Coventry City Council

Briefing note

To: Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)
Date: 19th July 2018

Subject: The Virtual School for Looked After Children

---

1   Purpose of the Note

1.1   To inform the members of the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) of the work of the virtual school for looked after children.

2   Recommendations

2.1   The Education and Children's Scrutiny Board (2) are recommended to:

      1) Consider the content of the briefing note

      2) Identify any further recommendations for the Cabinet Member

3   Information/Background

3.1   **The reporting cycle and parameters:**

3.2   The Virtual School is able to make preliminary reports on outcomes for KS4 (Key Stage) covering most of the Accountability Measures for secondary schools and other headlines of interest, immediately after the release of the GCSE results in August. The data at this stage has however not been validated by the Department of Education (DfE) and is not so validated until at least the following March. Outcomes reported in the autumn maybe subject to small errors in reporting from schools and cannot account for any subsequent re-marks. Numbers making 'expected progress' can be estimated at this stage, but the final Progress 8 outcome for the Virtual School is not available until the validated data is published. Neither can the performance of Coventry Looked After Children be compared to national Looked After Children attainment, or that of our statistical neighbours, until the release of this data.

3.3   At the time of writing (June 2018), we *are* able to fully report on the validated data for 2016 and 2017, including Progress 8. In autumn 2018, we will be able to report on the preliminary data for the current year 11 cohort; and on the validated data in the following Spring.

3.4   Please note, due to the new attainment and progress measures introduced in 2016 (explained below), and because of the on-going changes to the grading system of GCSEs, comparisons between current data and attainment measures prior to 2016 are no longer reliable.

3.5   In line with DfE requirements, the cohort reported on is known as OC2; that is, those students who have been in care for a least one year beginning 1st of the April of the previous financial year.

3.6 **Explanation of Attainment 8:**

3.7 This is the reporting headline which replaces the old head-count of children achieving 5 or 9 GCSEs at A*-C or A*-G. Attainment 8 measures the individual's achievement across eight qualifications from four categories; mathematics (double weighted), English (where both language and literature are taken the highest is double weighted), three GCSEs that count in the English Baccalaureate (EBacc), and three further qualifications that can be either GCSEs or equivalents from the DfE approved list. Each individual grade a pupil achieves is assigned a point score, which is then used to calculate a pupil's Attainment 8 score. The individual scores are then averaged to produce the final Attainment 8 score for the school.

3.8 **Changes to GCSE grading and impact on Attainment 8:**

3.9 We should also be aware that the on-going move to the new 1-9 grading structure for GCSEs may impact upon the Attainment 8 outcomes year on year. This is due the two grading systems are not an exact map in terms of their scoring toward Attainment 8. Under the A*-G system an A* attracts 8.5 points, whereas under the new system 9 points are possible and awarded for a Grade 9. In 2016 GCSEs were still graded A*-G. In 2017, English and Maths were graded on the new 1-9 scale, but other subjects were graded A*-G. In 2018, most GCSEs will be graded 1-9 with a few 'legacy' GCSEs still graded A*-G.
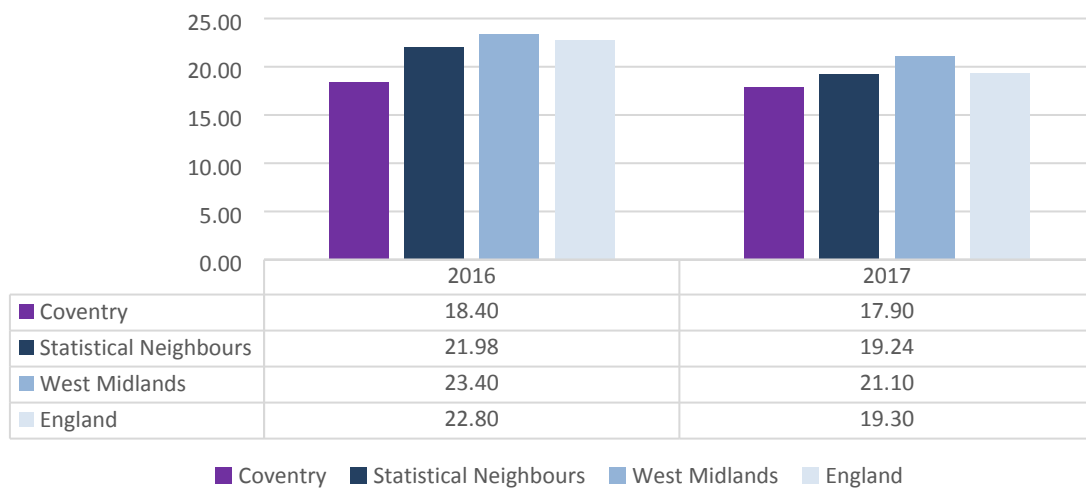
3.10 **Explanation of Progress 8:**

