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Date: 20.04.20 Our ref: Virtual School COVID-19 and CIC

Dear Head Teachers, Designated Teachers and Nominated Governors for Children in Care,

COVID-19 and CIC

As a Virtual School, we very much appreciate that schools 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 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. Through further weekly consultation with social care colleagues in relation to our Children in Care, a joint decision has been made that for CIC who are in stable placements, they do not need to attend their school. All CIC are reviewed weekly through consultation with VSH and Social Care colleagues including the Fostering Team. Schools are to continue to provide educational resources which will support their learning at home. Social workers will be in contact with schools directly to clarify where a child in care needs to be supported in school. It is paramount that other vulnerable children and the children of critical workers, on whom we depend through this crisis, are given the security and support that the school can offer in these ever changing, challenging times.

Weekly Updates

The Virtual School team case workers have been liaising closely with Designated Teachers in terms of weekly updates, and in some cases daily updates to the VSH for more complex cases. We thank you all for this close working relationship. Your updates feed into the bigger picture ensuring that our CIC are safe, well and accessing learning in whatever form that currently may be. We request that these updates and close liaison with the VST continues into the summer term.

PEPS

In accordance with the latest government guidance, the Virtual School expects that in the first instance Summer Term PEPs will be completed virtually. We appreciate that these are unprecedented times and many of our CIC are completing their time at a placement / at home completing work set by the education provider. It is still paramount that all CIC are tracked termly



as this information is fed into the wider CIC Care Plan and reviewed by Education, Social Care and Independent Reviewing Officers. As such, there will be no PPG issued in the summer term initially. Instead, we will explore with schools the distribution of funds to ensure a smooth transition back into full time education.

Targets and general education, including SEMH needs, will be discussed via the 'Virtual PEP'. PEPs will continue to be completed by the Designated Teacher and submitted to the Virtual School within the specific timeframe. The Virtual School case worker will continue to apply the QA process in relation to PEP completion. The Virtual School case worker and the allocated Social Worker will then be in receipt of the completed PEP and share more widely as appropriate.

As always, the Designated Teacher can telephone or email the Virtual School case worker or Virtual School Headteacher for further advice and support if required.

Attendance

Thank you to all of the schools that have been returning the DfE attendance spreadsheet to the COVID19@telford.gov.uk mailbox. It is reassuring to see that most schools are using this. The Virtual School Team are using the information you return to help track the most vulnerable Children in Care to ensure that they are safe. Please continue to send this in on a daily basis; if you haven't been sharing this, please do, as it makes it so much easier to ensure young people are safe.

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 which can be used in addition to the resources supplied by school. We will continue to update and share our resources with all stakeholders.

Previously Looked After Children

*The latest DfE guidance issued 3.04.2020 COVID-19 guidance for LEAs on Children's social care draws attention to the following: **Are adopted children entitled to attend education?***

Places in educational settings are reserved for children of critical workers and vulnerable children. Vulnerable children include children who are supported by social care, and those with safeguarding and welfare needs. Full guidance on eligibility can be found in [maintaining education provision](#).

Leaders of educational settings and local authorities know who their most vulnerable children are and will have the flexibility to offer a place to those on the edges of receiving children's social care support.

This could include adopted children or children subject to special guardianship orders or wider kinship placements. For some of these children, attending education would best meet their needs and may stop a placement breakdown. Local authorities and education settings should therefore sympathetically consider requests from adoptive parents and special guardian carers. These should be assessed on a case by case basis, taking into account the additional needs of many of these children and advice from local authority Virtual School Heads.

Therefore, in the first instance, I would request that schools contact the VSH for further support/ advice and guidance in relation to Previously Looked After Children.

Resources to support CIC

The Virtual School is continuing to develop a more comprehensive bank of resources which can be found on our webpage

https://www.telford.gov.uk/info/20642/virtual_school_for_children_in_care

In collaboration with the West Midlands Virtual School Heads and Arts Connect, a further website has been launched. Please share widely and let's get the gallery going with pictures from this week's challenge!

<https://www.artslinkwm.org.uk/>

Going forward, there will continue to be lots of issues to resolve and questions to answer as the situation evolves. We appreciate how difficult this must be for schools and we wanted to extend a huge thank you to all of you. I know each and every one of you are going over and above to support our Children in Care during these exceptional times.

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