REPORT TO:	Corporate Parenting Panel 2017
AGENDA ITEM:	6
SUBJECT:	Virtual School Report
LEAD OFFICER:	Barbara Peacock , Executive Director of People Department
CABINET MEMBER:	Alisa Flemming, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Learning
WARDS:	ALL

CORPORATE PRIORITY/POLICY CONTEXT:

CYPL Service Plan

- Enjoying and Achieving

CYPL Departmental Plan

- Improve the outcomes for vulnerable and underachieving groups

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The Virtual School is currently funded by the schools forum through the High Needs DSG Block, with the exception of the Head of the Virtual School post which is funded by the local authority.

FORWARD PLAN KEY DECISION REFERENCE NO: N/A

---

1. RECOMMENDATION

1.1 Corporate Parenting Panel to note the report which is an update on education outcomes for Croydon's Looked After Children.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1. Responsibility to promote the educational achievement of looked after children has been a statutory duty placed upon Local Authorities since the Children Act 1989 ("the 1989 Act") (as amended by the Children and Families Act 2014). The Children and Families Act 2014 amended the Children Act 1989 to require local authorities in England to appoint at least one person for the purpose of discharging the local authority's duty to promote the educational achievements of its Children Looked After, wherever they live or are educated. That person, the Head of the Virtual School must be an officer employed by the authority or another local authority in England.

3. DETAIL OF YOUR REPORT

3.1 The report on educational achievement of Croydon's looked after children is appended.

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 This report has been produced in collaboration with schools.

5 FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 There are no financial considerations arising from this report.

6. COMMENTS OF THE COUNCIL SOLICITOR AND MONITORING OFFICER

6.1 There are not legal implications of this report.

7. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

7.1 There are not Human Resources implications of this report.

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.1 This report is not proposing a change in policy or service. The Virtual School is provided using the underpinning principle the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy.

The procedures and associated practice guidance are all part if the underpinning principles of the legislation surrounding CLA and procedures of the Children Act. We are looking to use Fischer Family Trust and NCER CLA project to look at data comparisons.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

9.1 There are no environmental implications of this report.

10. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

10.1 There are no crime and disorder implications of this report.

CONTACT OFFICER: Gill Manton, Head of the Virtual School (gill.manton@croydon.gov.uk)

1.BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
Not applicable

THE WORK OF THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL

1.1 This report covers the work undertaken by Croydon Virtual School for the academic year 2015/16. Croydon Virtual School continues to actively monitor, support and advocate for its large, complex and unique Looked After Children population and this work has contributed to many positive outcomes, which are not always recognised or reflected in the national statistics but are evident throughout this report.

1.2 In September 2016 Gill Manton was appointed as the new Head of the Virtual School with a determined focus to improve outcomes for our Looked After Children. This report also sets out how this will be achieved.

1.3.Ensuring that Children Looked After receive a high quality education is the foundation for improving their lives. Children Looked After have poorer educational outcomes than non-looked after children. They still face significant challenges with a high proportion (61%) having special educational needs compared to 15% of all children nationally. During the year ending 31 March 2016 0.13% of Children Looked After have been permanently excluded – this is broadly stable following a period of decline in recent years. CLA are twice as likely to be permanently excluded from school and 5 times more likely to have fixed period exclusions that all children.

1.4 As of 31 March 2016, there were 70,440 looked after children in England, an increase of 970 (1%) on 2015, and an increase of 3,370 (5%) on 2012. In 2012, 59 children per 10,000 of the population were looked after; in 2016 the rate was 60 children per 10,000 of the population. The rise over time reflects the higher number of children starting to be looked after than ceasing. In particular, in the latest year, we have seen a rise in the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children in care, with 3,440 unaccompanied asylum seeking children entering care, and 1,980 leaving care. Many of the changes seen in the characteristics of the looked after children population as a whole have been influenced by this increase, resulting in a rise in the number of children aged 16 and over, and a rise in the number of children with an ethnic background of 'Any other Asian', 'African' or 'Any other ethnic group'. If we remove unaccompanied asylum seeking children from the count of Croydons' looked after children, we see that there has been a decrease in the looked after children population of 500 (1%) since 2015.

1.5 The Department for Education report "*Outcomes for Children Looked Afte by Las: 31 March 2015*" (the most recent published national data available) summarises the national picture. It showed that in 2015 14% per cent of children looked after who have been looked after for at least a year achieved five good GCSEs including English and Maths, compared to 53% per cent for non-looked after children. This is an increase on the 12% achieving the same results on the previous year. Attainment for Children Looked After at Key Stage 2 continues to improve with increases seen in all subjects. The largest increase was in grammar, punctuation and spelling, where the percentage achieving level 4 or above increased by 5% on last year, to 54%. The headline measure, percentage achieving level 4 or above in reading, writing and mathematics increased by 4 percentage points to 52% nationally. Key stage 1 attainment for looked after children continues to improve – increasing slightly for both mathematics and writing and remaining stable for reading. 73% achieved level 2 or above in

mathematics, up from 72% last year, 71% achieved level 2 or above in reading, the same as last year, and 63% achieved level 2 or above in writing, up from 61% last year.