3.11 Also introduced in 2016, Progress 8 quantifies the progress made between each individual's starting point; i.e. their end key stage 2 score, to their key stage 4 outcome; i.e. attainment 8. The result of this calculation is of no personal import the individual child, but is made to enable a further set of calculations, which facilitate comparisons between the 'progress made' by the children in one school with the actual achievements of other pupils with similar prior attainment. As such, it is a type of 'value added' measurement. A score of 0 for the school means that the pupils' overall progress meets the expected standard. In simple terms, any minus figure represents progress which is less than expected, and any positive score represents progress above the expected standard.

3.12 Progress scores for cohorts of looked after children, because of their additional vulnerabilities, are typically less good than those of peer groups. Indeed, in 2017, no local authority had a Progress 8 score for looked after children equal to or greater than 0.

4 Outcomes for Coventry Children

4.1 **Average Attainment 8 Outcome for Coventry Virtual School:**

4.2 Below are the Attainment 8 scores for the Coventry Virtual School compared to other Virtual Schools regionally and nationally, across the two years for which this measurement has been in place. Coventry's statistical neighbours, that is an average from those Virtual Schools in other authorities considered most similar to Coventry across a range of socio-economic factors, are also used as a comparator.

The attainment 8 score of Coventry CLA compared to other CLA in 2016 and 2017

	2016	2017
■ Coventry	18.40	17.90
■ Statistical Neighbours	21.98	19.24
■ West Midlands	23.40	21.10
■ England	22.80	19.30

Coventry ■ Statistical Neighbours ■ West Midlands ■ England

[Source: Gov.uk]

4.3 **Progress 8 score for Coventry Virtual School**

4.4 Below is the Progress 8 score for the Coventry Virtual School compared to other Virtual Schools regionally, nationally and amongst our statistical neighbours, across the two years for which this measurement has been in place.

The progress 8 score compared to other children in 2016 and 2017

	2016	2017
■ Coventry	-1.40	-1.27
■ Statistical Neighbours	-1.16	-1.26
■ West Midlands	-1.07	-0.99
■ England	-1.14	-1.18

■ Coventry ■ Statistical Neighbours ■ West Midlands ■ England

[Source: gov.uk]

4.5 Factors other than pupil performance can impact upon Progress 8 and attainment 8 scores. For instance, the lists of qualifications approved by the DfE as counting toward progress and attainment 8 changes from year to year and this can affect the scoring. Consequently, the dip in attainment 8 score of 0.5 points between 2016 and 2017, should be read against the national trend for all pupils and the Looked After Children of our statistical neighbours, and is best understood in terms of the progress 'gap' between our children and those of other groups.

4.6 Nationally, there was a dip of 3.7 points for all pupils and 3.5 attainment 8 points for all Looked After Children. The dip for our statistical neighbours was 2.74 points. That our children have done comparatively very well is underscored by the fact that the old GCSE count (which includes qualifications that are approved but do not fit the counting 'buckets' for attainment 8) actually rose from 6% attaining 5 A* - C (or equivalents) in 2016 to 12.5% in 2017.

4.7 Moreover, Coventry Virtual School has experienced a significant improvement in progress made by our children and a closing of the 'progress gap', narrowing its positioning in comparison to its statistical, regional and national neighbours. The Progress 8 score for Coventry Virtual School improved by +0.13 between 2016 and 2017, greater than the improvement experienced by our statistical neighbours, with whom our performance is now more in line.

5 English and Maths

5.1 Along with the reporting requirements for Attainment 8 and Progress 8, from 2017 schools will report on the percentage of children obtaining English and Maths at grade 4 and above and at grade 5 and above. A grade C under the A*-G scheme attracts 4 points and is thus broadly speaking equivalent to a grade 4. As the schemes are not an exact map, a cross year comparison on 2017's data is likely to be unreliable and is not attempted here.

