

People's Scrutiny Committee

Educational Outcomes Task Group

Final Report

20 November
2014

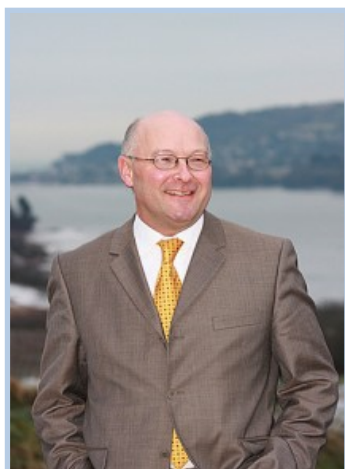
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http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/democracymunities/decision_making/cma/index_scs.htm

Preface



Every child in care has enough to deal with, without the prospect of not achieving five good GCSEs with which to see them start out in adult life.

In Devon, it's fair to say we've seen some truly awful results with only around 8% of Children in Care mustering enough exams to be meaningful. It had improved, but then tumbled, with limited prospects for recovery.

From the vantage point of not being a health, education or social care professional, I and other councillors on the authority asked the simple questions 'why' and 'what's being done about this'.

The outcome was an illuminating insight to the world of education, aspiration and achievement not only for our Children in Care but also all those who receive free school meals and for which the Government pays a 'Pupil Premium' to help foster their learning and educational experience.

As a team, we have been both challenging and challenged... and alongside that inspired. Inspired by the children we've met and spoken to about school and also a good number of teachers and school principals who opened their doors and showed us 'what they do' and 'how they make a difference'.

Schools Visited: Okehampton College; Coombeshead Academy; South Dartmoor Community College; Honiton Community College; The King's School; Pilton Community College and St James School.

It was brave of them. They perhaps didn't fully appreciate our mission and I hope we have reflected well of them and their open doors welcome in this report. Sadly, some schools we asked to visit didn't respond positively to our request. I don't know why.

Schools that were approached but did not take part in the review: Dawlish Community College; Uffculme School; Exmouth Community College; Tavistock College; Kingsbridge Community College and St Lukes Science and Sports College.

I very much hope we have learned some great lessons and will see in fairly short order the improvement in results and attainment not only for Children in Care but also all the children who should be fully benefitting from the Pupil Premium.

The team undertaking this review has set to it with enthusiasm and great interest. My thanks to each of them and particularly my Vice-Chair and colleague Cllr Andy Hannan.

Our collective thanks to the school heads, staff and officers and agents of Devon County Council for their contribution and support too.

I now better understand the issues - but will continue to challenge for improvement, as we all must, to ensure children in Devon, get the best, aspire for their best and achieve the best they are capable of.

Alan Connett
Chairman, Educational Outcomes Task Group
People's Scrutiny Committee

Introduction

The Task Group — Councillors Alan Connett (Chair), Frank Biederman, Alistair Dewhirst, Andy Hannan (Vice-Chair), John Hone, Sara Randall Johnson and Margaret Squires — would like to place on record its gratitude to the witnesses who contributed to the review. In particular thanks to those schools that the Task Group visited, who provided such interesting sessions for the members.

In submitting its recommendations, the Group has sought to ensure that its findings are supported with evidence and information to substantiate its proposals.

At 3 April 2014 People's Scrutiny it was resolved to undertake a review evaluating educational outcomes for children and young people with a particular focus on Children in Care. The terms of reference for the review were:

1. To understand the County Council's statutory responsibilities, role and function in terms of the educational outcomes of children and young people and where these differ from academies.
2. To understand the gap in achievement, particularly pupil underperformance at Key Stage 4, of the most vulnerable including Children in Care, children and young people with SEN and those in receipt of free school meals.
3. To explore how schools use the pupil premium in terms of closing the gap in outcomes.
4. To report back to the People's Scrutiny Committee on the findings of the Task Group.

Time and resources necessitate that this report provides a snapshot approach to highlight significant issues relating to educational outcomes. Members agreed that the issues relating to pupil attainment in the County Council's special schools would be served as part of the work of another Task Group.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

That the County Council:

- i) continues to restructure the Virtual School and how it operates to ensure that it drives the highest level of academic aspiration and outcomes for all Children in Care;
- ii) appoints a board of governors to the Virtual School made up of members to ensure that the County Council properly discharges its corporate parenting mandate;
- iii) adopts a much more demanding and targeted approach towards Babcock LDP's input into the Virtual School.

Recommendation 2

That schools, the Virtual School and Babcock LDP ensure that good practice in the effective use of pupil premium is shared across schools and key practitioners.

Recommendation 3

That members as corporate parents be provided with the following:

- (i) access to anonymised data for individual Children in Care giving an account of their educational journey highlighting any changes to schooling, foster placement and social worker etc;
- (ii) more detailed termly report on the educational progress of Children in Care to the Corporate Parenting Forum focussing on educational progress and changes to fostering arrangements of Children in Care;
- (iii) introduce an annual corporate parenting training session for all councillors, with the expectation that all members attend.

Recommendation 4

That placement stability for Children in Care is given an even higher priority and every effort is made to reduce the number of changes a young person has of foster carer, social worker and school.

Recommendation 5

That further work and reporting is undertaken to ensure that vulnerable children are not disadvantaged through school absence, part-time schooling and children being outside of mainstream schooling.

Recommendation 6

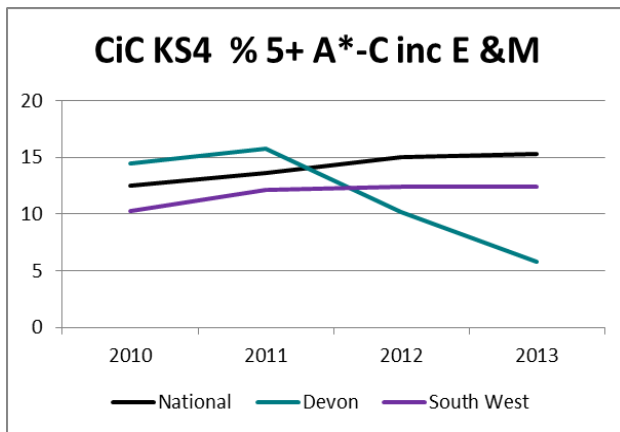
That the recently convened Young People and Employment Task Group from the Place Scrutiny Committee be asked to examine employability for post-16 to ensure:

- (i) the likelihood of Children in Care becoming NEETs is reduced through formalised educational pathways;
- (ii) CSW funding is specifically targeted to enhance employability and skills.

