort this year. They attended Annual Reviews and had specific input from our Educational Psychologist to help them become “lead professionals” on individual SEND CLA. Many examples of the benefit of this can be seen in our results data e.g. a year 6 pupil with EHCP for a Specific Learning Difficulty in literacy, achieved expected standard in SPAG and Greater Depth in maths, through a focus on building his areas of strength.

3.14 We continue to strive towards our pupils achieving their very best individual results. The lack of national comparison again this year remains very positive for our young people, who are such a specialist group with such varied additional needs that usual comparative measures are not helpful. What is vital for this cohort, is that we

ensure all professionals have the highest expectations for our pupils through their PEPs. Our 95%+ completion and good quality rating here means we are able to effectively and challenge and support schools to use their resources and the child's PPG effectively to help impact attainment.

Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21	Apr-21	May-21	Jun-21	Jul-21
93.5%	91.7%	89.2%	96.0%	96.5%	97.1%	93.2%	97.9%	96.9%	96.2%	97.2%
85%	85%	85%	85%	85%	85%	85%	85%	85%	85%	85%
371	373	378	378	376	379	395	386	390	391	394
347	342	337	363	363	368	368	378	378	376	383

Table 5- CLA 13 indicator- % SSA CLA with a PEP in last 6 months

4. Summer results 2021- KS4 and KS5

4.1 A detailed analysis of the cohort's Centre Assessed grades is not yet available due to delays in receipt of many results (BTEC/Level 1/ESOL courses) and the fact that there is no requirement this year for schools or colleges to submit data to Local Authorities, which has affected our collation. Our young people attend over 100 establishments nationally, many of which remain closed until January 2021. Collation will be completed after this.

4.2

Table 6: Year 11 cohort 2021- contextual information

	2021	2020
Total cohort size	97	146
No in N101 cohort (more than 1 year in care at March 31 st 2018)	72	71 (49% of whole VS cohort at EOY)
No of UASC in whole cohort	50	83 (57%)
No of UASC in N101	29	29 (41%)
No in Croydon schools in whole cohort	44	84 (57%)
No in Croydon schools in N101	38	37 (52%)
Missing education in whole cohort	5	12 (8%)
Missing education in N101 cohort	2	3 (4%)
Attending a non-mainstream school in N101	17	18 (25%)

Attending a non-mainstream school in whole cohort	27	56 (38%)
Cohort who had been in care for < 1 year at time if exams	11	75 (51%)
Cohort who had been in care for < 2 years at time if exams	37	108 (74%)
Cohort who had been in care for >5 years at time if exams	14	18 (12%)
Number in N101 with SEND EHCP	17	10 (14%)
Number in whole cohort with SEND EHCP	17	13 (9%)
Number in N101 with SEND support	26	10 (14%)
Number in whole cohort with SEND support	27	13 (9%)
Number entered at Lvl 1/2 in N101	47	53 (74%)
Number entered at Lvl 1/2 in whole cohort	56	73 (50%)
Number in N101 entered for 8 eligible subjects	19	21 (29%)
Number in Whole cohort entered for 8 eligible subjects	22	28 (19%)

- 5.1** In summary, the Y11 reportable CLA NI101 cohort for 2021 was 72 pupils. Only 21 of these pupils were entered for 8 GCSEs in the c9- Correct 'buckets' to be eligible for an Attainment and Progress 8. 13 of these pupils achieved at least 9-4 Inc. E and M. (18% cohort) this falls to 13% when we look at 9-5 Inc. E and M. (13% cohort). When we include only the 21 eligible students our % success rate at 9-4 E and M is 62%. All of these results are both an increase on last year (from 13%-18) and above national averages for CLA (7% in 2018)
- 5.2** It is difficult to compare our cohorts, year on year, as a result of the high mobility and daily contextual changes. Nevertheless, it is pleasing to note that even with Covid-19, in 2020-21 academic year: 18% (vs 13% last year) pupils gained 5+

4-9 grades including English and maths. The overall cohort this year was much smaller and contained fewer UASC young people than the previous year.

5.3 Table 6: Attainment at KS4 20-21 as known at 25.8.21 (35 results still to add)

	Number	5+ 9-5EM	5+ 9-4EM	Total 5+ 9-4EM	5+ 9-4 either E or M	Total 5+ 9-4EorM	5+ 9-1	Total 5+ 9-1	1+ 9-1	Total 1+ 9-1
Total Yr 11	97	12	2	14	2	13	17	30	22	52
NI101	71	10	2	12	1	13	14	27	21	48
TOTAL Yr 11		12.37%	2.06%	14.43%						
Yr 11 NI101		14.08%	2.82%	16.90%						

5.4 This dataset is really pleasing (especially as we are still awaiting a number or results that we expect to be positive. We have already passed our 2019 high of 14.7%. We are delighted that the teacher assessed grade as opposed to exams allow our cohort to better access their potential.

