

Joint working protocol between

Virtual School, Inclusion Hub
and Youth Justice Service



Updated May 2023



Walsall Council

The Purpose of Protocol

The purpose of this protocol is to set out the arrangements of the Virtual School, Inclusion Hub and Youth Justice Service to ensure we effectively and efficiently support and promote the educational achievement of children open to the Youth Justice Service.

Changes to how the children under the YJS are supported by the Virtual School

Since 2018 The Virtual School's Education Liaison Officer (ELO) has been co-located in the Youth Justice Team for 1 day a week. The role of the ELO was to work closely with the Youth Justice Officer to ensure children under the service were in school, attending well and not at risk of exclusion. The ELO attended education meetings with and behalf of the Youth Justice Officer, supporting and challenging schools and LA services to ensure children receive the support they need to achieve in education.

In 2021, in response to the government's extension to the role of the Virtual School head in promoting the education of all children with a social worker, the local authority developed the Inclusion Hub (previously Vulnerable Learners Hub). The remit of the Hub was to promote the education of vulnerable children.

In 2023, after a review of the Education Liaison Officer's role within the Youth Justice Service, it was decided to further develop the educational offer to children under the YJS the remit of children under youth Justice would transfer to the Inclusion Hub. A Vulnerability Matrix was developed to highlight those young people who were our most vulnerable and who were more at risk of underachievement or disaffection. Weekly attendance data is collected, which includes suspensions and part time timetables data. This enables the team to focus their work on children who need it most

Introduction

We know that children under Youth Justice Service (YJS) are more likely to have, or have experienced issues with educational engagement, attendance and attainment. Many will have experienced poor school attendance, high numbers of exclusions and have low literacy and numeracy levels. They may also more complex needs such as low self-esteem, social emotional and mental health difficulties, including self-harm and suicidal thoughts and poor social skills

The Inclusion Hub work closely with schools/education settings, Youth Justice Officers, Youth Offending Institutes and other the local authority services to ensure children and young people under Youth Justice are accessing appropriate education provision, are attending and have support in place to help them to reach their academic potential.

The team consists of an Inclusion manager and two Inclusion Officers. The Inclusion manager will be responsible for the strategic oversight and service delivery and the Education Liaison Officers will work closely with the young person's Youth Justice Officer to deliver the service through a joint working partnership.

Aims of the protocol

The aim of the protocol is:

- To ensure the Youth Justice Service and the Inclusion Hub make the education of young offenders a priority and facilitate joint planning with schools, education providers, the schools attendance team and the EHCP Team in order to achieve positive educational outcomes and ensure that each young person is accessing appropriate education.
- To ensure good co-operation, communication and collaborative decision making between schools/ education providers and local authority services in relation to education planning and assessment
- To ensure the voice of children and young people under youth Justice is listened to when discussing their education and training

Roles and responsibilities

The Inclusion Hub will:

- Develop a vulnerability matrix to identify the most vulnerable children and young people in the youth justice service who are at risk of underachievement
- Track and monitor the attendance of children and young people under youth justice
- Move from a paper based Vulnerable Learners Personal education plan (V-PEP) to a formally designed electronic PEP (ePEP) to record the needs of young people in remand or in custody

The Inclusion Officer will:

- Ensure all children and young people are on the role of a school to meet their needs
- Signpost, and provide advice and guidance to schools and education providers on strategies to help improve educational outcomes for children under youth justice
- Support and challenge other LA services to ensure there is no drift and delay in identifying need and support
- Work with other professionals to ensure young people at risk of disengaging from education receive support based on a full assessment of their needs
- Provide advice and guidance to youth justice officers, parents and carers on the SEN Graduated response
- Engage with young people to offer advice and guidance on learning and career options with a view to raising aspirations
- Ensure education services within the LA are kept informed about any young people made subject to a court order
- Ensure if a child has an EHCP the current EHCP is sent to the Institution together with the last annual review, PEPs, professional advice and other related documents.
- Work with the EHCP Team to ensure a young person in custody with an EHCP is provided with a provision to ensure that their needs can continue to be met in custody.
- Ensure a robust transition package is in place to transition the young person back into education or training

The Youth Justice Officer will:

- Maintain regular contact with the school/ education provider to ensure they are aware when a young person is made subject to a court order
- Ensure pre-sentence reports for court information are requested from schools/ education providers
- Notify the EHCP Team within 5 working days when a young person with an EHCP is sentenced to custody.
- Notify and engage all relevant educational professionals when planning for the young person's release.



Remands to Local Authority Care or Youth Detention

If a child/young person who has previously been accommodated under section 20 (voluntarily accommodated) or section 31 (under a care order) of the 1989 Act is remanded in custody, they remain looked-after. The local authority continues to have a duty for care planning and which includes education planning through their Personal Education Plan (PEP)

The Virtual School will continue to oversee the child's education through reviewing their (PEP) and reassessing the child's needs to inform arrangements for their education while on remand.

In line with recommendations from the recent file audit, when a young person is remanded in custody but was not in care prior to the remand, the Virtual School will support them as if they were in care. The young person will be allocated a Virtual School Officer and a PEP will take place within 20 days of the remand date. The young person's emotional and developmental needs will be assessed and the Virtual School SEN Casework Officer will determine whether a post-detention Education Health and Care needs assessment is required. The young person's PEP will continue to be reviewed termly.

We have recently developed a PEP for young people on remand and in custody which will help to identify any additional support needed and ensure a thorough transition plan is in place when the young person is released.

When a young person with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) is remanded in custody the EHCP Team, the Virtual School SEN Casework Officer and the Youth Justice Officer alongside the education provider will be responsible for reviewing and updating their EHCP.

Custodial Sentences

Children who offend and receive custodial sentences remain looked-after if they were under a care order or were accommodated under section 20 immediately prior to conviction. The Virtual School will continue to review their PEP as part of the care plan, and to ensure the child's access to education and training is consistent with their statutory entitlements. In these cases, the Virtual school will ensure

- Plan ahead in sufficient time so that a suitable educational or training placement can be arranged wherever the child will live following release from custody;
- Ensure information on a child's education and training needs is passed to the youth offending unit, usually through the most up-to-date PEP, as quickly as possible;
- Ensure that the learning needs of the individual are being met; and that there is proper planning to maintain the continuity of education and/or training experience once the young person is released from custody.

The Young person's named Virtual School Officer will continue to oversee the education of a young person who receives a custodial sentence until the end of the academic year of their 18th birthday.



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