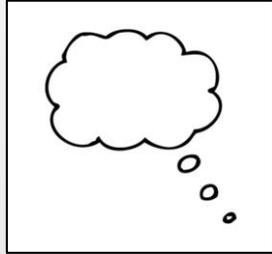




Welcome to the eleventh edition of our update which is circulated every month. These updates will provide guidance, information and ideas around education, important dates and events, well being, learning from home and next steps. We hope you find it useful. Thank you to everyone who contributes to this update and to all of you who take time to read it. If there are any topics that you would like included please contact us. Rachel.Cosgrove@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Children We Care For Oxfordshire Virtual School - Carers Update Issue 11 July 2021



To open the links, you can 'right click' next to the 'here' and open the link or click directly on the link and open it on your computer or tablet.

SURVEY OF CARE GIVERS

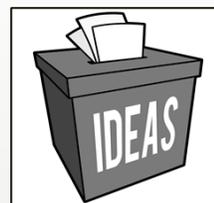
We have carried out a Virtual School survey over the last few months to find out how parents and carers feel about the work we do and to see how we can further develop the closer relationships we have built up during the pandemic.

We interviewed over 40 parents and carers by phone. The carers interviewed were very generous with their time and happy to share their views. We found out that the quality of the school makes a huge difference to the experience of carers. The better the relationships developed; the more confident carers feel about communication. Many carers felt that having a Virtual School caseworker at the PEP meetings had been valuable and that there are some advantages to having the meetings online. Virtual School caseworkers are highly valued by families. Carers know that the caseworker is on the end of the phone if they need them. Carers praised the quick actions of the Virtual School when it came to follow up.

The survey showed that if children went to good schools, carers don't need as much support. Good schools nurture positive relationships, communicate well and don't over promise. Many carers spoke very highly of school staff and felt that the DT and pastoral team were very supportive. Where carers are struggling with particular schools, carers felt lack of knowledge and awareness of the care experience, was a barrier. Carers want to be seen as professionals at the meetings, but can sometimes feel out of the loop. Sometimes carers can feel intimidated by the system. Several carers commented about the need for all schools to have access to attachment and trauma training as they felt this impacted hugely on the understanding of their children.

Transitions are key times where Virtual School is needed more - to help secure a school place, to liaise with SEN officers or admission teams and to help organise the first PEP. Children with complex SEN or struggling with attendance and/or at risk of exclusion need more focussed support. Carers were appreciative of support in navigating the EHCP system and in securing a specialist school. Carers of young people at college would like more communication from staff at the setting.

'For each family it's all new – the basics are needed. What is a PEP? How it works. Pupil Premium+ etc. EHA? Teams within the LA - what do they do? Never make assumptions that carers know what is around. You don't know what you don't know.'



Extended role for Virtual School Headteachers

The government have decided that Virtual School heads could have more influence over the work done with children who have social worker involvement. In 2019 the Government's [Children in Need review](#) highlighted how poor the educational outcomes of children with social workers could be; these are the children in need or children with child protection plans. These children fell behind their peers at every stage of their education and were much less likely to achieve a strong pass in their Maths and English GCSEs.

The DfE have now announced funding and published guidance to extend the role of Virtual School Heads so that children in every local authority can **benefit from Virtual School Headteacher leadership and expertise**.

Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) Post-16 Pilot: EOI process to launch early July

Alongside the Virtual School Headteacher role extension announcement, the Government has also confirmed a £3 million pilot of funding for Virtual School Heads to support **looked-after children and care leavers in post-16 education**. The pilot will launch in October 2021, enabling Virtual School Headteachers to work with further education settings to provide much needed support to these young people.

Children in Care Council Ambassadors

The ambassadors held an online meeting last week and shared their ideas and insights. It was a really powerful event and so important to hear from these young people who have such a depth of experience and things to say about the care system. If you would like your child(ren) to become involved in the Children in care Council please contact James Collins james.collins@oxfordshire.gov.uk

New resources added to the VS website following the Helen Arkell Dyslexia training session for carers – <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/schools/our-work-schools/virtual-school-looked-after-children-and-care-leavers-0-25/resources-and-publications>

Scroll down and look under 'supporting your child with reading and spelling'.



Would you like some support supporting transition to secondary school?

Anna Freud Centre have some great resources for free [here](#) which include a great animation for kids.

Amjad Ali has done a great session for Oxfordshire Virtual School about how to support your child's learning at home. He explains the common reasons why some children might struggle and provides lots of handy tips for families to try at home. See it [here](#).