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Message from the Virtual School Team July 2020

Firstly the Virtual School Team & I want to extend our gratitude and admiration to you all, during these extremely unprecedented times. We appreciate how difficult it must have been since the pandemic's arrival, partial lockdown and adjusting to the new ways of working. Despite all of this our most vulnerable children in care have been truly supported by a variety of stakeholders. We know that you all have gone 'above and beyond'. The VST report communications with schools, social care colleagues, young people and foster carers have gone from strength to strength.

Further evidence of this is: attendance for our children in care is in the **top quartile nationally**. PEP completion rates for 2-18 year olds continues to remain at **100%** term on term and all our PEPS have been completed virtually via Microsoft Teams- many of our YP report they prefer this method. **In the autumn term all PEPs will continue to be held remotely via Microsoft Teams.** The quality of the PEPs has continued to rise and for the first time ever, our termly PEP percentages for SMART targets for compulsory school age CIC is reported at **96%**, which is amazing, I'm sure you will agree. Placements have remained stable and the number of placement breakdowns has been very few; significantly lower than we anticipated due to the pressure of COVID. This is due to the 'team around a young person' approach and the effective communication between VST, Fostering teams, Social workers and school colleagues. Through early intervention and creative thinking; placements have continued to remain stable and **over 70%** of our CIC compulsory school age are accessing education, with 10% shielding and the remaining 20% self-studying at placement.

We have worked in collaboration with Arts Link West Midlands Virtual Schools and provided over 200 arts packs to our young people. Many of you have sent in art work pieces which look great! We have planned a variety of online Virtual Arts activities for the summer break with a Festival Art theme. For more information please visit <https://www.artslinkwm.org.uk/>

In addition we have continued to work closely with *Smash life* through lock down and beyond! Using Instagram live- social media platform sessions have been live streamed on *Smash life* Instagram, twice a week initially with a variety of guest speakers with a thread of SEMH focus throughout.



Hopefully many of you were able to join the one of the two commissioned CPD sessions aimed at Designated Teachers, wider professionals, foster carers and parents led by Lisa Cherry focusing on the recovery model for Children in Care at the end of June- feedback received has been positive. We aim to also have the recording on our Virtual School webpage. Our PEP Coordinator has done a sterling job in developing our Virtual School webpages and there are a variety of tools, information and resources available.

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

In collaboration with Pupil Support Services Led by BSAT, **free CPD** has also been offered to schools regarding the 'Recovery, Reset and Reform' model to support vulnerable pupils and transition back into school. Please contact Darren Lennon, Head Teacher at the Linden Centre/ BSAT, directly if you are interested in this offer. Many schools have already taken up this offer and the feedback has been positive to date.

We will continue with our ambitious plan that within three years all schools in Telford & Wrekin are accredited as 'Attachment & Trauma Informed Schools'. Many of you have started this process by joining and completing the online SEF with Attachment Research Community (ARC). Further details can be found at <https://the-arc.org.uk/> The Alex Timpson ARC attachment awards recognises and celebrates best practice in attachment and trauma aware schools and settings. Identified Telford & Wrekin schools have been nominated and once regional nominations have been received, five schools or settings from across the country will be shortlisted.

The most recent ILAC Ofsted reports comments that 'Children **are cared for and cared about**' we are very proud to report that the Virtual School - as part of Children's Services - was graded Outstanding.

Next academic year will we continue to focus on the 'Recovery, Reset and Reform' model to support schools further. We will embed our training offer for schools linked to Youth Mental Health First Aid, Attachment and Trauma Informed practice. We'll also launch our first ever 'Children in Care Conference' in the Spring term and celebrate our annual awards evening also in the Spring term (delayed from the autumn term). We will get outdoors and back to nature with Arthog, on a year 6 residential, hold our 2nd Virtual School conference for Designated Teachers & Nominated Governors for CIC in the Summer term and embark on some exciting research projects, linked to attachment and improving outcomes for CIC... As well as all of this, we will continue to ensure we achieve 100% PEP completion and work in collaboration with all stakeholders to apply early intervention to support schools.

The Virtual School mailbox- virtualschool@telford.gov.uk will only be checked intermittently during the summer break from **24th July until the 1st September** so we kindly request that for urgent matters, please contact social care colleagues directly.

On behalf of the Virtual School Team, we wish you all a restful and relaxing summer break.

Take Care, stay safe and well.

Kindest Regards



Michelle Salter
Virtual School Headteacher