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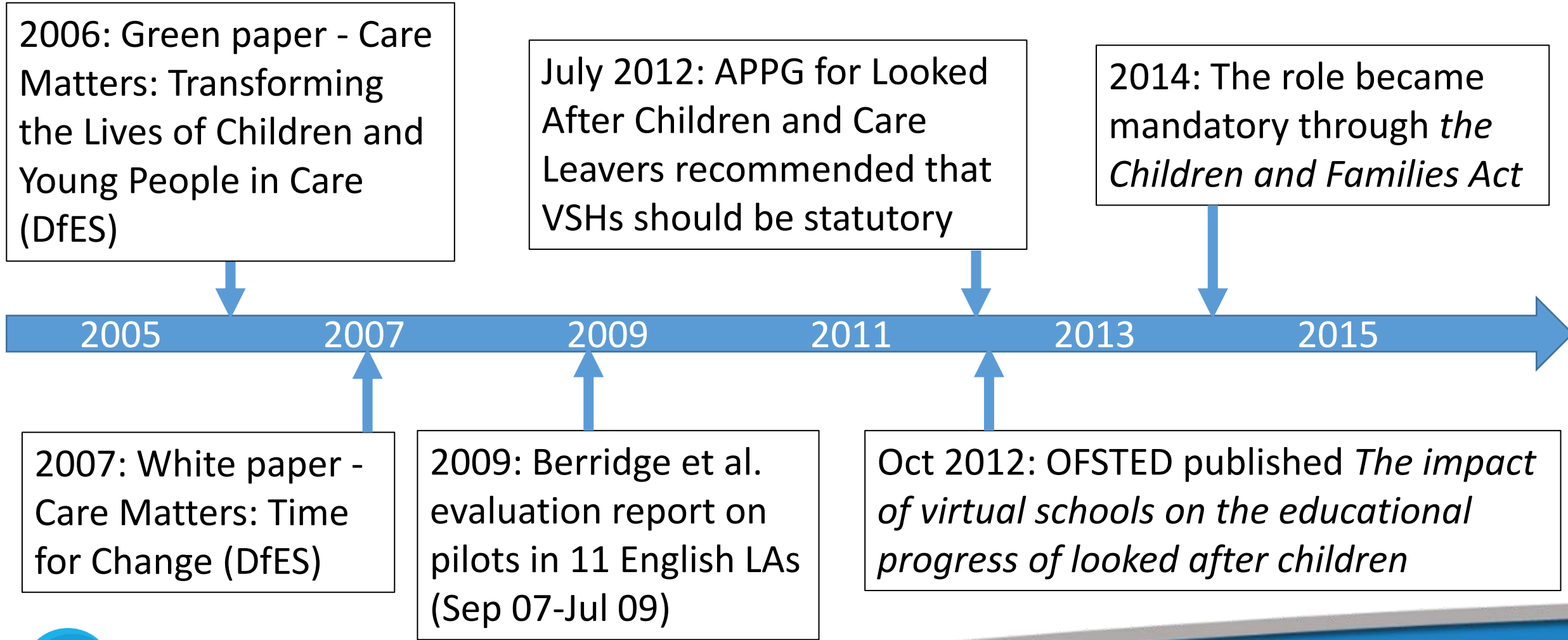
'In both camps' Virtual School Head Teachers in Scotland connecting social work and education

Dr Leanne McIver, Research Associate
Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and
Protection (CELICIS), University of Strathclyde