As always, there were some exceptional, individual performances including:

- Pupil a 5+ 9- [9@8-5](#)
- Pupil b 4EM 5+ 9- [5@9-4,4@3-2](#)
- Pupil c 5EM 5+ 9- [5@6-5,4@4](#)
- Pupil d 5EM 5+ 9- [5@9-7,4@6](#)
- Pupil e 5EM 5+ 9- [5@7-5,1@3](#)
- Pupil f 5EM 5+ 9- [7@7-5,1@4](#)
- Pupil g 4EM 5+ 9- [4@6-5,4@4](#)

5.5 Of the 97 pupils in the whole cohort 90 attained at least 1 qualification at Entry level or above.

Of our 37 young people who had been with us less than 1 year at the time of exams, 19 achieved 1 or more GCSE equivalent qualifications and 9 achieved a set of 5+ results at 9-4 Inc. E and M. This is extremely impressive as 3 were UASC arrivals and the other 6 had the tremendous disruption of entry to care in their recent experience yet sustained their academic achievement.

5.6 Key stage 5 data has not been completely received. A current status update appears in raw form below and a more detailed analysis will be tabled in the next Corporate Parenting Panel Report.

6. Key stage 5 attainment data (pending further info)

Table 7: Year 13 attainment data by Centre assessed grade 2020-2021

	Number	L3	L1/2	EL	No Results	Nothing Received	
Total Yr 13	189	12	25	14	56	82	43.39%
NI101	174	11	24	13	49	77	44.25%

**Pupils where no results had been received at the time of writing (27/8/2021) will have results submitted to Virtual School by w/b 20/9/2021 and update will be issued for the November corporate parenting panel.*

6.1 The results offer some exceptional individual performances for young people. Of the 12 students, who took a level 3 (A Level or equivalent) courses, 100% completed their courses, with 10 passing at C or above in 1 or more subjects.

We are still collating data on who secured places at higher education institutions of their choice. We know of one young person who secured AAB grades heading to Warwick University for Psychology and another who scored A* A A in Biology, Chemistry and Maths respectively who is currently deciding which of his Russell Group universities to attend. Exceptional achievements all round.

We are exceptionally proud of all our young people and their achievements, through a period of great instability under COVID.

7. Staffing, Structure and capacity in the Virtual school

7.1 The Virtual school team (and permanent establishment) is now 28 strong (Consistent in number – slightly different in make up to last year). We have full time advisory teachers 2 of whom are specialist ESOL teachers, as well as a post 16 Education Advisor (non- teaching), 3 senior phase leaders (EYFS-KS3, KS4 and post 16 (Inc. CIAEG) and a Head teacher. All teaching and direct contact posts with statutory school age pupils are funded through Pupil Premium Grant.

We also now have the lead of the Children in Care council and 2 youth workers in our team. We support 5 care leaver apprentices including the Young Director and Assistant Young Director. Our structure chart is included in the appendices.

7.2 Each teacher has a named cohort of no more than 60 pupils- average 49; this means they can really be present at Pupil Education Plan meetings, quality assure all Plans and support schools to best allocate their Pupil Premium resource for the needs of the individual child. These smaller cohorts also allow

for strong relationships to be built between schools, social workers, carers, young people and our Virtual School Team so that through knowing each child better we can tailor the support to their needs and ensure both challenge and support to schools. These cohorts remain with the young, wherever they move to, as they travel up through school years, providing essential consistency of support and knowledge of the educational journey for our highly mobile cohort. This is the 3rd year cohorts have been maintained with no changes in the advisory team. One member of Post 16 staff is on maternity leave. Cover will be secured for September 2021.

- 7.3** Our administrative team has also expanded to better serve our growing professionals and carer's network. We have a data officer, a Quality assurance, monitoring and finance officer, a newly appointed Business systems officer (formerly ePEP champion) responsible for our PEP and attendance monitoring system and 2 senior officers in admin, one for our UASC cohort- UASC office manager and one for all other CLA administration.

This increased capacity means we are able to issue regular communication to all our stakeholders and keep abreast of changes in Children's Social Care and schooling for our young people.

This team, and all leadership roles are funded through designated schools grant as allocated by Schools forum for the effective operation of the Virtual School.