Overview

Nationally the number of Children in Care achieving 5 A* to C grades including English and Maths at GCSE has increased from 11% in 2009 to 15.3% in 2013. Devon has however seen a reverse of this trend. Official results for 2014 are not yet available but GCSE results for 2013 of 5.8% 5A* - C including English and Maths reveals an alarming picture.

KS4 (5+A*-C (including English & Maths))				
	2010	2011	2012	2013
National	12.5	13.6	15.0	15.3
Devon	14.5	15.8	10.2	5.8
South West	10.3	12.1	12.4	12.4



Source: DfE; Statistical First Release (CHILDREN IN CARE) & LAIT

The 2013 Children Looked After (CLA) data for Key Stage 4 (KS4) as used by RAISEonline to analyse performance is based on a cohort of 71 pupils, the Children in Care data was based on a cohort of 65 pupils. Due to the different definitions, the 71 CLA pupils may not include all of the 65 pupils and vice versa. The graph below clearly shows that for both definitions Devon pupils make significantly less progress than that made by pupils nationally.

End of KS4 Expected Progress



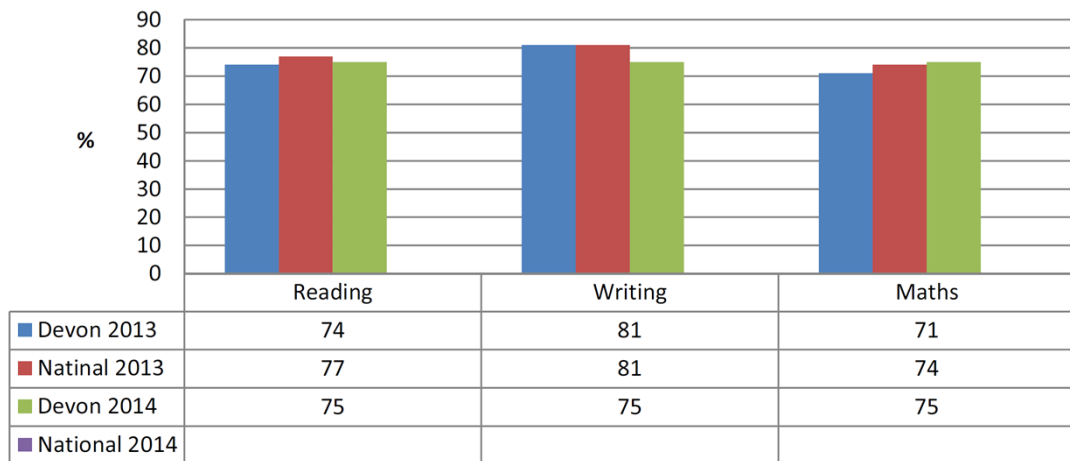
However, Devon Key Stage 2 (KS2) data overall demonstrate a strong performance, significantly above the national mean and south west mean.

KS2 (Level 4 and above)		2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014*
Reading	National	59	54	59	64	63	-
	Devon	63	43	43	43	75	69
	South West	58	58	59	61	61	-
Writing	National	-	-	-	51	55	-
	Devon	-	-	-	69	69	69
	South West	-	-	-	47	54	-
Maths	National	47	47	52	56	59	-
	Devon	69	69	69	69	56	81
	South West	48	46	52	53	52	-

* Provisional Unvalidated Local data

In terms of educational outcomes for the most vulnerable young people, the percentage who achieve the expected level of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is largely in line with the results nationally, which further highlights the issues at Key Stage 4. It is more likely that children will come into care during their secondary education.

CLA End of KS2 % making Expected Progress



2014 figures are provisional unvalidated data

Although the exam results of disadvantaged children in England (defined in terms of those eligible for Free School Meals) have been rising sharply in recent years, they remain relatively low compared to other children – with just 42 per cent of disadvantaged students getting five good GCSEs including English and maths, compared to 67 per cent of other children. The attainment gap between disadvantaged students and the rest remains stubbornly resistant to improvement. While some progress has been made, the gap has been closing far too slowly as better performance for disadvantaged children has been matched by improvements for other children¹.

Summary

This gap in educational outcomes at Key Stage 4 is in no way acceptable at its current level and is a major concern. It has largely been assumed that the defining feature of educational outcomes is the strong influence of social background. It is however apparent that schools have a huge role in closing the gap for the most disadvantaged, where even young people with the most challenging of backgrounds can progress and achieve. This is not to put the entire onus on schools as the County Council as corporate parent has much more to do.

There are tensions between schools and social care particularly in relation to thresholds for interventions and attendance at meetings, which need to be addressed. The early help offering certainly needs further embedding in the learning community. Some schools would like to see more support from the County Council, while others felt well supported. It is here that the Virtual School can have an important role working more consistently with schools to ensure the best possible outcomes for young people in care. The Virtual School does however need to be much more proactive in this regard. The Virtual School has not in the past been resourced sufficiently to provide both the support and challenge that is necessary. As a corporate parent it is vital that the County Council acts in the same demanding way parents would in wanting their children to get the absolute best from their school experience. This should also be the expectation of all foster carers.

¹ Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission *Cracking the code: how schools can improve social mobility* (p.5)

Overall in Devon schools the performance of disadvantaged children compared to the national average is much better at the end of KS2 than at the end of KS4. Devon's gap is broadly in line nationally, but there are inconsistencies in gaps across all key stages. Members also took account of the gaps that Ofsted had recently flagged up to schools, where crude comparisons of outcomes had not been linked to overall levels of achievement and progress: in fact some of the schools have been performing exceptionally well. It needs to be recognised that attainment and progress measures can be quite different. However as a County Council efforts have been made to work with schools to ensure they do not accept the gap in outcomes and that it is challenged strongly.

Schools are making considerable advances in terms of being able to track and monitor children's progress, and are responding to these data with a raft of interventions to raise pupil attainment. Whether there is always adequate focus on the most vulnerable groups of students is unclear. Devon will receive an additional £16 million in fairer funding next year, with £9.5 million set aside for KS4 and to target the gap in outcomes between vulnerable students and their peers.

It is essential that schools take a strategic approach in their use of pupil premium funding if it is to have a measurable impact in improving educational outcomes for disadvantaged students. The pupil premium must be targeted specifically at interventions and not be used as part of more generic funding. The Task Group fully endorses the approach of the County Council now has where pupil premium money will not be released unless the school's Personal Education Plans meet a good standard of quality assurance.

The County Council shares the responsibility with schools and other agencies to ensure that all children and young people are safe from harm and reach their full academic potential, and that gaps in attainment are closed. The County Council has also to be satisfied that it is doing all it can for its children and young people.

