

'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 (CELCIS), University of Strathclyde

JSWEC, June 2023







Timeline of development of VSHs

2006: Green paper - Care Matters: Transforming the Lives of Children and Young People in Care (DfES)

2007

July 2012: APPG for Looked After Children and Care Leavers recommended that VSHs should be statutory

2011

2014: The role became mandatory through *the Children and Families Act*

2015

2007: White paper -Care Matters: Time for Change (DfES)

Centre for excellence

2005

CELCIS

2009: Berridge et al. evaluation report on pilots in 11 English LAs (Sep 07-Jul 09)

2009

Oct 2012: OFSTED published *The impact* of virtual schools on the educational progress of looked after children

2013

Relationship with social work

'VSHs operate at the heart of complex issues in interprofessional 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)

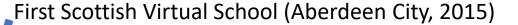


Virtual Schools (and equivalents) in Scotland

1. Aberdeen City 2. Aberdeenshire 3. Angus Council 4. Argyll and Bute 5. City of Edinburgh 6. Clackmannanshire 7. Comhairle nan Eilean Siar 8. Dumfries and Galloway 9. Dundee City 10. East Ayrshire 11. East Dunbartonshire 12. East Lothian 13. East Renfrewshire 14. Falkirk 15. Fife 16. Glasgow City 17. Inverclyde 18. Midlothian 19. North Ayrshire 20. North Lanarkshire 21. Orkney Islands 22. Perth and Kinross 23, Renfrewshire 24. Scottish Borders 25. Shetland Islands 26. South Ayrshire 27. South Lanarkshire 28. Stirling 29. The Highland Council 30. The Moray Council 31. West Dunbartonshire 32. West Lothian

You are here

CELCIS Centre for excellence for Children's Care and Protection



Research Outline



Review of existing literature

Ethics committee



Online individual interviews x13 Summer 2021



Topic guide

Position within theCollaborativelocal authorityworking

Key features of the VSH

Access to data

Offering individualised support

CELCIS Centre for excellence for Children's Care and Protection

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)

Centre for excellence for Children's Care and Protection

CELCIS

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

Centre for excellence

References

- 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. <u>https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/id/eprint/15782/</u>
- 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] <u>www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-matters-transforming-the-lives-of-children-and-young-people-in-care</u>
- DfES (2007) Care Matters: Time for Change [White paper] <u>www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-matters-time-for-change</u>
- 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. <u>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-impact-of-virtual-</u> <u>schools-on-the-education-of-looked-after-children</u>

CIS Centre for excellence for Children's Care and Protection



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

VSHTs Network web page: <u>www.celcis.org/our-work/key-</u> areas/education/virtual-school-head-teachers