8. Virtual School Cohort: School Ofsted Ratings

- 8.1** At July of 2020/21, 92% of statutory school age CLA attended schools rated by Ofsted as 'Outstanding' or 'Good'. Compared to 90% the previous year.
- 8.2** The Ofsted rating of a school where the child moves in-year remains a priority for Croydon and there is a now a dedicated section in the e-PEP to monitor school moves more closely and record dual registration.
- 8.3** Where possible, children are placed in schools rated 'good' or better. However, if a child comes into care while in a school rated less than good, or if a schools' rating is altered following OFSTED, it may be inappropriate to move their school place simply on the basis of the Ofsted rating of their current school. In these instances, a full risk assessment would be conducted by the Virtual School senior team in collaboration with the school Head teacher and Designated CLA Teacher.

9. Attendance data for children and young people looked after in 2020-2021

- 9.1** At the time of writing, attendance for 2020/2021 cannot be compared to any attendance data for previous years due to COVID-19 and non-compulsory attendance at school. It has not yet been agreed how school attendance will be monitored and compared nationally, as schools have a range of flexible options that are bespoke and based on their context.

- 9.2** At Croydon Virtual School we collected data online via the ASSET system. A commissioning and procurement exercise took place between February and July 2021 and the new contract for this service was awarded to ePEP, by eGov which means we will have a streamlined “one stop” data system from September 2021. This takes data directly from the schools registration system and inputs to PEPS. We currently collect 95% data in this way. The rest is ascertained manually through PEPs and calls to schools.
- 9.3** During the second ‘lockdown’ period of school closures (November 2020-February 2021) we monitored individual pupil attendance through calls to carers on a RAG system. Our message to carers and establishments, was in line with the DFE guidance, that if CLA (who were this time classed as “vulnerable”) could benefit they should attend school. We called carers weekly to ensure any changing needs were considered. We liaised with other Local Authorities and national authorities to ensure that we had the best interests of all our children covered.

Our attendance figures were as follows:

Table 8: attendance through Covid

3. ATTENDANCE MONITORING										
Overall Attendance Percentage (c										
YEAR	Autumn 20/21			Spring 20/21			Summer 20/21			
	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21	Apr-21	May-21	Jun-21	
Primary School	Year R	91.14	93.94	94.75	94.23	98.94	97.28	98.83	97.38	97.85
	Year 1	91.40	91.49	91.30	91.40	91.70	91.08	89.95	90.58	91.36
	Year 2	95.57	96.97	96.56	93.77	91.89	94.33	96.73	94.39	94.89
	Year 3	89.49	89.87	89.57	87.48	90.50	90.75	90.38	91.30	91.91
	Year 4	96.80	96.37	96.34	96.64	97.15	96.00	96.07	96.14	94.96
	Year 5	92.71	93.26	93.08	92.00	91.78	87.98	89.61	90.67	91.45
	Year 6	99.36	99.02	98.74	96.15	93.81	89.68	88.62	92.32	92.92
Sub Total	Primary	94.80	95.11	94.93	93.55	93.33	91.60	91.76	92.79	93.17
Secondary School	Year 7	98.39	98.81	98.76	97.34	92.18	91.18	91.32	92.25	92.77
	Year 8	93.36	92.58	92.54	90.19	88.07	87.51	87.31	88.11	88.16
	Year 9	94.33	94.96	94.93	92.14	89.16	87.01	88.11	89.01	89.24
	Year 10	90.52	91.38	89.84	84.56	84.49	83.21	83.34	85.19	85.74
	Year 11	88.72	88.70	89.48	86.59	81.27	81.93	82.89	82.23	77.61
Sub Total	Secondary	92.10	92.56	92.24	89.21	85.77	85.22	85.66	86.19	88.64
Total	SSA	92.74	93.23	93.15	90.67	88.07	87.44	87.85	88.49	90.68
					99 CLA had attendance recorded as authorised absence during Spring Term Lockdown			10 CLA had attendance recorded as authorised absence during Summer Term		

Where there were problems for individual families – Advisory staff negotiated with schools to ensure that attendance could be prioritised.

9.4 Persistent Absence

- 9.5** We retain our focus on PA this year in Virtual School as it was identified in national data in 2019 as a significant area for improvement. (CVS 15.2% National 12.3 % - children looked after for more than 12 months).

Our advisory team work with our attendance Senior Lead to track and identify where a pupil is struggling and then to support the school to intervene and ensure improvements.

Reasons for PA in CLA cohort are many, complex and varied. Often there are legitimate reasons and for some persistent absentees attendance of 70% may represent a significant increase and improvement. Each child’s journey is unique and must be supported carefully through discussion at the PEP and close work with school Social Workers and carers. In July 2020 the following numbers were considered to be PA:

414 cohort		
		%
Below 90%	137	33
Below 85%	100	24
Below 80%	89	21
Below 75%	64	15

An action plan via the PEP targets is in place for each child with PA. Our PA rates are dramatically affected by time in care. When we remove children who have been in care for more than one year from these figures the PA rate falls to 14.9%.