1.6 The national picture for attainment at key stage 1 in writing and mathematics improves slightly but stabilises for reading for Children looked after in England for at least 12 months at 31 March . The comparison to non-looked after children, attainment for looked after children is much lower. The largest difference is in writing where in 2015 only 63% of looked after children achieved level 2 or above compared to 88% of non-looked after children.

1.7 Natioanlly, attainment for looked after children at key stage 2 also continues to improve. The headline measure, achieving level 4 or above in reading, writing and mathematics, increased to 52%, up four percentage points on last year and up from 42% in 2012. Rises have been seen across all individual subjects, continuing year-on-year trends. Nationally, however, key stage 2 attainment for looked after children is lower than for non-looked after children, although slightly higher than children in need (see table 2). The table below shows percentage attainment figures at key stage 2 for looked after children in England,

	Children looked after for at least 12 months at 31 March, 2011 to 2015, non-looked after children and children in need, 2015 Looked after children					Non-looked after children	Children in need1
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2015**	**2015**
Reading	59	64	63	68	71	89	64
Writing	.	51	55	59	61	87	58
Mathematics	52	56	59	60	64	87	60
Grammar, punctuation and spelling	.	.	45	49	54	80	50
Reading, writing and mathematics	.	42	45	48	52	80	49

Table 2: Attainment at key 2 for children looked after

1.8 The table below shows percentage attainment figures at key stage 4 for looked after children in England:

	Looked after children		Non-looked after children	Children in need[4]
	2014	**2015**	**2015**	**2015**
5 A*-C GCSEs or equivalent including English and mathematics	12	14	53	15
5 A*-C GCSEs or equivalent	17	18	64	19
A*-C in English and mathematics	14	16	55	..

Source: CLA-NPD, CIN-NPD

This information provides the national picture and sets the context for the outcomes for Croydon Looked After Children.

2 Unaccompanied asylum seeking children

2.1 The number of unaccompanied asylum seekers (UASC) has continued to rise, it has increased steadily over the last eight years. There were 70,440 looked after children at 31st March 2016, an increase of 1% compared to 31st March 2015 and an increase of 5% compared to 2012. The rise this year reflects a rise of 1,470 in unaccompanied asylum seeking children, compared to a rise of 970 in all looked after children. In 2016, the number of foster care continued to rise, of the 70,440 looked after children at 31 March 2016, 51,850 (74%) were cared for in foster placements – the same proportion as last year. In 2016 the number of looked after unaccompanied asylum seeking children increased by 54% compared to last year's figures, up to 4,210 children at 31st March 2016 from 2,740 in 2015 and up from a low of 1,950 in 2013. At 31st March, unaccompanied asylum seeking children represented 6% of the looked after children population.

2.2 Unaccompanied asylum seeking children are not located evenly across the country; there are higher numbers in the local authorities where there are access routes into the UK. Kent have seen a 136% rise in the latest year, up to 865 looked after at 31 March 2016 – 21% of all unaccompanied asylum seeking children. Croydon had a further 430 children which represents a 10% increase. Two thirds of all unaccompanied asylum seeking children (66%) were located in London and the South East and a further 11% were in the East of England as at March 31 2016.

3. The Virtual School in Croydon

3.1 The Virtual School in Croydon exists to:
- Support schools and settings to raise achievement of all Looked After Children
- Improve joint working between all involved in a child's education
- Track improvement of the progress and attainment made by Looked After Children in order to be able to target intervention and, through these aims, to
- Ensure the best outcomes possible for all Looked After Children

3.2 The Virtual School does this by:

- **To support schools and settings to raise achievement of all Children Looked After (CLA) :**
  - ➢ Ensure that all CLA have a robust and effective Personal Education Plan and monitor and track the effectiveness of Pupil Premium Grant.
  - ➢ Track and improve outcomes for the most vulnerable CLA from early years to post 16 including: children with special educational needs and disabilities, unaccompanied asylum seekers, children who are placed out of Borough and in residential care
  - ➢ Engage and train designated teachers and practitioners to improve progress and transitions for CLA.
  - ➢ Negotiate access to education for vulnerable care leavers with further and higher education providers to improve attainment.
  - ➢ Develop 'ready for school' hubs around the Borough to support the increase in UASC.