JSWEC, June 2023



Timeline of development of VSHs



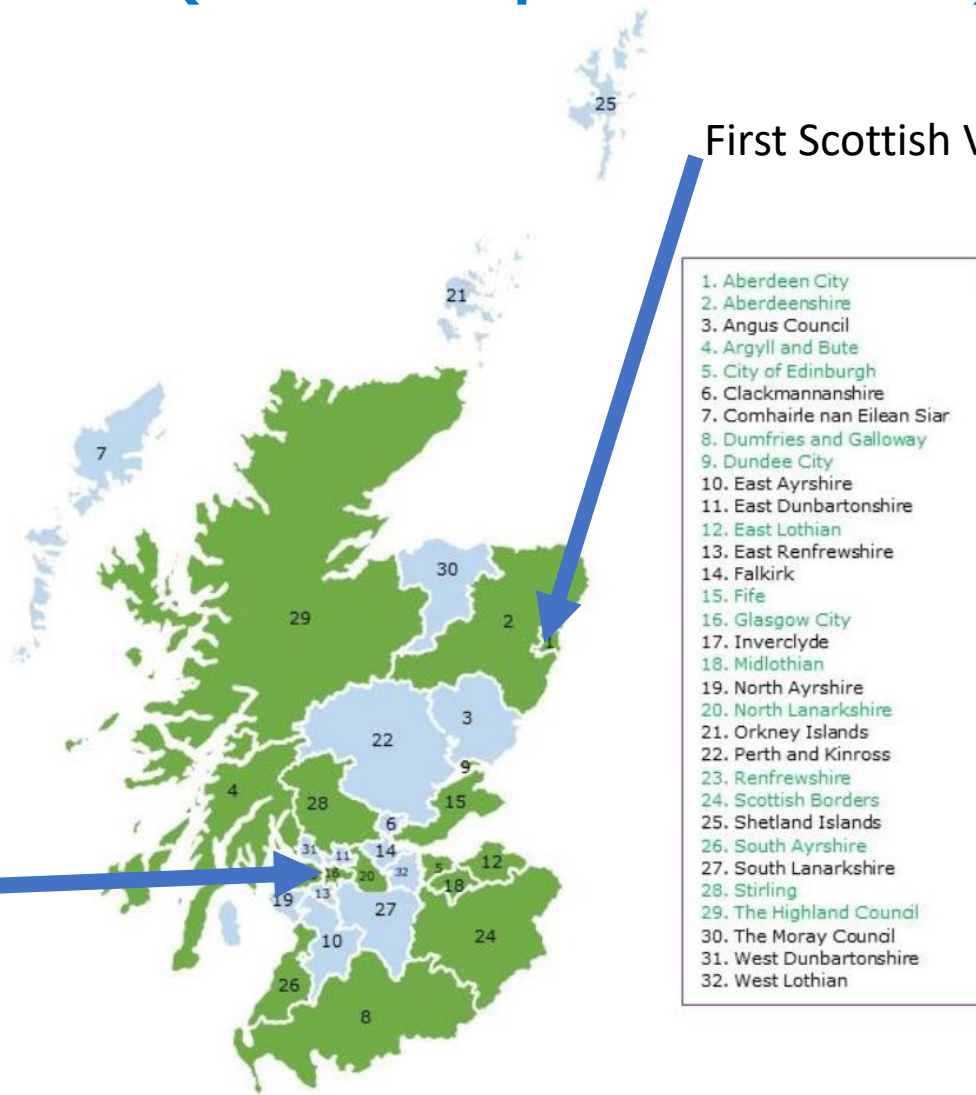
Relationship with social work

'VSHs operate at the heart of complex issues in inter-professional working between education and social work and often seem to be contributing towards the integration of the two previous departments.' (Berridge, 2009)

'...informing social workers about the education system, for example, helps them to feel more confident in negotiating with schools and acting as advocates for the children on their caseload.' (Jackson, 2015)

Virtual Schools (and equivalents) in Scotland

First Scottish Virtual School (Aberdeen City, 2015)