5.2 In 2017, Gov.uk gives the percentage passing English and Maths at grade 4 or better as 18.75%. Coventry's score for those passing at grade 5 is, however, suppressed due to the small size of the cohort. The National Consortium for Examination Result give the figure of 14.6% of Coventry Looked After Children passing English at grade 5 or better and 8.3% passing Maths at these higher grades. 4.2% passing at the higher level in both

5.3 **What action plans are in place for young people who are not making adequate progress/achieving?**

5.4 Pupils' progress is closely tracked through their termly Personal Education Plans (PEP). Half termly overview reporting and PEP quality assurance processes allow advisory teachers to both identify, celebrate and encourage those children who are doing well, and to identify and better plan for children who are struggling.

5.5 Support and challenge is offered to schools to ensure that individual progress is maintained and accelerated. Advisory teachers do this by:

- contacting the designated teacher to discuss the education progress of pupils and ask about planned interventions
- Ensure that schools have the best guidance on tailoring support and curriculum to the need of the individual child. Request a multiagency meeting to address complex issues impacting on engagement and/or attendance such as mental health, CSE (Children at risk of Sexual Exploitation), frequent missing episodes, persistent absence, ill health.
- Attend any future PEPs.

- Promote an understanding of any impact attachment disorder may be having on that child and provide strategies for school to enable the child to cope.
- Making referrals to Virtual School Lead Mentor for personal mentoring support.
- Where appropriate, making referrals for a learning assessment by Virtual School's educational psychologist.
- Where appropriate, commissioning hypnotherapy to reduce anxiety levels.
- Where appropriate, commissioning support from partner schools who offer nurture programmes, forest schools and emotional literacy programmes etc.
- Where necessary, securing support from the Educational Attainment team to support the pupil attendance and engagement.
- Advising school as to how to make the most of their PP+ to accelerate the progress of the child and helping them make application for additional funds where appropriate.
- Ensuring that the children are offered one to one tuition
- Commissioning alternative education, say Work related learning, for our most vulnerable children.
- Tailoring Work-Related Learning Provision to meet need, e.g Confident Me course to help build self-esteem.

5.6　Additionally, the Virtual School encourages the engagement of these children in a number of beneficial projects and services depending upon their personal interests and ambitions. These services include a wide range of learning and cultural events, celebration events and career and university taster days.

5.7　**Pupil One:**

5.8　The designated teacher and inclusion manager at this school designed an excellent 12 week support programme to facilitate the smooth transition for a child returning from ELC (Extended Learning Centre) provision to a full time, mainstream schooling. This included learning mentoring and tutoring to provide a significant amount of one to one support. The school facilitate personal mentoring support from the Virtual School and actively encourage his participation in our learning events. This child is currently on a full-time timetable, working at age related expectation and making good progress in English, Maths and Science. His attendance is 100%.

6　Examples of schools who are good with LAC

6.1　The virtual school promotes stable school placements within schools which are rated 'good' or better and to cultivate positive working relationships with those schools. Currently, 72% of children are in a school which is rated 'good' or better' and a further 19 % are in new Academy Converters awaiting an OFSTED rating, but expected to be good or better.

6.2　The schools which have the best practice, proactively seek advice and guidance from the Virtual School and engage with our advisory teachers to find individual solutions for our children. Typically, they offer most or all of the types of support below, tailored to the learning needs of the child, and delivered in a timely manner:

- Identified keyworker for each Looked After Child, who is sensitive to their needs
- A bespoke timetable suited to the needs of the learner
- Internal arrangements to minimise any breaks in pupil's capacity to access their education.
- access to mentoring services, 1-1 tutoring
- student support facilities
- detailed educational assessment tools.

6.3 Such practices do much to reduce the threat of fixed term exclusions for those children who struggle in school settings. These schools also routinely produce timely and high quality PEPs.

6.4 The effective use of the above practices in the best of our Coventry Schools is illustrated by the following case studies:

6.5 **School One:**

6.6 At this school a child was at risk of permanent exclusion. She had recently had a placement change and was emotionally unstable. The school liaised closely with the Virtual School to develop a bespoke package of support, including one to one mentoring, play therapy and a Work Related Learning Course. Following this programme this child has gradually reintegrated back into her mainstream school and is accessing a full-time timetable. She has formed some new, positive friendships and developed positive relationships with the adults she works with. Overall, she has developed a more positive, reflective attitude. Her attendance has increased from 51.7% to 76.6%.

6.7 **School Two:**

6.8 A child at this school with emotional, behavioural and significant learning needs, had been excluded on a number of occasions by the end of half term 2. He also had a significant number of unauthorised absences, his attendance falling to 71%, and was failing to make progress.