- **Improved Joint Working**
  - ➢ Ensure that the Virtual School meets both local and national priorities
  - ➢ Engagement CLA in the design and delivery of services.
  - ➢ Work with 'Octavo' to drive improvement in outcomes of Children Looked After
  - ➢ Develop additional employment training opportunities for CLA and care leavers

- ➢ Increase the percentage of care leavers accessing further education..
- ➢ Increase employment skills and work readiness for care leavers and reduce the number of CLA young people not in education, employment or training (NEET).
- ➢ Develop new or use existing structures to support work with social workers, foster carers and Designated Teachers.
- ➢ Inform and train governing bodies in respect of their statutory responsibilities, particularly for pupil premium plus.

- **To track improvement of CLA progress and attainment using data analysis**
- ➢ Improve educational outcomes for children and young people at the end of all key stages and Post 16.
- ➢ Robustly track data within the Virtual School to support effective target setting and intervention
- ➢ Improve tracking and analysis of achievement at the end of each key stage.
- ➢ Ensure effective governance and impact of Pupil Premium in all schools for CLA children in Croydon.

3.3 In order to support us to achieve these objectives and raise the educational outcomes and aspirations for all Children Looked After under the care of Croydon, we expect schools to commit to partnership working and implement the following:

- ➢ Ensure that there is a designated teacher who is best placed within your school to be responsible for the welfare of Children Looked After and their contact details are shared with the Virtual School as the point of contact for all communications
- ➢ Provide termly data through completion of the Virtual School Tracker form (sent to all designated teachers)
- ➢ Provide End of KS2 and 4 results for the previous academic year's cohorts, where applicable.
- ➢ Inform the Virtual School of any changes to your school roll in respect of Children Looked After, including any exclusions.
- ➢ Contact the Virtual School with any concerns, requests, suggestions which will impact on positive outcomes for Children Looked After.
- ➢ Ensure relevant persons attend training provided by the Virtual School to inform and support best practice and policy with respect to Children Looked After.
- ➢ Provide a timely response to offers of provision or requests for information.
- ➢ Attend Personal Education Plan meetings.

4. Outcomes for Children Looked After Children in Croydon

4.1. Attainment of Children Looked After by the Local Authority can vary widely from year to year due to cohort sizes and other factors that contribute significantly such as Special Educational Needs and the length of time children have been in care. It is also important to consider the considerable number of children looked after by Croydon who are UASC (unaccompanied asylum seeking children) compared to statistical neighbours such as Merton and Greenwich Borough Councils. The number of CLA in Croydon as at March 2016 was a total of 800 children compared to 165 in Merton and 520 in Greenwich. In addition to this, the UASC population in Croydon as

at March 2016 was 430, whilst the London Borough of Merton looked after 25 and London Borough of Greenwich looked after 20 in the same time period. This difference makes comparisons with other Local Authorities difficult.

4.2 Although outcomes for Croydon CLA who have been in continuous care for 12 months or more remain low, with 36%, 27% and 18% achieving age related expectations or above in reading, writing and maths, with 18% achieving all three at the end of KS2 and 14.8% (based on unvalidated results) achieving 5 A*-C EM at the end of KS4, it is important to reflect that those who contribute to the national statistics are a small percentage in many cases of the total cohort within those year groups. For example in Year 11 the total cohort size at the end of the 2015/16 academic year was 178, with only 74 contributing to national indicators. These young people, a large percentage of whom are UASC, still need to be supported and in many cases are the most challenging with no education experience or provision in place when they enter the care system. These learners go on to make considerable progress, achieving at a level appropriate to their starting point and are successfully supported into suitable courses post 16. The successes enjoyed by our post 16 learners are testament to this and a result of the heavy investment made into this area of work.

4.2.1 The **Key stage 1** CLA cohort consisted of 12 young people, however, only 7 of these have been in continuous care for 12 months or more and hence will contribute to the national statistics presented by the Department for Education for the 2015/16 academic year. Of the 7 eligible CLA, 3 have statements of SEN and 2 are on additional support packages. The targets for 2015/16 were set using data gathered from schools for Reading, Writing & Maths were 33%, 22% and 56% respectively in the previous year. The actual attainment for 2015/16 over the whole eligible cohort were 43%, 14% and 43%. Two students out of the 7 eligible students did not sit SATS, this is 29% of the eligible cohort. Overall statistics show that this cohort did not reach age related expectations in combined Reading, Writing and Maths which is reflective of the needs and abilities of this cohort. It should be noted however, when looking at their achievements in each subject, 4 children exceeded age related expectations in reading; three children in writing and 2 in maths at key stage 1.