Key Issues

Children in Care

There is a particular issue in Devon in terms of the performance of Children in Care compared to their peers. There is concern about this nationally, but in Devon the gap appears to be widening. One of the biggest factors affecting educational outcomes for a young person is the stability of provision in terms of both schooling and care. There appears to be an issue in Devon with Children in Care placement stability and these children moving more than the national average, which is a factor in their performance. One school reported to the Task Group a Year 11 student who has been in 22 different care placements. In addition to the difficulties caused by moving between foster carers, the young people also have to work through issues from the often appalling trauma they may have experienced earlier in their life. There may also be schools which, wrongly, feel it is not worth making the commitment to these children and young people when they may soon move on to another school. If Children in Care do not make their expected progress, the school, regardless of whether or not it is an academy, needs to be asked for an explanation for why this has happened. This would be an important part of a robust approach to ensuring Children in Care performance does not slip.

The redesign of the fostering service in 2013 has helped to improve the level of support provided to foster carers which is helping to stabilise Children in Care placements, and is leading to a reduced number of school moves in Years 10/11. It is vital to get a young

person's care sorted out, so that focus and requisite attention can be placed on his/her education.

There are also issues for Children in Care being taxied considerable distances to school and the detrimental impact this can have. Although long journeys to school may be necessary to preserve educational stability when care arrangements change or foster families move, these are not desirable and may have negative effects on attainment.

In the past, some children have been left too late before coming into care, but there is now an awareness that it can be in the best interests of the young person to move into care much earlier. There can be difficulties in terms of placing Children in Care at 14/15 and situations arise where young people are subject to multiple placements. There appear now to be more robust mechanisms in place to minimise such moves, with an increasingly co-ordination between education and social care. As part of this a protocol has been agreed where no children will move during exam courses.

Across the teaching body there is much more understanding of Children in Care needs and there is a sense that these children are everyone's responsibility not just the SENCO. Every child is different and therefore needs a different approach. There is also a focus on creating opportunities for each and every student tailor made to meet their needs.

Okehampton College

Virtual School

The County Council uses a virtual school model as a structure to improve the education of Children in Care. The Virtual School Team includes staff from a range of services (Educational Achievement for Children in Care, Education Welfare, Educational Psychology) working together to promote and support the education of Children in Care, led by the Virtual School Head Teacher. There are 430 children and young people in the Virtual School from reception to Year 11, with Years 10/11 the biggest age group. 171 of these children and young people have a statement of SEN (154 with a disability).

The Virtual School arrangements have not been robust enough. There were previously just two officers responsible for the Virtual School, which was not adequate to discharge their duties. The Virtual School Headteacher previously had an extremely wide portfolio and large workload. The Virtual School Headteacher role is vital as the conduit for this relationship between education and social care, and yet at present there are headteachers of secondary schools in Devon who are not fully aware of the role of the Virtual School. The Virtual School must be consistently represented in Children in Care Education Panel meetings so that Children in Care placements provide educational stability which is in the best interest of the child.

The Virtual School is being restructured to ensure that it is aligned with Ofsted and the County Council's improvement journey. Officers are working with Babcock LDP to improve the capacity and effectiveness of the Virtual School structure. The County Council must ensure that there is robust monitoring of the Babcock contract to maximize benefits for Children in Care.

The Virtual School, and social care, need to be held to account through regularly reporting to People's Scrutiny and the Corporate Parenting Forum on the progress of its students. This will also help to raise awareness about these young people and improve their situation, as currently their results are not good enough.

The following initiatives are underway to improve the Virtual School arrangements:

- where a student does not attend for an exam, a policy is now in place where the Virtual School is notified immediately;
- the Virtual School prospectus to offer a pledge to Children in Care in the County;
- fully updated website;
- learning advocates added to the core Virtual School which should help to ensure strong multi-agency working and a stronger focus on individual children;
- the adoption of a Governing Body with the Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Skills as the Chair, a vital component previously missing from the governance arrangements;
- Members also felt it useful for the Virtual School to hold on its system a photo of every child within their records.

Aspiration is a key factor. Young people must be given hope and something to aspire to. Deprivation need not be a factor or barrier to achieving.

Devon Secondary School

Corporate Parent

As corporate parents the County Council is not consistent enough in supporting Children in Care receiving additional help in subjects with which they might be struggling. Higher aspirations are required for the most vulnerable children. As a corporate parent, questions need to be asked as to whether pupil premium pupils are being adequately supported to raise their achievements. Some Children in Care are giving feedback to say that they are not being pushed enough in schools. The County Council does not appear to currently have a firm grip on this issue with schools. Foster carers must be tenacious in advocating and supporting their Children in Care. It is not clear entirely to what extent this has been occurring. As part of foster carers' assessment the importance of promoting the educational aspirations of Children in Care should always be highlighted.

Children's Social Care

Schools reported that there have been improvements in the children's social care system since the County Council's inadequate Ofsted on its safeguarding arrangements in 2013. There however remains some frustration that children's social care is not providing young people with adequate support early enough in the system, nor are they always working readily enough with schools to do this. Schools reported that consistency of social worker is vital to the young people concerned, and yet social workers were changing too often without a quality handover leading to inconsistency of care. This was felt to be particularly acute in Exeter with a high proportion of agency workers.

A lack of communication from social care to schools and the young people at the centre of this remains a major frustration, as is a lack of feedback regarding referrals made to the MASH team. Schools reported that there are often problems on a Friday afternoon when a referral is made to the MASH which does not meet the children's social care threshold. There is unfortunately something of a gap between an issue that might be of serious concern to the school and the point at which the County Council will respond and this is a real problem, where schools may feel the only option they have is to contact the police. The Task Group recognised that further work is needed to develop the early help tool and offer to support schools.

The responsible social worker also has a role in conversations with the school about an individual's progress. More training for social workers needs to be provided about the necessary ambition for Devon's young people in care.

All young people who are struggling with their work are looked at on an individual basis notwithstanding how far below the threshold of the GCSE C pass they are. The advantage of the levels of progress measure is to ensure schools should be looking to meet the needs of all pupils regardless of their predicted results.