6.9 The school engaged with the Virtual school to find solutions to ensure the stability of his place, and better to adapt his curriculum and learning environment to his difficulties. The Virtual School supported the school to secure an educational psychologist's assessment and EHCP referral and, in the meantime, to identify and obtain funding for an appropriate alternative provision. The school provided SEN mentoring and properly documented their plans in a 'good' quality PEP.

6.10 This child remains on roll with this school, attending the alternative provision full time and comments that he prefers the work set for him. There have been no further exclusions and his attendance has risen to 100%.

7   LAC NEET numbers and what is being done to support

7.1 The importance of aspirations and career choices are underlined by the fact that sections of the PEP are devoted to pupil's career choices, this enables conversations to be held 3 times per year as part of the process for pupils as young as 5 years old.

7.2 The Virtual School are working with 10 schools involved in a Key stage 3 project: 'The Wasted Years' a major element is careers advice for Year 7-9 pupils.

7.3 The Virtual school facilitate a Year 9-11 Careers Event held during the Spring Term which was attended by 42 pupils alongside with career providers, Carers, social workers and DTs from several schools.

7.4 KS4 students in Year 10 continue with focused meetings to discuss career choices and access follow up Appointments with Careers Teachers at their individual schools.

7.5 The KS4 Advisory Teacher for the Virtual School attends all PEPs of all focused children in Year 11.

7.6 There is a programme for identified potential Year 11 NEETs (run in partnership with Coventry College and Work Related Learning (WRL)

7.7   The Next Steps Mentor also supports the LAC Mentoring Service via Aspirational and Educational visits and trips, this is an excellent way to start raising aspirations early with LACs (Looked After Children) in Y7 onwards as it also allows the Next Steps Mentor to get to know the LACs earlier and start planning and preparing expected post 16 options and routes. This support also includes the residential trips organised by the LAC Mentoring Services as well as supporting the UniGo Programme and Crest Awards Programme.

7.8   The introduction of a Next Steps mentor has enabled the Virtual School to ensure a staff member attends most initial Post 16 PEPs and can continue to support for the focused pupils. She monitors and tracks other Year 12 and 13 pupils carefully, developing a clearer picture of LAC transitioning from Y11 into Post 16 and onto university and identifying where there may be gaps or further development required. The Next Steps Mentor is embedded into the Through Care Team and she supports all team members and works with managers to look at developing fresh ways to engage young people and promote positive outcomes. Currently the Next Steps Mentor is working on a report to include the proposed destinations of nearly 500 LAC and Care Leavers, this includes those in or going to university. **The 2017-18 academic year has 34 Care Leavers engaged with HE (Higher Education) this is a record number for the city.

7.9   This academic year there was a total of 162 Post 16 PEPs spread across 40 social workers. Last academic year's Post 16 PEP completion rate was 95%, with fewer number of Post 16 LACs, this year the predicted rate is 95%+.

7.10 The Next Steps Mentor also supports transition to post 16 educational pathways by sharing EET opportunities, with local school careers advisers, social workers and other professionals, representing the virtual School at LAC NEETs Management group and supporting NEETs advisors to reduce the risk of our young people becoming NEET. She works directly with LAC who wish to consider council apprenticeships.

7.11 The Next Steps Mentor also works extremely close with Adult Education, this has allowed the advent of a special offer to those LAC NEETs who have been dis-engaged for some time with the offer to undertake English and maths in very small groups with 1:1 tuition too. This is most effective for those 'harder to reach' NEETs as the offer starts with just 1 half a day session per week with the option to build up to a full day offering qualifications and training in IT, Customer Service and Care and Childcare. The 16-19 Bursary is also paid for this alongside the Money Matters Incentive payments (where young people are in semi-independence). This approach has supported several young people into apprenticeships too, or the opportunity to gain work experience.

7.12 Another partnership approach with Adult Education includes ESOL options for UASC's who are unable to gain a college place straight away. This summer will see a further collaboration of the ESOL offer to include an additional 2-week ESOL summer course, this is for any new UASC's, Y11 leaver UASC's plus those who may already be doing ESOL at college but who wish to continue their learning during the college summer break.

8   Next Steps Mentor Case study - client A:

> *Client A is in their first year of A Level studies and disclosed during his Post 16 PEP that he no longer wanted to continue and wanted to find a full-time job instead, he is in a Foster Care placement.*

He felt that he was not getting good enough grades, after his teacher showed him where he was at with his studies, and that he would fail so he believed it was better to leave straight away.

He is in a good and secure foster placement and his carers have high aspirations for him to go to university, and whilst he has the potential to take this route he still felt that he is not good enough.

