

3rd October, 2023

Inclusion Hub Update - Report

Ward(s): ALL

Portfolios: Education and Skills - Councillor Mark Statham

1.0 Aim

- 1.1 This report will provide an overview of the work carried out by the Inclusion Hub during the 2022/23 academic year.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 For the committee to note the impact of the work carried out by the Inclusion Hub

3.0 Report detail – know

- 3.1 Walsall's Virtual School is responsible for liaising and working in partnership with agencies to support the education of looked after / vulnerable children. Following a national review which identified that 3 children in every classroom needed a social worker, Walsall Council developed its offer launching a Vulnerable Learners Hub (recently renamed Inclusion Hub) to improve educational outcomes of children with a social worker.
- 3.2 To support the new duties we developed a Vulnerable Learners Hub (now renamed the Inclusion Hub) and seconded three members of staff to work with social workers, schools and LA officers to help make visible the disadvantages children with a social worker can experience and promote practice that supports their engagement in education.
- 3.3 Funding for this team came from a £100K DfE grant which was initially for 1 year but was extended for a further year and more recently extended for an additional two years. The team is made up of 3 staff seconded from the School Attendance Service. The secondments have been extended in line with the funding extensions.
- 3.4 During the 2022/23 academic year the team have dealt with 429 referrals from social workers, schools and other professionals. This is an increase of 77 referrals from the previous academic year. The complexity of the referrals has also increased. This can be seen in the increase in the number of referrals for children who are not attending school, which has increased from 97 in 2022 to 179 in 2023 and the increase in referrals for children at risk of suspension or exclusion.
- 3.5 So far, this academic year the team have had 31 referrals and have already worked with schools to avoid the permanent exclusion of 5 young people
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3.6 The chart below shows the overall referrals and SEN status of the young people the team received in 2022/23

2022/23	Total	%
Number of YP referred to the Inclusion Hub (overall)	429	100%
Number of YP referred to the Inclusion Hub with no recorded SEN	204	48%
Number of YP referred to the Inclusion Hub with SEN support	124	29%
Number of YP referred to the Inclusion Hub with an EHCP in progress	5	1%
Number of YP referred to the inclusion Hub with an EHCP	96	23%

Of the 429 referrals

172 issues related to school attendance

40 issues related to children missing education

95 issues related to suspensions and exclusions

23 issues related to school admissions/awaiting a school placement

40 issues related to special educational needs

23 issues related to children under Youth Justice

Other issues were around reduced timetables, managed moves and support for NEET

3.7 In addition to the work carried out to improve educational outcomes for children with a social worker, the staff in the Inclusion Hub are also challenging schools where children with an EHCP are at risk of permanent exclusion.

The table below shows the number of referrals into the hub for young people at risk of permanent exclusion.

Perm Ex referrals	Total
Number of YP referred at risk of Permanent Exclusion	31
Number of YP without an identified SEN who were at risk of PEx	15
Number of YP without an identified SEN who went on to be PEx	0
Number of YP on SEN support were at risk of PEx	8
Number of YP on SEN Support who went on to be PEx	0
Number of YP with an EHCP were at risk of /PEx	8
Number of YP that went on to be PEx	2
Total number of YP at risk of perm ex	31
Total number of exclusions avoided by the Inclusion Hub	29

3.8 Through hard work, determination, support and challenge, staff in the inclusion Hub were able to avoid the exclusion of 29 young people with a social worker or with an EHCP.

3.9 In addition to the work the team are doing to promote the education of children with a social worker and reducing exclusions of children with an EHCP they are now fully supporting children under the youth Justice Team and in the spring and summer term of 2023 they supported 20 young people open to JYS. The support they provided included:

- working with services to reduce the time young people were missing education,
- visiting young offenders' institutes to ensure young people are receiving appropriate education provision.
- liaising with schools to prevent suspensions/exclusions.
- challenging poor school attendance

3.10 The work of the Inclusion Hub around supporting children and young people under the Youth Justice Service was recognised as good practice in the recent HMIP Joint Thematic Inspection of children on remand. This also led to lead inspector requesting a further one to one discussion with staff in the Inclusion Hub, to gather further information on the work they are doing with children on remand, to include in the effective practise guide

3.11 The team also continue to lead a regional working group with staff from other authorities, sharing our good practice and learning from others.

3.12 Feedback

Alex James-Walker – Inclusion Officer

*Hello Alex. I just wanted to thank you for being there again today and how you spoke up for R again. I always go to these countless meetings with a heavy heart and little hope of a good outcome, but when I see you there my heart lifts as I know 100% you will fight his corner and I can't thank you enough for that as he's not a bad kid, he's just lost his way a little. Have a lovely summer break. You've earned it.
Grandmother of a child at risk of permanent exclusion*

Jennie Dalton -Education Liaison Officer in the Vulnerable Learners Hub

Thank you for your support with co-ordination and ensuring the right support is offered for the child attending Busill Jones Primary. As you are aware, I have shared many times we cannot achieve positive outcomes on our own. You have been accessible throughout, ensuring we are not missing any areas of support provided, this has been helpful. Thank you for being on the other end of the line."

