

Barnet Virtual School Newsletter

Autumn Term 1 2021

Welcome Back

Welcome back to another new school year and who knows what this one will bring! Last year was an unusual year for us all and I would like to extend my thanks for all your hard work in supporting our young people in the most challenging of times. We hope you have all had a good summer break and are refreshed coming into the new term.

We have a number of changes this term. Over the summer break, one of our caseworkers Catherine Rooney left the Virtual School. Those of you who worked with Catherine will know how brilliant she was at her job and we will really miss her knowledge, experience and organisation! We have a new caseworker who started with us on the 1st September, Hannah Hudson. Hannah will be working mainly with Key Stage 2 and 3 and will be getting in touch with schools over the coming days.

At the end of the Summer Term we had some really exciting news! **The DfE announced that from September 2021 Virtual Schools will take on a strategic and advisory role for children who have or ever had a social worker**—primarily children with a child in need or child protection plan. This will initially be for a trial period. A link to the full guidance can be accessed here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/994028/Promoting_the_education_of_children_with_a_social_worker.pdf

This new guidance does not change existing duties for looked-after and previously looked-after children and should be read in conjunction with the existing statutory guidance (Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children). The new responsibilities are as follows:

- To 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.
- To 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.
- To 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.

New responsibilities are strategic . Virtual Schools are NOT being asked to:

- Work with individual children and their families - including tracking and monitoring educational progress of individual children or providing academic or other interventions.
- Respond to requests from parents or carers to offer advice, intervention and support in relation to individual children with a social worker.
- Take responsibility for children with Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) who do not require or need a social worker

... see next page

The DfE have not prescribed a model for this work—it will be up to LAs to develop a way of working. For this trial period, we have decided that I will be taking the strategic lead role and we are delighted to have appointed an experienced educational professional, Nicola Axford, to take on the role of education lead for this new project. Over the next few weeks, we will be developing this work including:

- Making sure we have accurate information on which children it is and where they are educated
- Setting up attendance and achievement monitoring for some children
- Beginning to identify trends and target groups within the cohort
- Audit training needs for staff working with this cohort
- Collate information on enrichment opportunities
- Providing advice to schools and social workers particularly around children without a school place

If you have any queries do contact us on 020 8359 4534 or Barnet.virtualschool@barnet.gov.uk or email Nicola directly on Nicola.Axford@barnet.gov.uk

Virtual School Team Member Profile

Aiysha Iqbal — Caseworker



My name is Aiysha Iqbal and I am one of two Post-16 Virtual School caseworkers at Barnet. I have been supporting young people aged 16-18 for the last two and a half years and thoroughly enjoy the work I do in this role.

I have a first class degree in Criminology which I found most interesting. I went on to support children with special education needs in Key stage one and two which was a most pleasant experience. This role encouraged me to want to explore the SEN processes and responsibilities of the local authority for children who had special education needs. In 2017 I joined Barnet council working in the SEN team where I learnt a great deal about the Education and Healthcare plan processes and built strong relationships with Barnet Schools. After a year or so, I decided I would like to have a more direct role with children or young people, supporting them with their education and having a positive impact on their futures and so, joined the Virtual School.

I enjoy the collaborative working I do with other professionals and value building established relationships with schools/colleges, carers/placements and external agencies to support our young people to achieve better outcomes and help fulfil their future goals whether it be in education, training or employment. It brings me great personal satisfaction to know that I positively impact the young people I work with.

I am developing my skill set everyday and learning about new things and new opportunities which will benefit my cohort. At present I am beginning to explore different career resources available to young people which may not be commonly known about. I intend to build on this during the term and circulate to our young people which I am very excited about.

PEP deadline is 5th November. To be considered for PP+ funding your PEP must be completed for quality assuring by this date!

Personal Education Plans (PEPs) and Pupil Premium Plus Funding

This term, you will see a few changes to the PEP form on Welfare Call as we have tried to streamline it a little more. Please ask your caseworker if you are unsure of anything. The deadline for PEP completion is Friday 5th November.

Just a reminder that social workers must attend the PEP meeting—it should not go ahead without their presence. Foster carers should also be part of the meeting and where possible, the Virtual School caseworker. Please remember that caseworkers have caseloads of between 50 and 75 young people so will not be able to attend every meeting. PEP meetings should be chaired by the Designated Teacher. We advise that you fill in as much information as possible before the meeting and complete the form as soon as possible afterwards.

If your young person is in Reception up to Year 11, you can make a request for Pupil Premium Plus funding through the PEP but this must be made before the completion date. You need to set a SMART educational target/outcome in the ePEP and provide details and cost breakdowns of any funding they need in order to support the child to achieve these targets and improve educational outcomes. This is then discussed and you will be informed if funding has been agreed and if so, how much. Funding is allocated on the basis of learning need and is usually in the region of £500. However looked after children will have different needs at different times and we are aware that every term some children will need no additional funding and some will need more.