This is still above national at 13% and remains an area for focus and attention this year. Covid has also definitely impacted on these figures with lockdown recording by schools not being consistent and in some cases affecting pupil statistics.

10. Exclusions

Permanent exclusions

- 10.1** There were 3 permanent exclusions of (Secondary age) Croydon CLA during the 2020-2021 academic year, which is an increase on the previous year’s figure of 2. However in each case, we managed, through Virtual School intervention to find appropriate solutions for avoidance of the permanent exclusions and they were all rescinded by the Head teachers. 2 of these were out of borough children. 1 attends a Croydon Academy School. In each case EHCPs have been secured via support and recommendation from Croydon Virtual School.
- 10.2** There were no permanent exclusions of primary age CLA pupils. Any CLA primary aged pupils at risk of exclusion have assessments done by our Educational Psychologist and are referred as early as possible to Croydon Primary Forum, if they are Croydon based. Out of borough we visit to assess need and look at what additional support is needed.
- 10.3** A further 4 Croydon CLA (3 secondary and 1 primary) were at risk of permanent exclusion over the year, but these never proceeded to permanent exclusion following the intervention of the Virtual School and securing of EHCPs to allow

for movement to appropriate specialist settings. (Identifiable pupil data cannot be included here for safeguarding reasons.)

Fixed term exclusions

10.4 A total of 39 statutory school age Croydon CLA received a total of 55 fixed term exclusions during the 2020/2021 academic year. This represents 9 % of Croydon’s statutory school age CLA cohort of 414 .This is significantly lower than last year (12.9% pupils). This is in part due to school closures from Covid. Numbers look as though they would’ve been lower without this though.

10.5 Broken down by those Croydon CLA in 2020/2021 who are educated in Croydon and those who are educated in other local authority areas the figures are as follows:

Table 9: No. of fixed term exclusions issued to CLA in Croydon 2020-2021

11. Quality Assurance and PEPs

School location	2020-21		2019/20	
	No. of Croydon CLA receiving 1 or more FPEX	No. of FPEX issued to Croydon CLA	No. of Croydon CLA receiving 1 or more FPEX	No. of FPEX issued to Croydon CLA
Croydon school			34	65
Out of LA school			26	41
TOTAL			60	106

11.1

Every statutory school age child who is looked after must have a personal education plan. This is a document, written and evaluated by professionals from education and social work that set out the plan for monitoring and supporting the child’s educational progress over the academic year. The plan must be reviewed at least every 6 months. This is a statutory duty for children’s social care. In Virtual School we request these 3 x yearly for all pupils to give a more accurate view or progress

11.2 The % Statutory School Age children and young people with a PEP that had been reviewed by Virtual School in August 2021 was **99%**.

11.3 **98.9%** of all children and young people had a PEP meeting held by professionals in the last 6 month period.

- 11.4** Of these 68% were rated good and 32% rated excellent through the Virtual School quality assurance process. This will continue to be a focal point for next academic year, where Virtual School workers will help to improve the standard of PEPs. We are keen to ensure that our criteria for outstanding is 'the degree to which professional support and it's culmination in the PEP document supports the young person'. This is judged by Advisory Teachers and checked by SLT. We also do cross checks with the SEND team as part of their "EHCP deep dive". We have a scheduled look at EHCP/PEPs for CLA in September 2021.
- 11.5** From September 2021- all PEPS will be emailed to carers as PDFs within 14 days of the PEP taking place.

12. The Virtual School Interim Provisions for UASC

- 12.1** Croydon Town School-CTS (11-16) and Croydon Town College-CTC (16-25) are the interim provision for newly arrived young people. The provisions offer a full curriculum complement and intensive ESOL as well as school readiness and preparation for understanding how schools and education in the UK work. There are 20 places at CTS and the school was full throughout the 2020-2021 with a waiting list. The college had 6 places in 2020-2021 and we are hoping to expand this to 10+ in 2021-2022 if we secure funding from the ESFA. A bid was submitted in June 2021. Without funds, it is not possible to run the CTS provision as we have historically. There are no further CMF grant monies. For September to January- any provision will occur online via our ESOL teachers while we attempt to secure funds and premises for the physical provision. Our newly appointed UASC office manager will support carers and YP and schools with admissions and getting their UASC on role at suitable schools.
- 12.2** **103** young people from 22 countries passed through the provision for varying periods of time over 2020- 2021, averaging 6 weeks. These young people, aged between 11 and 16 (mostly 14-16), are now all successfully integrated into mainstream schools or college places in Croydon or their local borough. Whilst priority is given to Croydon CLA, other boroughs are very keen to utilise the facility. We have had placements of CLA from Merton, Lambeth, Kent, Southwark and Surrey this year. 3 of our UASC young people from Vietnam who attended our provision and went on to Trinity School in Lewisham- achieved a set of 9-4 Inc. EM results within one year of arrival. This is exceptional.
- 12.4** We focused our attention on newly arrived UASC of compulsory school age awaiting school places. Through close work with admissions we were usually able to have a child in our provision or a suitable school within two weeks of their arrival at the Home Office. Due to changes in the national transfer Scheme and Croydon Children's Social Care policy we think we are likely to see much reduced numbers of UASC coming into Croydon Care over this year.

