

Report to:	EXECUTIVE CABINET
Date:	20 December 2023
Executive Member:	Cllr Leanne Feeley – Executive Member (Education, Achievement and Equalities)
Reporting Officer:	Jane Sowerby – Assistant Director - Education
Subject:	DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION (DFE) GRANT EXTENSIONS FOR EXTENDED DUTIES OF THE HEADTEACHER OF THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN WITH A SOCIAL WORKER AND PUPIL PREMIUM PLUS FOR POST-16
Report Summary:	<p>This report seeks to summarise the details of two recently announced grant extensions by the DfE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) The first confirms the level of funding being provided to the Council, from the DfE, to support the Virtual School Headteacher to deliver the extended duties for children with a social worker. (ii) The second is the extension of the Pupil Premium Plus to include funding for cared for children and care leavers post-16.
Recommendations:	<p>That Executive Cabinet be recommended to agree:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) That the Council accepts the grant extension for extended duties of the Headteacher of the Virtual School for children with a social worker 2023-2025. (ii) That the Council accepts the grant extension for Pupil Premium Plus for post-16 2023-2024. (iii) That the grant agreements are entered into subject to the necessary due diligence having been undertaken.
Corporate Plan:	<p>The contents of this report links with the following elements of the corporate plan.</p> <p>Starting and Living Well</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aspirations and through learning and moving with confidence from childhood to adulthood • Resilient families and supportive networks to protect and grow our young people • Opportunities for people to fulfil their potential through work, skills and enterprise.
Policy Implications:	There are no policy implications to this report.
Financial Implications: (Authorised by the statutory Section 151 Officer & Chief Finance Officer)	<p>Confirmation has been provided that Tameside will be granted £0.100m for the extension of the Virtual Heads role for children with a social worker in both 2023/24 and 2024/25. The Council will also be issued £0.068m to support cared for children and care leavers post-16 in 2023/24.</p>

The funding needs to be utilised in accordance with the grant guidance as set out in the body of the report. Acceptance of this

grant will enable the Council to increase support of children with social workers and care leavers post-16. Additional expenditure associated with these grants must be in line with funding conditions and not create pressure on the core council budget.

**Legal Implications:
(Authorised by the
Borough Solicitor)**

The grant of the additional funding will assist the council with its delivery of statutory duties to children and young people.

There will be terms attached to the funding to ensure that it is spent within the remit of the grant and managed appropriately.

Due diligence will be undertaken in the grant agreements when received in order to ensure that the project officers are aware of any conditions so as to minimise any clawback provisions being triggered

Risk Management:

Without these grants the Virtual School and College Headteacher will be unable to fulfil both the extended duties and outcomes for these cohorts of young people will not improve. If the grant is not spent in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding and the terms of the grant determination letter and non-statutory guidance, then future payments can be withheld.

Background Information:

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting Rachael Weeden – Virtual School and College Head Teacher



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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Virtual School Headteachers receives a number of grants aimed at supporting various elements of their remit. The grant for children with a social worker and the Pupil Premium Plus are two of these grants which have recently been amended. This report seeks to summarise the details and uses, both planned and current of these grants.

