



AfC Virtual School

Designated Teacher Newsletter

Summer term: response to covid-19

We have changed the way in which we work to adapt to our new circumstances so that we can offer support for you in these uncertain times as you support our most vulnerable children.

Our team is also offering assistance to all foster carers to ensure that looked after children, even if they are not currently able to attend school, are accessing education.

Although we do not have the same statutory responsibilities to support the education of children previously looked after, we welcome any direct requests for support from parents and carers or from schools to ensure that this group of children are kept in mind.

If you have questions or concerns about the education of looked after or previously looked after children please contact the relevant team member.

- Richmond: paul.chapman2@achievingforchildren.org.uk
- Kingston: clare.farley@achievingforchildren.org.uk
- RBWM: christina.buckley@achievingforchildren.org.uk

Previously looked after children across the AfC tri-borough:

emma.dyer@achievingforchildren.org.uk

Headteacher: suzanne.parrott@achievingforchildren.org.uk

AfC Virtual School contact number: 020 8831 6037

Additional support for schools with trauma-informed practice

Three new educational psychologists have joined the Virtual School team this term, bringing a wealth of experience and expertise about wellbeing, transitions back to

school and trauma and bereavement during these uncertain times.

- Richmond: Kim O'Connor
- Kingston: Sylvia Rojas
- RBWM: Jennifer Head

If you have questions for them, please contact them via the appropriate member of staff for your area (details above).

Our two websites have resources for you and for parents and guardians to support wellbeing, counselling, crisis support and mental health. Please share this information with colleagues, parents and foster carers.

Previously looked after and special guardianship information

<https://www.afcvirtualschoolpreviouslylookedafterchildren.org.uk/>

Looked after children

<https://www.afcvirtualschool.org.uk/>

Training for designated teachers

Our next designated teacher forum will be held online on 21 May from 10-1130. You can book a place via workforce development:

https://www.afccpdonline.co.uk/education/courses/bookings/c_detail.asp?cid=9011&iscancelled=0&curpage=1&keyword=&ds=1&unconfirmed=&cs=&subid=&keystages=&locationid=&sdate=&searchcode=&asearch=&tutid=&estid=&sday=&smonth=&syar=&targetid=&cal=1&calday=21&calmonth=5&calyear=2020&caldate=21-5-2020&submonth=5&subyear=2020&list=&palist=&frompage=&a=&b=&c=&d=&s_l eaid=

Or by contacting Tavana Young Thomas at AfC Virtual School tavana.young-thomas@achievingforchildren.org.uk

We are currently organising further training events for foster carers and designated teachers and will update you as soon as we have more information.

Bereavement advice and support

Winston's Wish is a charity that supports children with the loss of parents, siblings and those close to them. Their website offers advice about and guidance from their experienced team on topics including how to tell a child that someone is seriously ill or has died from coronavirus, how schools can support bereaved students, and how to say goodbye if you can't attend a funeral in person.

<https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus/>

Preparing children for the return to school

Although we do not yet know when a return to schools for all children will happen, there are things that we can start to do now to help prepare our looked-after and previously looked-after children. Psychologist and attachment specialist, Louise Bomber, recently outlined five helpful tips for parents and carers while their children are at home to ease the transition back to school, including making a transitional object (such as a friendship bracelet) and visiting the vicinity of the school as part of their exercise routine in advance of it reopening. More information can be found here on our website:

<https://www.afcvirtualschool/previouslylookedafterchildren.org.uk/page/?title=Preparing+to+return+to+school&pid=256&action=saved>

We would encourage you to pass this information onto adoptive parents and foster carers to support a positive return to school for all of our children.

Teachers of Year 11 are urged to contact the Virtual School Deputy and Assistant Headteachers when assessing GCSE outcomes, especially where students may not have been at the school for very long or would be eligible for special considerations or support (e.g. Scribe, more time etc).

Research

Bristol University have researched into 'Children in Need (CIN) and Children in Care (CLA): Educational Attainment and Progress'.

Professor David Berridge looks at the link between time with a social worker and educational outcomes making several recommendations which include: <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/policybristol/policy-briefings/children-in-need-and-in-care-education-progress/>

- Inclusive Practice in Secondary education is essential; including reducing exclusions and monitoring the impact of disciplinary codes on vulnerable students.
- Efforts to increase visibility of CIN should continue
- There are strong advantages for Virtual Schools overseeing CP and CIN
- CIN and CP would benefit from Pupil Premium Plus that currently goes to CLA
- Recommends a review regarding decision making procedures around 'case closure' to ensure continuing support to families.
- Teacher Training to include Attachment Aware to support pupil wellbeing

The Sutton Trust

The Sutton Trust champions educational opportunities for children who are disadvantaged by living in poverty. Their latest report reflects upon the impact of the

pandemic, finding that children living in poverty are more likely to be disadvantaged by the lockdown and suggesting how these disadvantages could be addressed.

<https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/covid-19-and-social-mobility-impact-brief>

The adopter hub

Parents of adopted children, as well as all DTs, are eligible for a free subscription, through the AfC Virtual School. They are currently running a series of webinars that address how adoptive parents can cope with difficult times, including 'Staying positive whilst homeschooling', 'homeschooling children with additional behavioural needs' and 'parenting in times of Covid-19'. Their latest webinar, which you can now download as a teacher or member, is 'Foetal alcohol spectrum disorder'.

We would be grateful if you could let adoptive parents know about this useful resource, particularly if they are likely to be feeling isolated at this time, as it also provides a forum for contact with others in a similar situation.

Laptops for children looked-after

Local authorities are now accessing resources to support care leavers and children with digital equipment. In order to be eligible, young people and families must not already have access to a device and must be in one of the following groups.

- Children with a social worker
- Care leavers
- Disadvantaged children in Year 10, ahead of sitting their GCSEs next year

If they are care leavers, children with a social worker at secondary school and disadvantaged children and they do not have an internet connection, they will also receive a 4G router.

Schools will be able to keep these devices once they've reopened, allowing children and young people to continue to learn and receive support at home in the future.

Any 16 to 19 year olds in education without a suitable device and/or connectivity to study remotely and whose family can't afford these costs will also be eligible for support via the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund. Decisions on support will be made by education providers. We will work with you to ensure all looked after children who need a laptop have access to one.

The Department for Education is also working in partnership with technology suppliers to provide:

- support for schools to access online education platforms where teachers can set and collect work from pupils
- training on using remote education resources

- support from other schools and colleges who are already using these resources.

For more information please contact Paul, Clare or Christina (details above).