- 12.5 The provision operated at Archbishop Tension School 3 days a week throughout 2020-2021 academic year (even lockdowns). Students were able to integrate with the main school body and share mealtimes and social spaces.
- 12.6 During Covid '19 second lockdown- both CTC and CTS operated their timetable online and in person - to ensure continuity for students. Our ESOL specialist teachers were able to deliver both group and one to one tuition daily, this gave vital provision for this most vulnerable community who almost all chose to begin face to face teaching while only vulnerable groups attended the school site physically.
- 12.7 Explorations of running a version of CTS/CTC onsite at St Mary's School are underway for January 2022.
13. **Summer Programmes - EMPIRE and Legacy in Croydon (See separate report)**
- 13.1 Due to the ending of the CMF grant funds no summer mix was held this year for UASC. All our CTS students were taken to and registered at Legacy so that they were able to access the summer provision there this year.
- 13.2 A record total of 104 young people accessed the programme with a daily attendance of close to 60 young people.
- 13.3 An online offer was also presented for those who did not wish to meet face to face and Virtual School staff taught daily sessions of English and Maths to small numbers (up to 10) of young people who did not wish to attend in person.
- 13.4 We are in the process of the full evaluation but a cursory look at our data shows that attendance rate was 90%+ daily and feedback collected from the young people on the programme has been very positive. We are delighted that we were able to adapt at very short notice to legal guidance on Covid-19 and ensure safe in-person contact which our young people desperately wanted.
14. **E.M.P.I.R.E summer programme for CLA**
- 14.1 The EMPIRE Team summer offer (attached as an appendix) was comprehensive and daily between 1/08/2021 and 27/08/2021) culminating in a trip for 28 young people to Alton Towers.
- 14.2 We worked very hard on communication and publicity this year through the Young Croydon website and social media. We were really pleased with the take up from colleagues in Children's Social Care and early help teams in supporting the young people they work with to book onto activities. 101 applications for children to be included were made.

Provision had to be limited to 25-30 participants per session, due to staffing capacity and funds. The budget for the whole summer provision was £1500, with which the team of 2 f/t staff and 1 p/t plus 5 apprentices, offered over **40**

separate sessions and activities for all ages including Lemonwedge animation and film project for 4-10 year olds.

- 14.3 There were very well-attended sessions in football by Palace for Life at Selhurst Park, over 12 weeks, cooking and tasting, mental health and wellbeing, boxing, street dance and more general hang outs.
- 14.4 A Jamie's farm residential to Herefordshire for 10 young people who all worked exceptionally well together and impressed the residential team there with their "family vibe" and ability to work together cooperatively.
- 14.5 An event for UASC young people was kindly hosted by CVA on Friday 18th July as part of refugee week. Our young people attended and met with representatives from the police and other organisations in the community. This was very well received and built their confidence with one young man saying *afterwards "I don't know Croydon love us like that. We feel happy to be here."*

15. **Careers, information, employment, advice and guidance (CIAEG) support**

- 15.1 In February 2019 when the newly appointed VSH heard from members of the Children in Care council, CIAEG was a key area that all the young people mentioned they felt needed more work.
- 15.2 As a direct result of this, we secured first a temporary role for a Level 7 trained Careers Professional who worked 3 days a week between July and December 2019. Since then we have made her role full time, combining it with the interim leadership of post 16 phase. She has created a full database of contacts for schools and carers around CIAEG in Croydon, and developed the use of online software, KUDOS, licensed for all CLA in Croydon to use to assess their possible careers interest and knowledge. To date 124 young people have accessed this and this will form a standard part of our involvement for all Year 10 students

16. **Mentoring project and mentoring database**

- 16.1 Over the past year, we have drawn to an end our 18 young people who were matched with fully trained volunteer mentors – recruited internally and through 'Croydon Voluntary Action'. Each of these has had up to a year's ongoing weekly support. We are happy to report; these matches have been sustained even through Covid-19 and the challenges that posed for delivery. Changes were made, and we quickly managed to ensure that all of our young people were mentored online, every week via MS Teams or Zoom.
- 15.2 For 2020-2021 we had 18 young people (and slightly more volunteer mentors) signed up to the programme, all referred to us by the advisory team. We also held a highly successful workshop for social workers that was attended by 40+ people. Social Workers were able to witness the difference the programme had

made to the life of a CLA young person and from a volunteer mentor perspective.