2. GRANT EXTENSION TO SUPPORT THE EXTENDED DUTIES FOR CHILDREN WITH A SOCIAL WORKER

- 2.1 In September 2021 Local Authorities began receiving grant funding to extend the role of Virtual School Headteachers to include strategic responsibility for all children with a social worker. In spring 2023 it was confirmed by the DfE that all Local Authorities will continue to be eligible to receive grant funding to support Virtual School Headteachers in delivering this responsibility; and that this funding is confirmed until 2025. A grant determination letter detailing this and Memorandum of Understanding (**Appendix one and two**) was published on 19 June 2023.
- 2.2 The grant determination letter has confirmed that Tameside will receive £100,000 in financial years 2023-24 and 2024-25. This will be paid in three instalments per financial year; September, December and March. It is expected that a Memorandum of Understanding is read, signed and returned for each financial year. This outlines how the grant can be spent. It is expected that the LA provides an annual financial progress report on total receipt, expenditure of funding, and planned expenditure within the grant period. This was completed and returned for the period 2022-23.
- 2.3 It is expected that Virtual School Headteachers should work with early years settings, schools, colleges, and social care leaders to create a culture of high aspirations that helps all children with social workers to reach their potential. Non-statutory Government guidance, "Promoting the education of children with a social worker Virtual School Head role extension," updated in June 2022, outlines activities which should be undertaken to achieve this, as well as defining the scope of the role. (**Appendix three**)
- 2.4 The guidance states that: "The extended Virtual School Head role will:
- 2.4.1 Make visible the disadvantages that children with a social worker can experience, enhancing partnerships between education settings and local authorities to help all agencies hold high aspirations for these children.
 - 2.4.2 Promote practice that supports children's engagement in education, recognising that attending an education setting can be an important factor in helping to keep children safe from harm.
 - 2.4.3 Level up children's outcomes and narrow the attainment gap so every child can reach their potential. This will include helping to make sure that children with a social worker benefit from support to recover from the impact of COVID-19."
- 2.5 This grant can be spent to support costs associated with meeting these goals.

3. PREVIOUS USE OF THE CHILDREN WITH A SOCIAL WORKER GRANT

- 3.1 In previous years, the increased funding has been used to support increased capacity within the team as part of the service redesign carried out in 2021-22. It has also contributed towards the setting up of the SHiFT programme. A portion of this grant is likely to continue to support the increased staffing of the Virtual School and College. This allows the team to deliver some of the initiatives to support the children with a social worker cohort. Activities in this area so far have included:

- Increased training opportunities around educational issues for social care colleagues, delivered by the Virtual School and College Manager and creating links between Children's Social Care and the Virtual School and College.
- Open door policy for advice and signposting for social workers allowing them to contact the team to gain advice on educational issues.
- Training for Designated Safeguarding Leads as part of the yearly update delivered by the Virtual School and College Manager to outline the extended duties and our remit. Some bespoke training offered at high needs schools.
- Publicising the extended remit of the Virtual School and College at school networking events such as TASH (Tameside Association of Secondary Headteachers) and Primary Heads.
- Focus on the extended duties in governor training, delivered termly in year 2022-23.
- Joint working with Education Welfare Services and involvement in attendance strategy steering group.
- Pilot using Virtual School and College Educational Psychology time to provide targeted support to schools identified as high need, with high risk of permanent exclusions and suspensions.

3.2 Evidence of the impact of these initiatives is largely qualitative at this point. The training sessions delivered by the Virtual School and College managers was well received and has resulted in the forging of relationships between the teams. The Virtual School and College is receiving an increased number of enquiries for advice from social workers of Child Protection and Child in Need children. It has also provided some opportunities for case analysis to help the Virtual School and College gain an insight into the challenges of this cohort in Tameside. A similar outcome has been achieved as a result of the training and support delivered in schools.

3.3 The impact of the portion of funding designated to SHiFT is not yet evaluated as the programme is in its early stages. However, early signs are positive. 27 young people have been allocated to their SHiFT guides and the latest quarterly practice report indicates that 14 of them were engaging well and communicating with their guides.

3.4 A SHiFT steering group, which has Virtual School and College representation, meets every three months to review progress. Virtual School and College managers are also meeting regularly with the lead guide to discuss the young people involved and provide educational advice for the cohort where needed.

4. FORWARD PLANNING

4.1 The Virtual School and College Headteacher is undertaking a scoping exercise to support in planning for the use of the grant moving forward. This exercise will aim to better understand the needs of Tameside children with a social worker, consulting education and social care colleagues and children and young people. The non-statutory guidance and research tools will also be used to support this planning process.

4.2 Initial areas of development to be explored include:

- Developing links between the Virtual School and College and Social Care via locality working and designated education advice clinics.
- Development of work around attendance and understanding of the data for this cohort.
- Development of training offer for schools, social workers and governors, to also include Early Help as appropriate.
- Extension of Educational Psychology pilot already in place and investigating other support offers for this cohort.

- Dedicated Virtual School and College Conference with a focus on Children with a Social Worker for 2023/24 to raise the profile of this cohort and develop a Tameside response to supporting them.
- Investigating training opportunities which help support this cohort.