Honiton Community College

Pu Pupil Premium

It is important that it is understood that the pupil premium is not a personal budget but allocated to schools to ensure that targeted intervention and support can be provided within the school to improve the educational outcomes of the child. The pupil premium introduced nationally in 2011 is allocated to schools to work with children looked after by the local authority, with children whose parents are currently serving in the armed forces, and with children who have been registered for free school meals at any point in the last six years (known as 'Ever 6 FSM'). This is additional funding given to schools so that they can support their disadvantaged pupils in order to address the attainment gap. The Task Group found during its visits and evidence gathering a range of different approaches to the way in which schools deployed pupil premium funding. Schools use the pupil premium funding for a number of initiatives including:

- smaller class sizes
- English and maths 1-1 support
- homework classes
- educational psychology

- educational welfare support
- transition work for Year 6/7 students
- mentoring
- summer school
- counselling support
- equipment such as cameras, laptops and tablets
- school uniform
- outdoor education
- school trips / foreign exchanges
- leisure centre passes

While many schools are using their pupil premium to boost the achievement of their disadvantaged pupils, there were suggestions to the Task Group that not all schools in Devon are using it as effectively as possible. Some schools target this money just on pupil premium students while other schools may be using the money more widely as they fail to disaggregate this spend from their general funding. Ofsted advises that 'evidence from the 151 inspection reports shows that the most effective leaders identify their pupils' specific needs accurately and promptly so that low attainment can be tackled at the very earliest stage. They then track the progress of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium funding meticulously and make sensible amendments to the support they provide as a result of their monitoring and evaluation.'²

The Task Group certainly found that schools evidenced their ability to focus on pupil premium students and to track their progress in order to assess whether or not they are on target. Schools are collecting data intended to demonstrate a difference to Ofsted, showing positive outcomes from pupil premium funding. There is, however, a role for more challenge within the system about the way in which schools spend their pupil premium. With regard to Children in Care, this challenge needs to operate on a number of different levels, from members as corporate parents, from social workers and from foster carers.

Coombeshead is working with schools in Dawlish and Kingsbridge on the Challenge the Gap initiative, aimed at FSM pupils to raise aspiration. The project seeks to involve parents/carers.

Coombeshead Academy

Personal Education Plans

A Personal Education Plan (PEP) is a statutory document of utmost importance in planning education for Children in Care. PEPs are dynamic, live documents subject to a formal review every 6 months. A PEP review is an excellent opportunity to involve and engage young people in their education. However, currently 6% of Children in Care do not have a PEP. It is also unclear to what extent PEPs are being adhered to and whether all professionals are attending PEP meetings or if administrative staff are stepping into these sessions. The Task Group received various reports of PEP meetings taking place where the correct professionals are not in attendance or those that are present are not adequately briefed. Poor or incomplete paperwork is also an issue. The County Council's recently appointed PEP Coordinators have a role to ensure PEPs are in place. New processes have been put in place to quality assure all PEPs either through Babcock LDP or a

² Ofsted, *The pupil premium an update* (p.10)

centralised system which will only release pupil premium money once the PEP has been approved by a qualified teacher working for the Virtual School. PEPs have to be highly valued documents that can have an impact. The intention now is to use pupil premium money as a lever to improve what schools are doing to raise achievement for Children in Care. Only when the County Council is satisfied with its PEPs will pupil premium funding be released to the school concerned.

School Attendance

School attendance is an important factor in pupil attainment and in closing the gap in educational outcomes. The latest data on school attendance in Devon reveal a positive picture, which is better than the national and the South West average. Attendance for Children in Care is also improving. Persistent absence amongst Children in Care is largely in line with that of other pupils until Years 10 and 11, when it affects 32 out of 393 young people in care. The issue is at KS4 where girls' attendance in particular drops off and is worse than that of the boys. Schools need to ensure that they can always account for students whether on site or placed in alternative provision, and these young people are receiving high quality full time education. Schools must always ensure their arrangements are transparent and open to scrutiny. There may be issues at KS4 where some pupils are apparently asked not to attend.

The Virtual School needs to be much more proactive in ensuring that young people are attending their examinations. Where there is a recognised risk of children not presenting for an exam then every effort needs to be made to support their attendance. This should be seen as a very important corporate parenting function.

St James School is leading the way in narrowing the gap in educational outcomes and is top of the Value Added table of Devon secondary schools. St James School appointed a new headteacher in 2007 at a time when the school was in special measures and one of the lowest performing schools in the country. It has not been an immediate process to turn a school around, but the school has had phenomenal GCSE results this year. All key indicators exceed top 5% of similar schools targets. Students arrive at St James significantly below the national average for English and Maths and left significantly above the national average. Maths results have exceeded the Fisher Family Trust exceptional attainment target.

St James School, Exeter

Data Monitoring

The most effective schools start with a data-driven analysis of where poor children are falling behind.

Social Mobility & Child Poverty Commission

InIn

In the last few years considerable work appears to have been undertaken by schools with teachers being able to identify and understand pupils better. It is clear that those schools that engaged in the review process are holding an increasing amount of data on vulnerable pupils, which is analyzed on a regular basis to evaluate each individual's progress with interventions being made where appropriate. Information about pupils who are making excellent progress is highlighted to ensure good practice can be learnt from, as well as conversely where pupils are not making expected progress. This approach helps to ensure that pupils do not fall through the net at the point where their attainment starts to drop off. The Task Group was told that in a number of schools governors paid great attention to the data on vulnerable groups. Members were told that until only a few years ago teaching staff in some schools often did not know which pupils were Children in Care, but now teachers are aware of this and can steps to meet the specific needs of these pupils.

Members were concerned that schools were at times unclear about the level of monitoring the County Council undertakes in terms of Children in Care performance data. The County Council does appear to have recognised it needs to be working better with schools to get data on pupil progress. Through the One System ScoMIS are now able to present information on Devon schools in a way that they have not been able to before. The system which went live in September 2014 can track every individual child's progress. This can be used operationally but also as a strategic management tool. Data collection is taken from the school management system, except in the independent sector where schools have to report directly. Many schools, however, have just one or two Children in Care in a year group. It is therefore difficult tracking attainment gaps in individual schools, which is more easily accomplished by taking a countywide view.

Currently, a 'deep dive' analysis of Year 9 (Year 10) Children in Care in the Virtual School is being undertaken by County officers from both Social Care and Education to ensure there is sufficient support to the options process for these young people. This personalised focus allows detailed work to be conducted on every youngster bringing the relevant practitioners together to look at all the issues.

Pilton Community College removed study leave this year for Year 11. The school revised the timetable to offer a bespoke programme for each child's study. This approach has benefited all students, but has help the more disadvantaged young people most of all. Those children with less chaotic backgrounds receive more parental support and tend to be better motivated to prepare for their exams, so by removing study leave it has helped to narrow the gap in educational outcomes at Key Stage 4.