- 15.3 The 'Mentoring Programme' exists because our young people requested it and will continue to reach those in need of additional academic support; working in collaboration with the schools, social services, continuing to 'champion' their voices on their education experience.
- 15.4 One young person said of her experience with our Mentoring Programme; ***"these people don't know it but they're changing lives."***
- 15.6 We have moved all our training for mentors online and as such have wider reach and can accept volunteers from other localities.

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17. SUMMARY OF KEY SUPPORT, ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES- including response to COVID 19

- 17.1** Virtual school is especially pleased that the disruption of CV-19 in February/March 2021 caused no change to our service delivery or effectiveness. In fact reductions in travel time and online working meant our PEP delivery rose to almost 97.8% by the end of term.
- 17.2** In the academic 2020-2021 we were able to employ remote and flexible working as increase effectiveness. A key factor we developed throughout lockdown and school closures was the development of the webinar as a tool for online commination and training. Our Advisory Teachers are now comfortably able to complete 2 or even 3 PEPs a day where previously travel and other stakeholders' commitments meant sometimes only one.
- 17.3** Due to online and telephone working, we were able to provide additional, at least fortnightly calls to carers/residential settings by the advisory team throughout the period. Where our most vulnerable children needed additional support interventions and support for the education of our looked after children with achievements:
- 17.4** Funding and organisation of the Letterbox book club scheme continued throughout the Covid period- all our EYFS and KS1 primary school-aged children receive fiction books as gifts termly. This year 108 parcels have been sent to 54 children and their families to encourage reading together. We have received several letters of thanks from children and foster carers telling us how this has positively impacted on their lives. We will be completing an audit of the effectiveness of the scheme over the autumn term.
- 17.5** One to one tuition took place online over the academic year, and more intensively over the CV-19 period for 36 pupils – much of this was able to be offered by our own specialist Advisory team. We reduced spend on tuition from PPG significantly this year only using it in emergency situations where need arose over night or out of borough and needed to be face to face.
- 17.6** Our EMPIRE young people were shortlisted (and came highly commended runners up) in a national competition for Children in Care Councils – beating stiff competition from 19 other councils in March 2021.
- 17.7** We worked hard all year to reduce the number of CLA out of school for over 20 days. This number was routinely sitting at around 18 cases in 2019-2020. The remaining number at the end of the 2020-2021 academic year was 9. This will be resolved and remain a focal area for 2021-2022 but is a really positive reduction. Closer work with admissions and new changes to communications to school around CLA admissions for 2021-2022 should help us reduce this further.
- 17.8** Virtual School staff have continued to be involved in EHCP needs assessment request submissions. We are pleased that 3 further CLA (1 Croydon, 2 out of Borough) have had their plans finalised over the CV-19 period. An example of

great joint working is in the case of a young woman placed in another county who's SEND EHCP was delayed through bureaucratic issues in that LA for almost a year. The close working of the AT team with CSC in that LA and senior leader's intervention mean that the YP has secured her plan and a much needed place at Specialist provision as a result. All this negotiation took place over the summer holidays and the young man has been able to receive appropriate prep for transition at the new school on time for term starting.

- 17.9** Positive feedback was received from carers for the support offered by VS during lockdown. We had 9 thank you emails and positive messages vs 2 concerns, both of which were eventually resolved via communication with the carers.

18. Laptop and digital devices issue

- 18.1** As a direct consequence of CV-19, our provision of laptops, which was well established previously took on a new level of complexity. We now have very effective processes for issuing laptops and devices to any CLA anywhere nationally as required in a prompt timeframe. This is a significant and vital achievement that has enabled all our young people to stay connected to their social workers and through potentially very challenging times. All our CLA who need a device have one- any new to care young people can access one quickly via our processes- which we managed to keep separate from the council's 114 challenges, in order to avoid delay. 519 young people in our cohort were audited by our apprentices and found to either have their own device or suitable access to a device in their home.

