

Committee: Safeguarding Sub-committee	Dated: 04/06/2019
Subject: Virtual School for looked-after children update	Public (except Appendix 1 which is Non-Public)
Report of: Andrew Carter, Director of Community and Children's Services	For Information
Report author: Andrew Russell, Head Teacher, Virtual School for looked-after children and care leavers	

Summary

As the number of young people in care in the City of London increases, so do the numbers in the Virtual School. Since the start of the academic year in September 2018, when the new Head Teacher took over, the numbers have increased by 21 young people, bringing the total to 45. The vast majority are unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people.

To manage this high number of new arrivals, the new Head Teacher set up a tuition class at the Golden Lane Community Centre with the Adult Education Service. In addition, an enrichment project with the CLS was established. A new system of Personal Education Plans has been set up.

There will be an event to celebrate the achievements of our looked-after young people on Wednesday 17 July 2019 in the North Tower lounge at Tower Bridge from noon to 2pm.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.
- Note the need to find additional funding to continue the tuition class all year.

Main Report

Background

1. This report provides an update of the activities of the Virtual School for looked-after children since the Annual Report was presented in the February 2019 meeting.

Current Position

2. There has been a large increase in the number of young people coming into care since the start of the academic year. In total, 21 new people are now on the register of the Virtual School, bringing the total cohort to 45.
3. The young people are aged from 3 to 17 years. Apart from the 3-year-old, the others are all asylum-seeking refugee young people. They are all placed in and around London.
4. The Virtual School seeks to secure education for all the new arrivals as soon as possible. In recognition of the fact that they are all initially placed on the National Transfer Scheme (NTS), it was decided that in-house tuition should be provided while we await the outcome of possible moves to other local authorities. Working with the Adult Education and Skills team, a class was established at the Golden Lane Community Centre, running for three hours a day, three times a week.
5. Provision in the class is based on teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and life-skills activities, plus some visits to local museums and libraries and a trip to watch Ballet Black at the Barbican.
6. The class is very successful and the students enjoy coming to it and enjoy the social aspect too. Some travel more than an hour each way to get there.
7. The plan for the class is for it to be a 'revolving door' provision where students come for a few months before moving on to other local authorities on the NTS. The NTS is no longer functioning effectively, because local authorities around the country are not taking in new referrals, therefore students transfer to their local colleges when deemed ready. Other new arrivals who are initially placed outside London receive home tuition and are then placed directly into their local colleges as soon as possible.
8. To give the students a wider experience, an enrichment project has been set up with the City of London School (CLS). This is a nine-week programme of activities that takes place after the ESOL class on a Tuesday. Members of staff and sixth-form students at CLS join in a range of activities with our group. So far, they have played basketball and football and completed paired reading activities. Coming up will be art, music, drama, science and technology. A quote from the school:
Tuesday was superb! Your students were a delight to have.
9. The series will finish with a 'show-and-tell' event at the school on 3 July 2019.
10. A larger event, the annual 'Celebration of Achievement' lunch will take place in the North Tower lounge at Tower Bridge on 17 July 2019 from noon to 2pm. All Members of the Safeguarding Sub Committee are warmly welcome.
11. All young people in care and in education have three meetings across the school year. These are called Personal Education Plans (PEPs) and are a statutory part of the care plan for young people. The previous system and paperwork did not

facilitate the creation of 'outstanding' PEPs, so a new system and paperwork is now in place. The Head Teacher will quality assure each PEP with the aim that no future PEP is graded less than 'good' with the vast majority graded as 'outstanding'.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

12. The tuition class currently costs around £300 a week to run. It caters for up to 10 young people a week. This is more cost effective than setting up individual tutors for each young person. However, to run this for a whole academic year would cost around £12,000 in staffing costs alone.
13. Income for the Virtual School comes from: a) the City of London Corporation (approx. £15,000); and a government grant (the Pupil Premium for looked-after children). This grant varies each year but is only received for those up to and including the age of 16. This year that grant is approximately £9,000.
14. To continue to offer the class and the full range of services to all our young people in education next year, it will be necessary to put together a Business Plan for around £10,000.

Conclusion

15. An increase in the number of new arrivals has brought extra pressure on the Virtual School offer but also has brought extra opportunities in the new tuition class and the associated enrichment project with CLS.
16. Members are asked to note the impact of this pressure and the need to secure funding to run the class all year. Members are also warmly invited to the Celebration event on Wednesday 17 July 2019 in the North Tower lounge at Tower Bridge from noon to 2pm.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – **non-public** – photographs of the activities at enrichment sessions.

Andrew Russell

Head teacher, Virtual School for looked-after children and care leavers

T: 020 7332 3047

E: andrew.russell@cityoflondon.gov.uk