Pilton Community College, Barnstaple

Special Educational Needs

Devon has a higher percentage of children with statements for SEN than the national average and a higher proportion of Children in Care with a statement of SEN (171 out of 430). This does not, however, necessarily mean there are a disproportionate number of children and young people with SEN compared to other counties, but may be more a reflection of the schools use of the previous systems for statutory assessments and Devon's thresholds for issuing statements of SEN. Local authorities differ considerably regarding the number of statements issued. The new SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) reforms and development of the Devon Assessment Framework should start to impact on the number of children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans as the system has been developed to be far more responsive to individual needs within the school's own provision than relying on a statutory process to access additional resources (funding).

However, looking at the recent past, members of the Task Group investigated the possibility that the poor overall attainment levels of Children in Care could be accounted for by the fact that compared to other children a higher proportion had SEND. Officers presented evidence that this was not the case. This showed that compared to equivalent others the attainment of Children in Care children with or without SEND was noticeably worse. At the level of individual schools, however, numbers of Children in Care were small and thus the proportion of them with SEND could make a significant impact on their average attainment.

In general, for children and young people with significant special needs, level of progress is a more meaningful measure than attainment. It is apparent that a higher proportion of Devon's statemented Children in Care have profound needs in comparison with other local authorities and this impacts on the overall percentage attainment levels in national tests. However, even if Devon's Children in Care on the SEN register were to progress better than in other parts of the country this would not necessarily mean they would be able to achieve 5 A* - C grades at GCSE.

Exclusions / Unofficial Exclusions

An 'eliminating exclusions protocol' is in place, which seeks to prevent the permanent exclusion of Children in Care. However, there are ways that schools can exclude pupils without doing so permanently. There are concerns about schools providing young people with part-time timetables or a late school provision where children are not in school during the day. There also children attending different educational settings for part of their timetable. These young people should be registered at their parent school but they are sometimes not. There can be safeguarding issues in this situation that need to be monitored closely. School leaders must be challenged more over student migration. Ofsted guidance very clearly states that part-time attendance can be appropriate, but only where it is a temporary arrangement as part of reintegration.

There is a reducing number of fixed term exclusions in the County, 44% lower than this time last year, but this is still above the exclusion rate of children nationally. Schools have to continue to be challenged to keep this figure falling. There are schools in the County that deserve huge credit for doing all they can to keep pupils in school. Members visited schools with a passionate commitment to inclusivity which clearly try to ensure a personalised approach to addressing each student's needs.

No assumptions are made on vulnerable children; the emphasis is very much on progress rather than attainment.

The King's School, Ottery St Mary

Elective Home Education

There are over 500 Elective Home Education (EHE) pupils in Devon, many from families who will have selected EHE for philosophical, religious or various other reasons. There is great diversity amongst the children involved, although Children in Care are not home educated unless in exceptional circumstances. It was however reported to the Task Group that there may be schools in the County advising parents that they cannot meet the needs of their children and recommending they instead receive EHE. A significant number of young people are apparently being withdrawn from school in Years 10/11 under EHE, which is being used by schools wishing to remove a pupil from their roll. Parents in this situation may not understand the ramifications of having their children out of school. The Group learnt that one school in one half term had nine children withdrawn for EHE. In the Autumn term 2013 there were around 110 children entering EHE, double the previous year's total of 50.

There is no legal requirement for the County Council to visit a child who is in EHE, as it has no power in this regard. A School Attendance Order can be initiated, but this is a lengthy process. Babcock LDP is able to provide information, advice and guidance to parents in this area, but the Task Group was told that there have been cases where an illiterate parent has been responsible for their child's EHE. This Task Group accepts that EHE is suitable for some children, but it is, of course, greatly concerned that it may be being used by schools to avoid their responsibility to others who present with behaviour difficulties or are unlikely to succeed academically and thus may damage a school's attainment profile. Disadvantaged children in general and Children in Care in particular must be protected from such misuse of EHE.

Academies

While it is not possible for the County Council to require academies to do something, in the way that it is able to go into the maintained sector with an improvement plan, academy/non-academy divisions do not seem to be an obstacle to driving improvement. There is a willingness from academies to share expertise with the maintained sector. There is an Academy Protocol in Devon which sets out the Local Authority's relationship and the course of action to be taken where there are concerns. Some maintained schools do better than some academies in terms of Ofsted ratings in general and of 'value added' for disadvantaged students, and, of course, vice versa. The national policy is, however, about getting schools working together.

Parent / Carer Support

Parent/carers assistance is vital in terms of a young person's level of achievement. The support provided outside school varies massively and this can have a significant impact on progress and outcomes. It is important for schools to build relationships with parents/carers as this connection is extremely helpful. It is apparent that success is more likely where there is a good relationship between schools and the parent/carers. It is a problem for Children in Care where a foster carer is not properly supporting the young person concerned. Foster carers need to provide stability and be a constant source of support, as this is what has often been missing in the lives of Children in Care. It is problematic when foster placements change and young people are moved across the County and have to travel great distances to school or be educated far away from their home.

The school puts enormous focus on pupil premium students and is determined to narrow the gap between the pupil premium and non-pupil premium cohort across all subjects. These pupils are at the heart of every teacher at the school's ethos to learning. The school does not have a single approach but works with pupil premium students on a case by case basis. Some students for instance will need emotional support, while for others financial support is all that is needed to allow them to thrive academically.

St James School, Exeter

NEETs

All 92 Children in Care in the current Year 11 will have been flagged up to Careers South West (CSW), and will be monitored as part of the CSW contract. CSW has sought to contact all of these young people to engage them under the terms of the September Guarantee, which requires local authorities to find suitable education and training places for 16 to 17 year-olds. While the CSW contact is set up to monitor children within Devon, the contract does not track them when they move to a neighbouring local authority, which is a concern. Children in Care are more likely to end up as NEETs (those not in education, employment or training) post-Year 11 given their on average poor GCSE results. It should be noted, though, that the NEET category should disappear from 2015 as young people are required to stay in education, or training or employment with education/training until they are 18. However, there may still be a problem at 19 with unemployed young adults. The code of practice will allow the County Council to track and monitor members of vulnerable groups up to age 25.

Babcock LDP

For 2014/15 the County Council has commissioned Babcock LDP to deliver the following outcomes:

1. Improved standards of attainment for all learners in maintained schools and settings and contribute to standards in academies;
2. Improved attendance for children and young people of statutory school age;
3. Improved standards of attainment and closing the gap for vulnerable groups of children and young people;
4. Improvements in the rate of progress of children and young people across all phases;
5. The quality of provision in maintained schools and settings improves;
6. The quality of leadership in maintained schools and settings improves;
7. Improved quality of governance in maintained schools;
8. Learners are safeguarded;
9. Exclusions are reduced;
10. Access and equality for educational outcomes for young people with disabilities is improved.

