1.	Date of meeting:	December 12th 2017
2.	Title:	**Virtual School Headteacher Report 2017**
3.	Directorate:	**CYPS**

1. Background

The annual Virtual School Headteacher Report is a required document for the single inspection of Children's Services. It outlines:

- the purpose and role of the Virtual School
- places the school in its national and regional context
- the current school age population
- the key achievements of the last school year
- progess since the last inspection
- the main challenges for the future
- the Attachment Friendly Schools' Project
- the use of Pupil Premium Plus

The report also includes:

- a detailed analysis of the educational outcomes from the early years to post 16

- a series of appendices to significant reports and links to ideas and resources for the benefit of schools and other professionals, such as the 'The Educational Progress of LAC in England' November 2015, promoting emotional wellbeing, and key questions for school leaders.

2. Key Issues

There is a major educational gap in the educational outcomes of children & young people in care and their peers who are not looked after. However the raw results conceal more than they reveal. Intelligent interpretations of the outcomes of children and young people in care need to take into account the numerous risk and protective factors which impact on educational attainment and progress. These include:

- The high level of turnover of the virtual school population as a result of admissions and discharges
- The disproportionate number of children & young people with special educational needs
- The significant number of young people attending non-mainstream educational settings
- The type and number of care placements

- Recency to care
- Emotional wellbeing

Approaching the analysis of outcomes in this way reveals some very surprising results. For example, the DfE report on LAC outcomes for 2016 shows that at Key Stage 2 children in care without special educational needs made greater progress than their non-looked after peers.

The analysis of GCSE outcomes for Rotherham LAC in 2017 shows that the biggest risk factor, in terms of progress, was type of care placement and recency to care. Of those who made less than expected progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4, 5/10 had been in care for less than 3 years and only 4/10 were in foster care placements.

This is not to make excuses for the poorer outcomes of LAC compared with their non-looked after peers. The Virtual School and its partners are uncompromisingly ambitious for each and every individual.

The greatest single challenge for the Virtual School, the schools that LAC attend, their carers, their social workers and other professionals is how to re-engage approximately 25 young people (at any one time), predominantly in Years 10 and 11 who are not in receipt of 25 hours education, and those who are NEET post 16.

Related and interconnected challenges are reducing fixed term exclusions and reducing persistent absence.

Another significant issue facing the Virtual School and its partners is the increased numbers of children & young people in care. Between March 2016 and March 2017 the number of LAC increased from 430 to 484 and the rate/10,000 of the under 18 population has increased from 68/10,000 to 76/10,000. This is bucking the regional trend.

This presents significant challenges in terms of the resources and their deployment in the Virtual School Team.

3. **Key actions and relevant timelines**

To continue to work on innovative ways to re-engage those in receipt of 25 hours education and post 16 NEET, to minimise exclusions and to reduce persistent absence. This includes:

- Developing a Creative Mentoring scheme
- Exploring a wider range of alternative and complementary provision
- The Attachment Friendly Schools' Project
- The promotion of Emotion Coaching
- Developing the use of the Solution Focused Staff meetings in schools

4. **Recommendations to Improving Lives Panel**

To accept the report and endorse the key actions outlined above.

5. Name and contact details

Ian Thomas
Strategic Director, Children and Young People's Services.
Tel: 01709 822677
Ian.thomas@rotherham.gov.uk

Peter McNamara
Interim Virtual School Headteacher
Tel: 01709 334610
Peter.mcnamara@rotherham.gov.uk