19. Additional Support offered

- 19.1** Primary to secondary 'transition' all had to be supported online this year by our Year 5/6 advisory teacher and the senior lead for Primary. They were able to work individually online with every child's carer and school to ensure each had a plan in place. All our year 6 children had their first choice placement assigned. We are delighted in the consistency and involvement of our Primary and secondary schools in working creatively together to ensure support.
- 19.2** Our Educational Psychologist and her team have directly worked with 32 cases this academic year and consulted with VS staff on 50+ cases over the year. This input has proved vital for workers in being able to support schools with EHCP applications. Karina Ng our lead Educational Psychologist has also attended PEP meetings, SEND panel meetings and assisted in compiling the submission for a needs assessments to be progressed. She also helped us in referrals for education other than at school via Springboard, where young people are medically unable to attend their school.
- 19.3** The Virtual School also participated in the Reach 2 Teach trial project via Course we do and the team at Off the Record. This was a successful pilot of an IT tool for monitoring and supporting the attachment needs of vulnerable pupils in Primary schools. 15 schools (12 Croydon and 3 in local boroughs) with Croydon CLA benefitted from intensive training and support to use the software package to assess and intervene in building emotional regulation and wellbeing

for pupils. A specifically designed, trauma informed, therapeutic software, this has huge potential for use across all schools. We also had a pilot account specifically for us by VS staff who could develop detailed profiles for 9 of our most vulnerable pupils. This was found to be invaluable by school staff and the detailed project evaluation shows really positive indicators from staff, parents and young people. This is something we will aim to build on in the new academic year. Staff in the pilot schools benefitted from training webinars and discussions in Trauma informed practice and deepened their awareness of how attachment needs can affect children in the school environment.

- 19.4** VS Senior Leadership remain key members at weekly cross service meetings including: Fair Access Panel, Missing Monday meetings, Weekly Care Panel, Complex Adolescent Panel, the Strategic SEND review board and all SEND partnership working groups, joint funding panel and fostering panel. This has led to a much more collaborative approach to working and continues to be a key focus for the coming academic year. Timely identification of cases to target and improved advocacy on behalf of educational perspective when discussing placements and proposed moves. We are also involved in the re-design of Early help services to ensure we use our knowledge and skills to effect earlier change.
- 19.5** Continued participation in wider multi-agency networks including the NAVSH meetings for London and National Virtual School Head teachers, South London & Surrey Post 16 VS/DMS network to share good practice and build stronger working relationships with colleges and other virtual schools including Merton, Sutton, Lambeth and Islington.
- 19.6** The post 16 VS network is led by Croydon VS – building professional links with neighbouring virtual schools working with our oldest young people.
- 19.7** Our post 16 team play an active role in the design and application of the CSC NEET reduction plan. NEET Figures have been consistently around 18% (even with CV in 2021) over the academic year. A detailed strategy exists linking VS and NEET team to ensure this remains a strong focus over 20-21. This is a really positive indicator of stable working.
- 19.8** We were very lucky to work in collaboration with the ARC (animal rescue centre) all year. 23 KS1-3 students benefitted in total in a range of workshops, one to one sessions etc. and our KS1 summer literacy and confidence building programme took place again in August 2021 for 10 5-9 year old CLA. These children accessed a programme of animal care and literacy/numeracy activities that built their confidence, phonics skill and ability to read and write fluently. All of this was in relation to care of unusual animals like a skunk, meerkats and sugar babies. Great fun was had by all and 100% carer and child feedback was extremely positive. (Pictures can be seen on the VS website.)

20. Key Challenges and next steps-n 2020/21

- 20.1 Persistent absence rates remain a focus for 21-22.** School Development Plan that continues to be a priority for the Virtual School.
- 20.2 Funding and finance- accuracy of monitoring of PPG Spend as well as communication to schools around available spend**
- 20.3** Croydon Children Looked After **who do not have a full time school offer.** An ongoing focus area will be working closely with admissions and schools to reduce the wait time for children and Young People without a school place, accessing a part-time timetable or being educated offsite.
- 20.4 Children not in education and post 16 NEETs:** weekly tracking of our children and young people out of education, employment or training has helped us to identify children and young people not accessing education in much more time focused way. We have applied for funding and are awaiting an announcement, to make our post 16 offer more sustainable and increase capacity.
- 20.5** SEND /CLA closer working and the development of the Advisory Teacher as the “lead professional.” Some training took place in March 2020 from the SEND team to ensure that Advisory teachers understood how to conduct Annual reviews. Additional Ed Psych training in June 2020 took place to support the Advisory Team in making applications for EHC Needs assessment. Our aim is to ensure that any ‘young person’ coming into care has the relevant Educational assessments and an awareness of needs is shared with the school within their first term.

VS have been awarded 100k additional funding to develop a new “strategic responsibility for the educational outcomes of any children with social workers”- so all those who have had a child protection or child in need plan in the last year. This is a vast remit in Croydon and the appointment of a leader specifically focussed on this for 1 year in the first instance will be made in Sept 2021.