Babcock is commissioned for maintained schools but can trade with academies. However, for members of certain vulnerable groups such as Children in Care, Babcock's remit extends to wherever that young person is attending school regardless of its status. There are two new initiatives that Babcock is looking to fund to support this. *Achievement for All* is a two-year programme about raising attainment for vulnerable groups with £15,000 a school to fund academic mentoring support to a cohort of up to 30 young people. Babcock LDP also run a range of consulting and training on the use by schools of the pupil premium. It has been a problem for Babcock not having access to all the data on vulnerable children possessed by the County Council. However, changes are now being

put in place, which will allow Babcock to access children's data in real time. Babcock's commissioning for 2015/16 will focus on four on specific outcomes with priority being given to closing the gap in attainment and achievement between our most vulnerable groups of children and all others.

There has been a lack of clarity about role and responsibilities across the Virtual School network that sits across the County Council and Babcock LDP. Commissioning processes have not been used with enough rigour to hold Babcock LDP to account nor has there been enough priority afforded to improving outcomes for Children in Care within the school improvement work of Babcock LDP. It was felt that Babcock could be more proactive in their challenge to schools, and in supporting corporate parenting.

The school monitors pupil performance closely and staff are very approachable and always happy to help.

Years 7-10 Pupils, Devon Secondary School

Ofsted

Headteachers expressed some concern about Ofsted's judgment and lack of understanding of the issues in Devon. Ofsted's initial focus is on a school's headline results. There is also a judgment based on pupil progress, with overall effectiveness following on from that. For a school / academy to be outstanding it needs to have all children doing well including Children in Care and Free School Meals children. Consultation is currently being undertaken by Ofsted on integrated inspections of services for children in need of help and protection, Children in Care and care leavers. Many local authorities are likely to be judged as inadequate under the new criteria. Using the One System, Devon should be much better able to present information on Children in Care. It is vitally important for the County Council to be able to articulate where each and every child in the County is in terms of their educational progress.

South Dartmoor Community College set up the Link Project to work with those really hard to reach families focusing on developing literacy skills for students and for the parents. The project seeks to connect with some of the poorest communities to build strong links between the College and the families. Workshops are set up where students are able to learn with their parents/carers and together develop their reading, writing, spelling and speaking skills.

South Dartmoor Community College

School Approaches to Narrowing the Gap

Pupil's Perspective

The Task Group talked to young people throughout the review process, and overall received a very positive response about their school experiences. While members noted that those children that agreed to meet the Task Group were not necessarily the most vulnerable, a number of young people in receipt of the pupil premium were happy to talk about the interventions their school made to help them. The issues mentioned included:

- There was a strong focus on their literacy and on English and Maths subjects;
- Some resented being taken out of lessons where they were more confident to have additional support in areas of the curriculum where they felt less confident;
- Those students who are on the borderline of grades do tend to get pushed more;
- There seems to be less focus on supporting those pupils who are a long way below a prospective C grade;
- School is however, not just focused on exam results and does give a lot of support to students from a pastoral perspective, looking at a young person's home life to try to help overcome some of the barriers to learning.

Teaching

The Sutton Trust has identified the biggest impact in narrowing the gap as the quality of teaching in schools. If the gap in educational outcomes is to close then it is apparent that schools have to go the extra mile for their most disadvantaged students and absolute key to this are the teaching staff. The Task Group found many examples on their school visits of teachers who were committed to ensuring the best possible outcomes for the young people in their care. At St James School many children may have limited parental support at home, so the school works hard to try to fill that gap. St James does for instance stay open late for homework study sessions, as well as on Saturdays and in the holidays. This is part of the school's approach to raising the profile of the more disadvantaged students and putting them at the centre of the school's work rather than in any way being a bolt on.

Aspiration is a key factor. The level of aspiration in some parts of the County is an issue. Young people must be given hope and aspiration. It therefore becomes incumbent upon the schools, particularly through their teaching bodies, to engender an atmosphere and environment which supports and encourages young people to achieve to the very best of their ability, often in spite of their circumstances.

It should be recognised that disadvantaged children in general and Children in Care in particular may be high achievers. While a high proportion of Children in Care have SEN (171 out of 430 with statements), a number of schools tended to make an assumption that Children in Care were the responsibility of the SENCO. Aspirations of the children are important, of course, but so are the expectations of their teachers.

Those students who are on the borderline of grades do tend to get pushed more. There seems to be less focus supporting those pupils who are a long way below a prospective C grade. The school is however not just focused on exam results alone and does give a lot of support to students from a pastoral perspective, looking at how a young person's home life to try to help overcome some of the barriers to learning.

Year 9 Pupils, Devon Secondary School

Literacy

A number of schools highlighted their accelerated reader programmes for some Year 7 and 8 pupils to close the gap with their peers in terms of their literacy and numeracy. The Task Group agreed that it is absolutely pivotal all secondary schools in the County focus on Year 7 pupils who are below where they should be in terms of their literacy levels. It is very important in helping to close the gap in educational outcomes that these young people receive intensive intervention to support them in acquiring reading skills. A key element of St James' success story is the school providing the very best in teaching and support until its pupils can read and write well. The school tries to do this as quickly as possible, so that these barriers to learning are removed and children are brought up to their chronological reading/writing age. A large number of SEN children came off the SEN register because of the school's fast track literacy programme.

Vocational Qualifications

It is difficult in such a rural county to provide an adequate range of vocational provision and this is not something Devon has been entirely successful in doing. The lack of vocational course options at KS4 may be a contributory factor in the relatively poor performance of Devon compared to national averages at this stage. It appears that schools which have had a heavy emphasis on vocational courses have had a much higher Value Added score than those schools taking a more academic route. With the move to Progress 8 some schools will drop down the table as some vocational courses are removed. Concerns were also raised with the English Baccalaureate curriculum, where young people who would benefit from high quality vocational qualifications are not being adequately catered for within the system.

Performance Monitoring

Most of the schools visited by members evidenced a robust approach to performance monitoring, with pupil premium students flagged up as a priority. Progress is being very closely monitored for individuals, with a fine grading system used to identify pupils across KS4 who need additional support. Schools demonstrated use of cutting edge data monitoring to support learning and could adapt to the continual changes in performance measures. Students receive individual action plans to coordinate support if they are felt to be underperforming. Close data monitoring is essential as part of the constant process to drive up performance standards where evidence of impact and outcomes are rigorously sought in terms of pupil achievement.