Suki Baran, Director of family support services- Busill Jones (Shine Academies)

3.13 Case study

The child's core experiences.

- Child V is 9 years of age and is currently in year 5.
 - V lives in the family home alongside Mum, 2 younger brothers and younger sister. Dad doesn't live in the family home but is involved on a day-to-day basis with the family.
 - V has been supported by a Social Worker on a child protection plan for 5 years.
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- V has an acquired brain injury due to a fall when they were 5 years of age. Health professionals have recorded that V may require support with this into adulthood.
- There were concerns around V's lack of sleep and sleep medication was being explored.
- V had recently been hospitalised due to hearing voices in their head
- V had been self-harming

School Content:

- Attendance at Primary school has been around 70-80% for the past three years with a number of late marks recorded. Siblings attends another primary school; this is closer to the family home, but parents decided that V would remain on the roll of their current school due to the high level of support they receive. Due to parents having to transport their children to two different primary schools each morning V would often arrive late. Support was offered by siblings' primary school who arranged for siblings to be collected by minibus some mornings.
- In February 2022 V was recorded as K for SEN support in school.
- Between January and March 2023 V received two suspensions from school due to use/threat of an offensive weapon.
- V had recently been hospitalised due to hearing voices in their head.
- V had started to self-harm.
- During this period V was also reported as missing and received support from the exploitation team.

School was becoming increasingly concerned around V's escalating behaviour and their capacity to be able to meet V's needs.

At this point school decided to progress with an EHCP assessment and sought the support and views of all professionals working with V. This included social worker, SEN professionals, support via BRICS, NHS staff members, The Inclusion Hub, and staff from the acquired brain injury team.

On 12/05/2023 the Local Authority was alerted by school that V had received a permanent exclusion due to an assault against another pupil.

Intervention and Outcome

The Inclusion Hub became involved in January 2023 and were attending all professionals' meetings regarding V and were liaising with SEN regarding the EHCP assessment.

The Inclusion Hub were alerted to V's permanent exclusion on 12/05/2023. The Inclusion Hub acted quickly to bring professionals together 3 days later to discuss the perm ex further and put additional support in place.

During the meeting with school, the following was discussed:

- School was awaiting educational psychologists final report.
- School said the incident leading to the permanent exclusion came unexpectedly, they had not seen that level of aggression in V previously.

The Inclusion Hub were able to liaise with the SEN team to explore NT&AS for V with this taking place in a local centre and away from the home.

SEN team moved quickly to ensure V was allocated this tuition whilst consultations were ongoing with specialist provision and their draft EHCP was in progress.

With professionals acting quickly to come together to support V they were able to ensure V's EHCP was finalised, a more appropriate education setting was identified to better meet their needs and were able to get V's permanent exclusion rescinded. V is now attending a school who can meet his needs. It is early days but V is enjoying his new school, is settled and starting to make friends

Education was one of the main concerns as part of V's Child Protection plan. Following a Child Protection conference in July 2023 it was agreed by all professionals that V no longer met the threshold to remain on a Child Protection plan and was no longer at risk of significant harm.

The Child Protection chair praised the work of everyone involved in ensuring V was allocated an educational placement that would better meet their needs.

3.14 Further development of the Inclusion Hub

A recent delve into the 2023/23 primary school suspensions highlighted that children on SEN Support are more likely to receive a suspension than those with an EHCP or no special educational needs. Out of the 121 children in primary who received a suspension 59-49% were on SEN Support.

3.15 To enable us to address the high number of suspensions for children on SEN support, a report is being presented to Children's DMT to request a further two Inclusion Officers to sit within the Hub. This would mean we would be able to allocate an officer to each social work locality and extend our support to children on SEN Support.

3.16 To further support the work the team are doing to reduce exclusions and prevent children and young people disengaging with education, we will be virtually tracking 30 children who received at least 1 suspension in year 6 and who are now in year secondary school. We will monitor their progress, work with services to identify any unmet need and challenge schools to use suspension as a very last resort.

4.0 Financial information

4.1 The posts within the team are funded through the DfE VSH additional duties grants. Local authorities were given additional funds based on the number of schools. Walsall received £100k. This funding has been extended until the end of the academic year 2025

4.2 Funding for the additional two posts would come from existing budgets within Access & Inclusion

4.2 If the DfE funding is no longer available, to ensure we continue to deliver this successful service to our most vulnerable young people we will request investment as part of the STP and budget setting work

5.0 Reducing Inequalities

- 5.1 While there is no single cause for the poor educational outcomes for children with a social worker, experiences of adversity can create barriers to good outcomes. The work carried out by the VLH ensures that with the right support, the aspirations of these children can be raised to enable them to achieve their best and ensure there is equal access to education opportunities.

6.0 Decide

- 6.1 The committee may decide to request further information on the education outcomes of children with a social worker.

7.0 Respond

- 7.1 Any recommendations made by the committee will be responded to by the appropriate service area

8.0 Review

- 8.1 The actions and outcomes within this report are monitored by Access & Inclusion SMT and Children's Services DMT and through a monthly performance board

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