4.2.2 **Key Stage 2** the Year 6 cohort who contribute to national statistics consisted of 11 CLA pupils, 6 of whom had either a Statement of Special Educational Needs, an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP) or were receiving significant levels of in-school support. The attainment of the cohort in reading, writing and maths at the end of KS2 was 36%, 27% and 18% respectively which is below age related expectations. It should however be noted that, 2 children successfully reached the aged related expectations in combined Reading, Writing and Maths. In addition to this, 3 children exceeded in reading; 2 exceeded in writing and 2 exceeded in maths at the end of key stage 2. National figures for comparison are not yet available.

4.2.3 Our focus has and will continue to be to improve results in both KS1 and KS2 by working with Designated Teachers to set the PEP targets and identifying the support that can be provided in school for students that are underachieving by utilising the Pupil Premium Plus.

4.2.4. At **KS4**, Croydon has one of the highest cohort sizes compared to other London Boroughs. As a Virtual School we support the whole Year 11 cohort which equates to 178 learners, 123 of whom are UASC and 14 who have SEN. Due to our high number of UASC in the Year 11 cohort, whose results are not reported when they have been in education in the country for less than 12 months, and their age on arrival in the

country, only 74 children in the cohort contribute to reported statistics. Of the 104 who have been in care for less than 12 months, there were only 5 who were sitting 5 or more GCSE's. 6 of Croydon's Looked After Children achieved 9 or more A*-C at GCSE including English and Mathematics. Our UASC population come to the UK having had a wide variety of educational experiences and a number have had little or no experience of education at all.

4.2.5 For children that have been in care for 5 years or more, the cohort size was 19 and all but three achieved GCSE qualifications, with 6 achieving the 5 A*-C including English and Mathematics benchmark. The three learners wh did not achieve any GCSE qualification all had Statements or Education Health and Care Plans and were attending Special Schools working at P levels. For the UASC undertaking ESOL qualifications, most passed at their respective levels and were assessed by their educational provision as having made good in year progress.

4.2.6 Post 16 CLA/Care Leavers
The Post 16 Personal Advisers worked with approximately 300 young people sourcing suitable provision. The numbers of CLA and Care Leavers studying were broadly similar to last year (60 learners in 2014/15 and 54 learners in 2015/16). This is 10.8% of those in education (400) and 9.2% of the whole 16-19 cohort including the NEET young people (586). The attainment outcomes are as follows: 2 students studied at AS level and achieved 3 Grade A's; 5 students studied AS/A2 level and achieved a Grade B; 5 students AS/A2 level and achieved Grade C; 9 students studied a BTEC level 3 with three passing, including 4 merits and 8 distinctions.

4.2.7. Attendance/Exclusions
For 2015/16 the average attendance was 91.68%, a decrease on the previous year, with an average unauthorised absence of 2.79% which is better than the yearly target of 4%. For Children Looked After of statutory school age, 16% have attendance below 85% which equates to 71 students. (37 in borough, 34 out of borough). This is a 3% increase on the previous year.

4.2.8 In relation to Children Looked After fixed term exclusions, for the 2015/16 academic year, we recorded 11 primary pupils with one or more fixed-term exclusion (11.2%) and 50 secondary aged pupils (11.2%).

5. Focus for future action

5.1 In September 2016 a new Head of the Virtual School was appointed by the Local Authority. In her first 4 months in post, along with her Virtual School leadership team, she has identified the following areas for action in order to improve outcomes for Croydon's Looked After Children.

- To improve the completion rate and quality of PEPs /pathways plans
- To monitor Pupil Premium plus to ensure effective good quality support and intervention offered by schools and partner agencies is in place.
- To maximise progress and close the attainment gap for Children Looked After and Care Leavers by using data analysis more rigorously to identify key priorities at KS2, KS4 and KS5, informing practice and targeting resources

- To improve transition for Children Looked After from year 6 into year 7 to eliminate the dip in attendance/attainment/progress and for Year 11 into sustained further education or training.
- To reduce the time that our Looked After Children are out of education, particularly newly arrived UASC.
- To enable UASC to improve English skills at the earliest opportunity through developing the interim provision.
- To build on the programme and current offer to improve mental/emotional health and well-being of Looked After Children.
- To reduce Looked After Children NEET statistics by supporting young people wanting to engage with education and supporting those than are not, working with partner agencies to ensure an attractive course offer for Post 16 Looked After Children and Care Leavers and enhancing the support for level 3 learners to aid progression to HE or higher level apprenticeships.
- To continue to forge and strengthen relationships with other agencies and community groups to support our work with Looked After Children.
- To improve the knowledge of Designated Teachers/members of staff, social workers, key workers and foster carers to support Looked After Children and Care Leavers through termly network forums, regular training and sharing of good practice.
- To develop a wider enrichment offer for Looked After Children and Care Leavers in order to raise aspirations and increase learner confidence and experience.

5.2.Croydon Virtual School continues to actively monitor, support and advocate for its large, complex and unique Looked After population, ensuring that Children looked After receive a high quality education as this is the foundation for improving their lives.