The new Progress 8 measure will be the main indicator of school secondary performance from 2016 with progress measured against 8 and not 5 A* - C GCSEs and will inform the subjects schools start to teach from September 2014. The Progress 8 measure supports the policy aim to encourage schools to offer a broad and balanced curriculum with an academic core which still meets the needs of all pupils. Schools will be held accountable for pupils' progress in a suite of 8 qualifications.

School governors have an important overview and scrutiny role in terms of pupil educational outcomes. Governors awareness could be improved so that they have a sharper focus on gaps and outcomes for all vulnerable groups within their school, particularly how pupil premium is used to improve outcomes for these children specifically Children in Care, It was suggested to the Task Group that governors are not adequately holding headteachers to account with many not knowing fully enough what is happening within their schools and that there should be a governors' group to include secondary chairs and the new Academy Director for the South West.

As little as two years ago the school had 8% NEETs following Year 11 GCSEs, this year St James has zero NEETs with the school's best ever recruitment at Exeter College.

St James School. Exeter

Mentoring

Mentoring of students is extremely important in raising aspiration for disadvantaged students, as it also gives the young people concerned an advocate within the school and something similar to parental encouragement within a school context, checking on how they are doing with their homework, etc. Schools reported a range of innovative mentoring schemes including external mentors from the business and university sector, as well as more typically from members of teaching staff and also fellow students within the school. The Educational Psychology Team within Babcock LDP train staff allocated by the school to mentor young people. When schools have trained mentors, this skill base can be used year on year. Babcock's Educational Support Team is setting up a mentoring scheme for Children in Care, which is likely to start in the Autumn term. Teachers are also being trained in mentoring Children in Care.

Counselling

Schools provide a range of support services for pupils. There are school counsellors, as well as school nurse drop-in clinics helping support health and attendance. There are also family support workers supporting parenting and attendance. Staff are trained in grief counselling and lower level issues, but cannot deal with very complex cases. There is not sufficient provision within the system from CAMHS and other partner agencies to support children with mental health needs. Waiting lists to access provision are lengthy and the onus is therefore very much on schools to provide support.

Home - School Workers / Parent Support Advisors

Many schools and learning communities, employ Home-School Workers/ Parent Support Advisors, who fully justify the costs involved in their post. Staff will call and visit young people in their homes to help support their schooling. This helps the process of ensuring that deprivation need not be a barrier to achieving. Individual schools report that this initiative has helped to narrow the gap in terms of attendance of pupil premium students, which has been reflected in their exam results.

Laptops / IT Equipment

School Name	School Type	2012.13	2013.14	2014.15
The Axe Valley Community College	Maintained Secondary	89,589	138,750	147,360
The Ilfracombe Academy	Mainstream Academy	165,200	224,475	228,435
Steiner Academy Exeter	Mainstream Academy	0	0	21,575
Queen Elizabeth's Academy Trust	Mainstream Academy	106,037	165,825	175,745
Honiton Community College	Mainstream Academy	99,268	144,144	127,690
The King's School	Mainstream Academy	52,973	84,450	98,790
Isca College of Media Arts	Mainstream Academy	170,446	235,806	222,195
Route 39 Academy	Mainstream Academy	0	0	20,570
Clyst Vale Community College	Mainstream Academy	80,599	128,331	118,375
Cullompton Community College	Maintained Secondary	69,653	98,700	99,410
Sidmouth College	Maintained Secondary	72,135	119,325	113,785
Exmouth Community College	Mainstream Academy	284,109	422,787	451,255
West Exe Technology College	Maintained Secondary	189,802	273,525	262,325
St James School	Maintained Secondary	141,694	207,000	178,275
Braunton Academy	Mainstream Academy	68,552	99,000	111,935
Chulmleigh Community College	Mainstream Academy	52,946	87,825	101,125
Great Torrington School	Mainstream Academy	90,888	135,975	131,790
Holsworthy Community College	Maintained Secondary	58,562	102,000	122,210
South Molton Community College	Maintained Secondary	82,995	128,325	117,775

There is a general expectation of pupils having a computer online at home, which is not the reality for everyone. Some children, but not all get access to a laptop from the school for their homework. School advises those students without access to a computer to use either the library at school or in their town. It is a potential problem for those not online, as schools email homework that requires access to the internet. The Virtual School and Babcock LDP are looking at how Children in Care in key examination years can individually access IT equipment to support their learning.

Councillors

Alan Connett (Chair)
 Andy Hannan (Vice-Chair)
 Frank Biederman
 Alistair Dewhirst
 John Hone
 Sara Randall Johnson
 Margaret Squires

Copies of this report may be obtained from the Democratic Services & Scrutiny Secretariat at County Hall, Topsham Road, Exeter, Devon, EX2 4QD or by ringing 01392 382232. It will be available also on the County Council's website at:

http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/councildemocracy/decision_making/scrutiny/taskgroups.htm

If you have any questions or wish to talk to anyone about this report then please contact:

Dan Looker

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Appendix 1 - Pupil Premium Allocation

The Park Community School	Maintained Secondary	182,795	243,150	241,850
Pilton Community College	Mainstream Academy	192,775	285,675	287,170
Bideford College	Maintained Secondary	236,547	346,725	339,300
Dawlish Community College	Maintained Secondary	116,878	171,600	146,125
South Dartmoor Community College	Mainstream Academy	138,685	218,400	205,330
King Edward VI Community College	Maintained Secondary	187,900	285,150	270,370
Kingsbridge Academy	Mainstream Academy	91,835	137,475	149,385
Coombeshead College	Mainstream Academy	173,436	244,875	233,765
Teignmouth Community School, Exeter Road	Mainstream Academy	134,341	206,550	218,755
Tavistock College	Maintained Secondary	152,925	213,675	220,205
Okehampton College	Maintained Secondary	134,332	194,100	204,055
Ivybridge Community College	Mainstream Academy	162,774	242,775	257,433
Tiverton High School	Maintained Secondary	206,944	293,406	298,195
St Luke's Science and Sports College	Maintained Secondary	174,931	263,850	261,660
St Peter's Church of England Aided School	Maintained Secondary	116,017	162,150	149,320
Colyton Grammar School	Mainstream Academy	19,944	32,100	27,910
Teign School	Mainstream Academy	101,436	157,056	146,090
Newton Abbot College	Mainstream Academy	113,640	175,875	177,000
Uffculme School	Mainstream Academy	73,655	108,000	109,290
Dartmouth Academy	Mainstream Academy	93,702	145,650	180,070
		4,680,939	6,924,480	6,973,898