21. VIRTUAL SCHOOL TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT 2020/21

- 21.1** For 20219-20 a training calendar was sent out to schools and SC in advance. This includes – regular 1 to 1 surgeries for social care in ePEP. New starter induction training in ePEP
- 21.2. *The*** virtual nature of all our ePEP training means it can be done much more efficiently and in a more bespoke way. Our business systems officer is able to work with groups or individuals one on one and guide them through any system needs.
- 21.3** We have also offered Individual training for new Designated Teachers, as required, on the role of the DT, how e-PEP works, the ‘PEP’ and how Children Looked After should be supported in school.

- 21.4** We ran compulsory one to one online sessions for SW where issues arose and were escalated through management. This has directly impacted on our very high completion rates (96.9% in July 2021).
- 21.3** New starter compulsory ePEP training for all Children’s Services workers.
- 21.4** Termly Designated Teacher ‘Arena’- we commission AC training to create bespoke training at the request of our designated teachers.
- 21.5** Training covered this year has included:
- a) Ongoing e-PEP (system) training – has reached 136 Social Workers so far.
 - b) Mental Health and wellbeing in COVID –Mike Armiger –reducing the risk of suicide and self-harm- planning for safety- this exceptionally popular full days training as offered twice (March and June 2021) in total to over 180 delegates- CSC, schools, Virtual School staff and wider professionals in the education and Health directorates in Croydon. The NHS safety planning tools used have now been implemented as standard Risk Assessment tools in CSC.
 - c) The new role of the Designated Teacher-working effectively with CLA in schools- by Penny Todd. (attended by 45 new Designated Teachers
 - d) Online webinars for Social Workers around what to expect of education for different ages
 - e) Online webinars for Year 11s under opportunities in careers- samples of professionals giving advice in 10 key professions- including Law, fashion and beauty, construction, IT and mechanics. Specially designed to support all our young people and especially our black and ethnic minority cohort to see role models from backgrounds similar to themselves.
 - f) Monthly involvement in Course We do and Off the records- training seminars for staff- therapeutic sharing
 - g) Involvement in safe space- VSH is a board member – looking at improving sharing of best practice in equalities and diversity across VS team and cohort

21. Partnership working both external and internal

- 23.1** Continued engagement with the National Association of Virtual School Heads at regional and national level, and more liaison with local Heads- Bromley, Bexley, and Merton as colleagues to informally share practice.

- 23.2** Virtual School participation in various local authority strategy groups – including; *Corporate Parenting Panel, Missing Mondays, Fair Access Panel, Fostering Panel, LAC Managers Meetings, YOS resettlement Panel.*
- 23.3.** Increased ‘cross-border’ working’ with neighbouring Virtual Schools. The challenge here is to meet the needs of Croydon children placed in care out of authority and to support the virtual schools of other authorities that have CLA attending Croydon schools. The VS has liaised in detail with Staffs, Leicester, Birmingham, Hampshire, Surrey and many London Boroughs to secure better outcomes for Young people placed nationally.
- 23.4** The Virtual School has attended the SEN SAG panel and Social Care MARP panel as well as many placement planning meetings (for children moving out of borough). This enables the Virtual School to participate and contribute to key decision making processes and plan for effective and smooth school transitions. We are also a key feature in all Rapid Reviews and Safeguarding partnership meetings, ensuring our knowledge remains up to date.
- 23.5** The Virtual School continues to play a key role in the South London and South East Post 16 Virtual School and DMS network. This network brings together local colleges and post 16 Virtual school representatives to improve the collaborative work across the region between colleges and virtual schools to improve the overall outcomes for post 16 students. This has built stronger links with local virtual schools and colleges leading to an improved sharing of data and good practice to support our young people. There is a new NEET reduction network operating across 6 SL boroughs.
- 23.6** The VS has begun to forge links with South London Adoption partnership- a key area if development in 21-22 is the improvement of our offer and our communication of the offer of advice and guidance to the PLAC community.

22. CONSULTATION

None.

23. FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

None.

24. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

None.

25. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

None

26. EQUALITIES IMPACT

None.

27. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

None.

28. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

None.

29. DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

a. WILL THE SUBJECT OF THE REPORT INVOLVE THE PROCESSING OF 'PERSONAL DATA'?

YES/NO

(If yes, please provide brief details as to what 'personal data' will be processed and complete the next question).

(If no, please complete the sign off)

b. HAS A DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT (DPIA) BEEN COMPLETED?

YES/NO

(If yes, please attach a copy).

(If no, please provide the reason why a DPIA was not completed. Please also attach any relevant advice)

c. "The Director of Education comments that..."

(Approved by: [A. N. Other] on behalf of the Director of XXX)"

CONTACT OFFICER: Sarah Bailey, Head teacher, Virtual School, 0208 726 6000 ext. 88758.

APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT

None.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None