These initiatives will require increased capacity to support delivery. A portion of the funding would be used to fund an additional Education Welfare Officer to take specific responsibility for this cohort reviewed in line with funding availability and future grants.

5. POST-16 PUPIL PREMIUM PLUS

- 5.1 The Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) grant for cared for children aged 4-15 is well established and is used to provide both individualised educational support and support for the cohort as a whole. However, historically this funding has ceased when a child reaches the age of 16, although the Virtual Headteacher duties and need for support continues for as long as a child is in care.
- 5.2 The Post-16 PP+ grant is to provide additional funding to support cared for children and care leavers at post-16. A pilot for this grant has been underway in 58 local authorities since 2021 and in the spring it was confirmed by the DfE that the pilot would be extended across all eligible Local Authorities. Grant determination letters were published on 27 June 2023 which have confirmed that Tameside will receive £67,770 for the period April 2023-March 2024. **(Appendix four)** Unlike the 4-15 PP+, the funding formula is not calculated on a per head basis, but is calculated on a percentage rate basis. The grant will be paid in two instalments per year in September and January.
- 5.3 Local Authorities are expected to take into account statutory guidance to help implement this duty and are expected to engage with research partners in developing the evidence base for Virtual Headteachers working with further education institutions.
- 5.4 Initial publications encourage Virtual Heads to use the evaluation of the post-16 PP+ pilot to identify examples of best practice, as well as considering the needs of their cohort. The funding can be used to deliver both individual and cohort level support in order to improve outcomes; support particularly vulnerable groups, such as unaccompanied asylum seekers or young people who have recently left secure children's homes and to support young people who are not (or are at risk of not being) in education, employment or training (NEET).

6. SUPPORT CURRENTLY OFFERED FOR POST-16 CARED FOR CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS

- 6.1 The Virtual School and College uses existing funds to employ a post-16 achievement coordinator who is seconded from Tameside College for three days per week. This role focuses on providing support in gathering post-16 Personal Education Plans (PEPs), particularly for young people who are NEET and providing expert advice to social work colleagues and personal advisors in leaving care. The post also works with young people and professionals to support young people into suitable opportunities, as well as promoting routes into higher education.
- 6.2 The post-16 achievement coordinator also supports the Virtual School team in providing advice for young people 4-15 who are at risk of becoming NEET, as well as providing pastoral and transition support to those Year 10 and 11 students who may access college as part of their provision.

- 6.3 The post-holder tracks post-16 students to monitor engagement in Education, Employment and Training and offers support when concerns are raised, both through the PEP and outside this process.

7. FORWARD PLANNING

- 7.1 The Virtual School Headteacher intends to carry out a scoping exercise with colleagues in leaving care and with the post-16 achievement coordinator to establish how best to direct this additional funding. The results of the pilot and wider research will also inform the planning.
- 7.2 A dedicated post-16 conference, was attended which has provided an opportunity for reflection on current challenges and solutions, one of these being the accuracy of data around post-16 attendance and the ability to identify and support swiftly students at risk of becoming NEET . For this reason, it is planned for existing systems used to monitor pre-16 attendance and PEPs be extended to include post-16.
- 7.3 It is expected that some of this funding will be used to extend the capacity and focus in the team for working with this cohort and create an additional role to do this. The post would be linked to the grant period and would work closely with the existing achievement coordinator based in college. This would allow for a greater level of support to be offered to those students placed in institutions other than Tameside College and those who are NEET as well as more crossdirectorate working with Employment and Skills. It would also expand the capacity for the post-16 achievement coordinator to work with pre-16 students and offer opportunities to raise aspirations and prevent future care leavers falling into the NEET bracket.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 Both of these grants present the opportunity to strengthen our support for two groups of vulnerable young people. While the Virtual Headteacher role extension is well established, the extension of the grant for a further two years will allow Tameside Virtual School and College to develop work in this area and consider longer-term aims. The extension of the Post-16 PP+ will allow us to develop our current offer for this cohort and offer both cohort-level and individual support, which has lacked funding previously. The desired outcome for both will be improved educational outcomes; better cross-service and partnership working and more developed timely support.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 As set out at the front of the report.