After I explained that his current working grades were as expected and that it was early in the year, so he still had time to improve. I explained how everyone was proud that he got good GCSE's and that A levels are a big step up and that it is normal to have doubts at that stage. The PEP went on to look at additional support with studies and how the tutors could build in extra time to ensure client A felt he could still achieve. I also told client A, and carers, about Money Matters and how this would allow additional support in the option to fund a laptop that would give him the opportunity to enhance his home study periods.

We went on to talk about how difficult it would be for client A to find meaningful employment if he dropped out at that stage of the year, this was just before the Christmas period.

I advised that I expected client A to remain in 6th form for the remainder of the academic year and how even if he does not return for the second year, then his options would still be greater after completing one year rather than dropping out. We talked about other routes, such as, apprenticeships and especially higher-level apprenticeships. I advised about the council apprenticeship offer to LAC and Care Leavers and offered to arrange for client A to meet with a representative of the apprenticeship team to find out more. I also offered to arrange for client A to speak to a Care Leaver who had faced a similar experience, if he so wished.

Client A was adamant at the time that he did not want to go to university, however this was since he was only aware of the usual route to HE i.e. A levels, and he felt pressured, however after learning about other routes and options he said he felt better informed and agreed to continue with his first year at 6th form.

This demonstrates that when LACs are properly advised as to routes, options and opportunities they feel less 'stuck' and can make more informed decisions and choices about their direction. To take stress away from client A it was important to make sure he clearly understood that he is capable and has the ability to go to university, and that those involved have high expectations that he does so, but that we would work together to remove negative thoughts and help him to understand that there are different options, and whatever route he decides to take for this coming September is OK and that he is fully supportive of those around him.

I feel that without my knowledge and intervention it was highly likely that client A would have dropped out of 6th form during the year, and whilst he has still not made a firm decision on continuing in 6th form come September, he is still engaged and now feels more confident and less pressured about his future. One thing is for sure, he will not become NEET and now knows how to take some responsibility for his career planning and knows he is able to ask me for further advice and guidance if needed. His Foster Cares also told me that they too felt better informed, and they were thankful that I was at the PEP, especially as they too now have a clearer understanding.

9   Data

9.1   Coventry commissions Prospects LTD to directly work with LAC and Care Leaver NEETs. There are 2 Careers/ NEETs Advisers (job sharing 1 full time role) based within the Through Care Team and it is their role to support the NEETs directly.

9.2   The Next Steps Mentor oversees the NEET numbers and ensures that the CLA Activity codes on Protocol are correct and up to date. This work is carried out monthly and means that Coventry has a 'real time' view on what all older LAC and Care Leavers are doing, whilst this means we may have higher NEET figures, it means we have no unknowns, this is something of a rarity across other Virtual Schools and Social Care teams throughout the West Midlands. The Next Steps Mentor also now collates NEET figures at the end of each month so that as an LA we can monitor more effectively, and spot trends linked to certain periods throughout the year, such as, higher NEET numbers after the Christmas break. This monthly checking started recently after a FOI request highlighted that there was no monthly record/ stocktake faciality due to Protocol being a live data base. Over the next year Coventry will be able to better plan and look at where there are gaps in NEET provision.

9.3   Most recent NEET figures for the month of June:

Total = 160 out of 414

Code	Number of NEETs
G5 (121) Young Person not in EET (Education, Employment or Training) - other circumstances I.e. refusing/ failing to engage.	**131** 16 = 6 17 = 24 18 = 27 19 = 32 20 = 28 21 = 3 22 = 1 23 = 0
G4 (17) Young Person not in EET (Education, Employment or Training) - because of illness or disability	**16** 17 = 1 18 = 2 19 = 5 20 = 6 21 = 3
G6 (22) Young Person not in EET (Education, Employment or Training) - due to pregnancy or parenting.	**20** 17 = 3 18 = 3 19 = 6 20 = 9 21 = 1

10   Support provided by Prospects to LAC/Care Leavers:

10.1 Prospects Advisers have been involved in Personal Education Plans, LAC Reviews and strategy meetings with other professionals. These have provided an opportunity to meet with young people who are difficult to reach/have not previously engaged. The Adviser can gain an understanding of the issues faced by the young person and ascertain their correct educational level. By becoming officially embedded in the plan they can support progression appropriately and encourage

meaningful activity; they can help to ensure that education/training forms part of a safety plan so that the young person is less likely to engage in risky or criminal behaviour.