Whilst we do not fund activities that other children would not pay for (e.g small group TA support, working with a Learning Mentor or SENCo), there are lots of different ways to support children. You could apply for funding to give your child:

- Priority for enrichment activities.
- Access to music and the arts.
- One to one tuition.
- Support to prepare them for transitions which are often more challenging for Looked After Children
- Specific encouragement and support to aspire toward higher education.
- Access to careers advice and guidance and quality work experience.
- Support to develop their use of metacognition strategies or to build up resilience (e.g. emotion coaching).

Do remember to look at the Education Endowment Foundation Teaching and Learning Toolkit for ideas for the most impactful ways of supporting children.

Please contact maria.skoutaridou@barnet.gov.uk if you need support or have any questions regarding PEPs.

PEP deadline is 5th November. To be considered for PP+ funding your PEP must be completed for quality assuring by this date!

Feedback

Thank you to all of you who responded to School Review back in the summer and gave your feedback—we really appreciated so many of your positive comments. I wanted to respond to some of the comments and questions:

Can you attend training if you are an out of borough school?

Yes—the training is offered to all Barnet schools and all out of borough schools with a Barnet Looked After Child

Who should provide tuition if a young person needs it?

Barnet virtual school has always been easily contactable, knowledgeable and prompt with any queries. All PEPs are held in time and the paperwork completed without issue. They know the child well and always strive for best outcomes. As a team I can not praise them enough.

Tuition can be provided by the school if they are able to and a request made for payment through the PEP (statutory age children). This would need to set out a clear target, number and duration of sessions, who is delivering, cost per session etc. Alternatively tuition can be booked directly with external agencies by the Virtual School.

The experience with Barnet has been very efficient and helpful. I haven't worked with Barnet Virtual School before, and it was very positive

How is Pupil Premium Plus funding paid to schools?

It will be paid at the end of term. The child's UPN number will be included so your finance team can identify them. Please ensure we have your children's UPN number so we can do this.

Could PEPs be held at the end of term?

We appreciate that it might suit some schools assessment cycles to have PEPs at the end of term. However due to the number of children in care, they would stretch back to half term. We have them in the first half of term so you can use your previous term's assessment as a baseline. If you need the PEP early in the term please do speak to the social worker or Virtual School caseworker.

The team are always really helpful in resolving queries

Training

There were lots of suggestions for future training—thank you. We will try and address these through our newsletters and future training. Please see further on for what is on offer this term.

Training

These are all virtual training sessions and are open to both in and out of borough schools. They will be available to book NEXT WEEK:

http://cpd10g.schoolcircular.co.uk/pls/cpd2122/gen_bystrand_fr_pub

[New to DT/New to Barnet Induction](#)

This is a two-part induction course which will cover the following in two training sessions:

Session One: Thursday 7th October 2021 1.15pm to 3.15pm

Understanding the role of the DT and best practice for PEPs

- Who's who in Barnet Virtual School
- Role of the DT and statutory responsibilities
- PEPs best practice

How to work strategically as a DT

Session Two: Thursday 4th November 2020 1.15pm to 3.15pm

An Introduction to Attachment and how to support in schools

This session will focus on the following:

- An introduction to Attachment theory
- Why attachment matters
- The importance of the learning relationship
- How you can support in school

[Working with refugee and asylum seeking children and young people](#)

Thursday 21st October 9:30am-12pm

This session aims to strengthen our understanding of the experiences and needs of refugee and asylum seeking children/young people, and ways to support their resilience and achievements. The session will place a particular focus on working with unaccompanied minors and those with links to Afghanistan.

[Post 16 Designated Teachers](#)

Tuesday 30th November 9.30—11.30

Focus to be confirmed

Key Contacts at the Virtual School

Executive Head Teacher:

Paul.whitcombe@barnet.gov.uk

Head Teacher: Sarah.deale@barnet.gov.uk

Senior Caseworker:

Julie.locke@barnet.gov.uk

Virtual School Business Manager:

Jane.thrift@barnet.gov.uk

PEP Coordinator:

Maria.skoutaridou@barnet.gov.uk

Caseworker:

Allan.newby@barnet.gov.uk

Caseworker :

Hannah.hudson@barnet.gov.uk

Caseworker:

Ornella.rochfort@barnet.gov.uk

Caseworker—Post 16:

Frazier.stroud@barnet.gov.uk

Caseworker—Post 16:

Aiysha.iqbal@barnet.gov.uk

Education Lead—children with a social worker:

Nicola.axford@barnet.gov.uk

Contact us



Follow us on Twitter to keep up with news and opportunities to support our young people.

@barnetvs



Find out more by going to <https://www.barnetlocaloffer.org.uk/> and searching for the Virtual School



Tel: 020 8359 4534

email:



Barnet.virtualschool@barnet.gov.uk