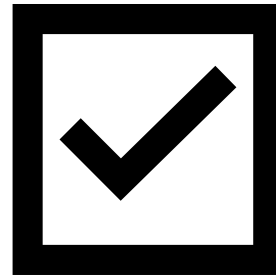


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Research Outline



Review of existing literature

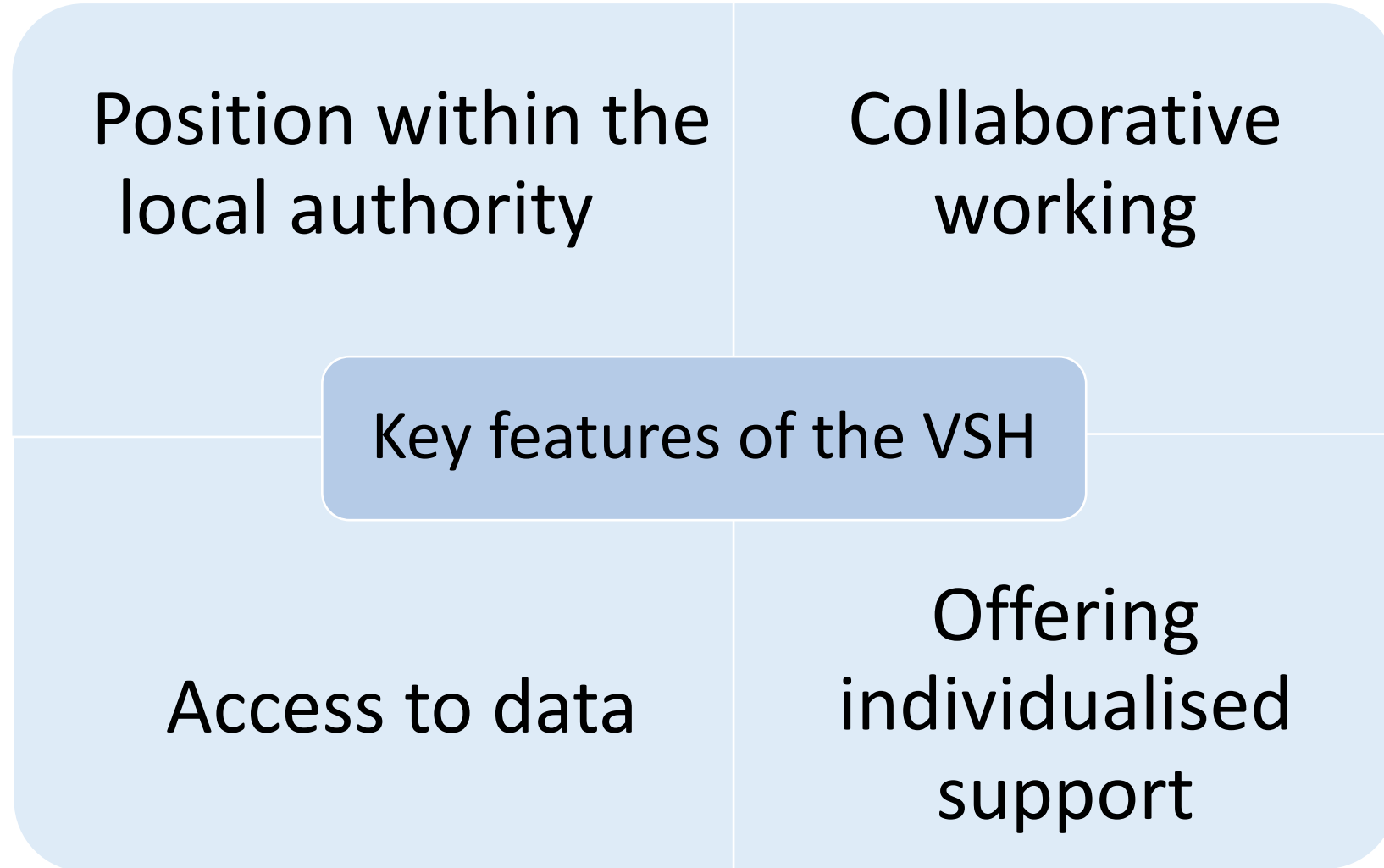


Ethics committee



Online individual interviews x13
Summer 2021

Topic guide



Findings I: 'Both languages'

...you are kind of over two, I've got **a leg on both sides of the fence** with that social work and education, and that's quite a unique role

(Participant 9)

So when I came into the job it was a new post and our education and children's services had just been joined together, with a Head over both, so **I kind of straddled the two**. I was based in the education office but spent as much time in the social work office.

(Participant 3)

Findings II: Making links

I think I have created a lot of collaboration with this team, bringing everybody round the table and **I'm kind of like the link person** between schools and health and social work and everybody else

(Participant 10)

Findings III: Challenges

I can't believe in this day and age that **I don't even know who all the care experienced young people are** in [this local authority]. And then you realise why it's such a challenge. And so we had decided that we would appoint **a data analyst who can work between the two systems**, the [social work] system and our SEEMIS* system, so that we can actually keep up-to-date...

(Participant 9)

*SEEMIS = Scottish education information management system

Conclusions

- VSHTs and equivalents in Scotland seem to see their role in connecting social work and education as a key part of their work
- There are some challenges, especially around information sharing, but good relationships and other solutions are improving things

Reflections and next steps

- How are social workers in Scotland are experiencing this?
- How are children and young people, families and carers, teachers/school staff experiencing this?
- Research evidence on broad impact as well as individuals and smaller groups

- APPG for Looked After Children and Care Leavers (2012) Education Matters in Care: A report by the independent cross-party inquiry into the educational attainment of looked after children in England. <https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/id/eprint/15782/>
- Berridge, D., Henry, L., Jackson, S. & Turney, D. (2009) Looked After and Learning: Evaluation of the Virtual School Head Pilot. University of Bristol.
- DfES (2006) Care Matters: Transforming the Lives of Children and Young People in Care [Green paper] www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-matters-transforming-the-lives-of-children-and-young-people-in-care
- DfES (2007) Care Matters: Time for Change [White paper] www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-matters-time-for-change
- Jackson, S. (2015) The Virtual School for Children in Out-of-Home Care: A Strategic Approach to Improving Their Educational Attainment. *Children Australia* 40:4, 327–334.
- OFSTED (2012) The impact of virtual schools on the educational progress of looked after children. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-impact-of-virtual-schools-on-the-education-of-looked-after-children>

Thank you 😊

Contact details: leanne.mciver@strath.ac.uk

VSHTs Network web page:

www.celcis.org/our-work/key-areas/education/virtual-school-head-teachers