10.2 Joint working continues with supported accommodation providers, including Key Transitions, Key Futures and Elysian Fields.

10.3 Home visits have taken place in conjunction with Social Workers, Personal Advisers and housing Support Workers, including visits to Brook House Care Home.

10.4 Inter-agency NEETs meetings are in place, involving Throughcare, Prospects, Adult Education and Coventry City Council Apprenticeships and Early Careers Team. NEETs meetings between Throughcare and Prospects staff provide an opportunity to discuss the specific support requirements of individual young people.

10.5 Links have been established with Coventry Youth Partnership so that LAC/Care Leavers may benefit from the specialist support, creative programmes, sport and mentoring services available.

11 Areas for further development:

11.1 Identify areas of academic concern and/or staff CPD across cohort and explore the extension of the use of shared resources/training.

11.2 Continuing to embed post 16 PEP process.

11.3 Expansion of Year 11 transition work.

11.4 Expansion of getting copies of Y11 school's Careers Action plans, to cover all schools/ academies.

11.5 Continue to work with partners to improve appropriate destinations and reduce NEETs.

11.6 Extend scope of the West Midlands Post 16 Virtual Schools group.

11.7 Extend the attachment training input to all post 16 settings/providers.

11.8 Continue with the new monthly report of NEET numbers – Next Step Mentor now checks and records NEET numbers at the end of each month and shares this data with relevant parties.

11.9 Work with the Through Care Team to develop Peer Mentors – older Care Leavers supporting and mentoring younger post 16's with regards to promoting positive progressions and raising aspirations with a view to reduce NEET numbers, longer term.

11.10 Working with the lead on the council's apprenticeship team to look at building in incentives for those older LACs and Care Leavers who want to gain a council vacancy. **This will also involve the implementation of the Governments new £1000 Bursary payment, from 1st August 2018, for LAC/ Care Leavers in an apprenticeship.

12 Mental Health

12.1 Non-statutory guidance, published in March 2016, provides advice on how all pupils can benefit from learning and developing in a well-ordered school environment that fosters and rewards good behaviour and sanctions poor and disruptive behaviour. Paragraph 1.8 of this document (see below*) outlines how schools can promote cultures and structures which can support their pupils' mental health.

12.2 Recognising that a significant proportion of looked after children experience mental health problems, the Virtual School works collaboratively with providers, to support

the delivery of these principles and processes primarily though training and awareness projects and other initiatives which make use of external expertise to help schools address mental health issues.

13 Training

13.1 All Virtual School frontline staff have themselves attend training sessions in attachment theory and its impact on brain development. This training has furthermore been offered to all schools. Since March 2016 116 school staff have attended the level one course and 27, the level two.

13.2 Theraplay is a technique which enables children to better manage behaviour in educational settings and specific training on its use has been offered since autumn 2017. A total of 42 schools and 10 Early Years providers have attended a half day course.

14 Support Services

14.1 The Virtual School buys in the service of an Education Psychologist, equivalent to 1.5 days per week. To expedite EP assessments for looked after young people who have been identified by the school as requiring one to enable support to commence at the earliest possible stage. We have further bought in psychological support services from Phoenix psychology and a hypnotherapist. In addition, the Virtual School, has two mentoring staff, who support children on 1-1 basis and supports with vulnerable groups transition from Year 6 into Year 7 and between KS4 - KS5.

15 Supporting Attachment Projects

15.1 HV funding is supporting the Attachment Project to the tune of £23,000; providing each participating school with £4,000 to fund the project and a half day of attachment training by a clinical psychologist. Initiatives include:

- Membership to Attachment Research Community (ARC) for 12 schools and facilitate the school's involvement in a programme over 3 years totalling £6,000.
- The Virtual School's participation in a £5m project supported by The Alex Timpson Trust.
- Five primary schools are working with The Rees Centre (Oxford) research programme. This project is currently in its early phase, with schools completing an audit of the Attachment Awareness status. Attachment training will be delivered in September/October 2018, and school staff and pupils will complete an online survey.
- Additional support projects have been funded via the Highly Vulnerable stream, in areas such as Thrive programme, Riverside Resilience Project, Woodfield supporting schools, plus other individual programmes to support pupils' transition into secondary school.

15.2 For further information, please refer to the following;

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/508847/Mental_Health_and_Behaviour_-_advice_for_Schools_160316.pdf

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/634725/Supporting_Mental-Health_synthesis_report.pdf

Jim Horgan
Virtual School Headteacher.
Direct Number 024 7683 4914
Jim.horgan@coventry.gov.uk