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Date: 20.03.20 Our ref: Virtual School Children in Care COVID-19

Dear Foster Carers/ Parents and Social Care Colleagues,

COVID-19 and CIC

Education establishments are working exceptionally hard in unprecedented circumstances to try to find solutions to the latest Government announcements in relation to school closures while remaining open for the vulnerable students including Children in Care.

Firstly I wanted to reiterate to you all that the Virtual School is here to support you all during this challenging time, in any way we can. Once schools have an idea of what the provision is going to look like in practice for our children in care they will share this with the Virtual School, foster carers/parents and social care colleagues. Although many of our Children in Care do not like to be singled out as CIC, the Government guidance is clear that schools will remain open for vulnerable groups including CIC to attend schools. We appreciate that this is a difficult time of uncertainty for all. As Corporate Parents along with Social Care colleagues we are actively encouraging foster carers/ parents/ guardians to support the latest Government guidance in encouraging our CIC to attend.

Attendance

The Virtual School requests that schools continue to record and submit attendance daily for our Children in Care. We will continue to analyse daily attendance reports and follow up any discrepancies to collectively ensure our children are safe.

PEPS

In accordance with the latest government guidance, the Virtual School expects that PEPs already planned for the remainder of the Spring term 2020 will be completed by the Designated Teacher and submitted to the Virtual School. We appreciate that schools may not be accepting visitors into schools. Should this be the case, the Designated Teacher can telephone the Virtual School Case worker at the specified PEP Meeting time to discuss SMART Targets, progress etc. The Designated Teacher can then complete the PEP online as usual and return to the Virtual School Case worker within the agreed timeframe. The Virtual School case worker and the allocated Social Worker will then be in receipt of the completed PEP and will be able to share wider with foster carers/ parents once it has gone through the quality assurance process.

PEPs for Telford & Wrekin Children in Care placed outside of area can still continue as planned. However, there will be no representation from the Virtual School Team. PEPs will be completed online and returned to the Virtual School as per policy and timeframe. The Virtual School case worker and the allocated Social Worker will then be in receipt of the completed PEP and will be able to share wider with foster carers/ parents once it has gone through the quality assurance process.

Summer PEPs

The PEP Coordinator will continue to schedule dates for the Summer term PEPs and will liaise with schools directly regarding the format of the meetings. We are also exploring the possibility of releasing the Summer Term PPG payment of £500 to schools early after Easter to support schools in the allocation of additional support or resources to prevent delay.

CIC Self isolating

Schools are required to inform the Virtual School on the first day of a CIC self-isolating due to either (i) showing signs/ symptoms of COV-19 or (ii) members of their household showing signs/ symptoms.

This will enable us to continue to track these pupils and liaise with the relevant professionals. We also have a comprehensive list of resources which will be shared with foster carers/ parents/ residential placements to support CIC during the self-isolation period.

Resources to support CIC

A list of resources is attached to support schools. The Virtual School is currently collating a more comprehensive bank of resources to share with schools which will be available on our website by the end of next week. https://www.telford.gov.uk/info/20642/virtual_school_for_children_in_care

Other useful links

Parents and schools can keep up to date with the latest advice on how to protect themselves and others and what to do if they feel ill at www.nhs.uk/coronavirus and visit www.gov.uk/coronavirus for up to date advice on how the government is responding.

The Department for Education coronavirus helpline is now available to answer questions about COVID-19 relating to education and children's social care. Staff, parents and young people can contact this helpline as follows:

Phone: 0800 046 8687

Email: DfE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk

Opening hours: 8am to 6pm (Monday to Friday)

Going forward, there will continue to be lots of issues to resolve and questions to answer as the situation evolves. The Virtual School team are here to support you with our Children in Care. Please do not hesitate to contact the Virtual School directly for further clarification, advice support and guidance.

Take care, stay safe and healthy

Yours sincerely

Michelle Salter Virtual School Headteacher