Data on individual schools pupil premium spend is available on their websites, examples of spending used to inform the Group's work include:

<http://www.st-james.devon.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/St-James-Pupil-Premium-Policy-2013-2014.pdf>

<http://www.the-kings.devon.sch.uk/About-us/Pupil-Premium-spend/>

<http://www.southdartmoor.devon.sch.uk/sites/default/files/pupil-premium-data-publication-2012-2013.pdf>

Appendix 2 - Task Group Activities

- A1.1 The first meeting of the Task Group took place on **2 May 2014** to discuss the scoping of the review and receive an overview from the Head of School Effectiveness and Learning, Babcock LDP and the Lead Adviser for Secondary Schools, Babcock LDP.
- A1.2 On **2 June 2014** members met with the School Improvement Strategy Manager; Strategic Lead Education Achievement of Children in Care & Alternative Provision; Head of Children's Social Work Service and Child Protection (Interim); Head of Learner Services and Safeguarding Lead, Babcock LDP.
- A1.3 On **9 June 2014** the Task Group visited Okehampton College and met with the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors, a group of young people and some of the teaching staff.
- A1.4 On **12 June 2014** members met with the Executive Headteacher at Coombeshead Academy on their visit to Newton Abbot.
- A1.5 On **25 June 2014** the Task Group visited South Dartmoor Community College and held a meeting and received evidence from the following: Pupil Premium Coordinator; Mentoring & Monitoring; Performance Leader; Deputy Principal / Director of Quality Assurance; Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator; Deputy Principal / Director of Post-Sixteen Education and the Principal.
- A1.6 On **30 June 2014** the Task Group visited Honiton Community College and met with a number of pupils; Staff Governor and Senior Additional Needs Assistant; Director of Additional Needs; Assistant Principal (Student Well-being); Student Mentor for Students' Accessing the Curriculum; Vice Principal; Assistant Principal; Headteacher; Chair of Governors; 5 Year 10 students; and other teaching staff.
- A1.7 On **2 July 2014** the Task Group visited Pilton Community College and met with the Principal, Chair of Governors and the Deputy Headteacher & Finance Director. Members followed this session with a discussion with 10 young people from Years 7/8/9/10.
- A1.8 On **12 August 2014** members met with the School Improvement Strategy Manager;

Educational Commissioning & Contract Performance Manager and the One System Manager, ScoMIS

- A1.9 On **24 September 2014** members met with the Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Skills; Head of Education & Learning; School Improvement Strategy Manager; Educational Commissioning & Contract Performance Manager and the Senior Manager Strategic Commissioning of Educational Outcomes, Employment & Skills. The Task Group also visited St James School, Exeter and met with the Headteacher along with the Assistant Headteacher.
- A1.10 On **17 October 2014** the Task Group met to discuss their draft findings and recommendations.

Appendix 3 - Contributors / Representations To The Review

Witnesses to the review (in the order that they appeared before the Task Group / members)

Witness	Position	Organisation
Bob Hooper	Head of School Effectiveness and Learning	Babcock LDP
Sue Madgwick	Lead Adviser for Secondary Schools	Babcock LDP
Dawn Stabb	School Improvement Strategy Manager	Devon County Council
Deborah Booth	Strategic Lead Education Achievement of Children in Care & Alternative Provision	Devon County Council
Fiona Fitzpatrick	Head of Children's Social Work Service and Child Protection (Interim)	Devon County Council
Beverley Dubash	Head of Learner Services and Safeguarding Lead	Babcock LDP
Darryl Chapman	Headteacher	Okehampton College
Ian Courtney	Chair of Governors	Okehampton College
8 Young People	Year 9 /10 Pupils	Okehampton College
Group	Teaching Staff	Okehampton College
Matthew Shanks	Executive Headteacher	Coombeshead Academy
Dan Young	Pupil Premium Coordinator	South Dartmoor Community College
Louise Bennett	Mentoring & Monitoring	South Dartmoor Community College
Dan Vile	Assistant Principal – Director of Student Performance	South Dartmoor Community College
Paul Collins	Deputy Principal / Director of Quality Assurance	South Dartmoor Community College
Fiona Goodchild	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator	South Dartmoor Community College
Kirsty Matthews	Deputy Principal / Director of Post-Sixteen Education	South Dartmoor Community College
Hugh Bellamy	Principal	South Dartmoor Community College
5 Young People	Year 9 /11 Pupils	Honiton Community College

Alison Salter	Staff Governor and Senior Additional Needs Assistant)	Honiton Community College
Nerys Wintle	Director of Additional Needs	Honiton Community College
Marie-Claire Adams	Assistant Principal (Student Well-being)	Honiton Community College
Kate Adkin	Student Mentor for Students' Accessing the Curriculum	Honiton Community College
Glenn Smith	Principal	Honiton Community College
Andrew Holt	Vice Principal	Honiton Community College
Rob Robson	Assistant Principal	Honiton Community College
Faith Jarrett	Headteacher	The King's School, Ottery St Mary
Sue Fallows	Chair of Governors	The King's School, Ottery St Mary
5 Year 10 Students Group	Teaching Staff	The King's School
Louise Miller-Marshall	Principal	Pilton Community College
Mrs Lock	Chair of Governors	Pilton Community College
Danny Heaton	Deputy Headteacher & Finance Director	Pilton Community College
10 Young People from Years 7/8/9/10		Pilton Community College
Richard Belcher	Educational Commissioning & Contract Performance Manager	Devon County Council
Mark Goodwin	One System Manager, ScoMIS	Devon County Council
Sue Clarke	Head of Education and Learning, People	Devon County Council
Councillor James McInnes	Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Skills	Devon County Council
John Peart	Senior Manager Strategic Commissioning of Educational Outcomes, Employment & Skills	Devon County Council
Moira Marder	Headteacher	St James School
Steve Lee Farmer	Assistant Headteacher	St James School
Written Representation		
Alison Hurley	Professional Lead for SEN and Disabilities	Babcock LDP

On **25 June 2014** Devon Education Forum discussed the review and returned a number of comments to the Task Group.

Appendix 4 - Bibliography

Championing All Our Children – A strategic vision for vulnerable children and young people in Devon

<http://www.devon.gov.uk/championing-all-our-children-2014.pdf>

Cracking the code: how schools can improve social mobility

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/360753/Cracking_the_code_Final.pdf

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<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/pupil-premium>

Education Endowment Foundation – Toolkit.

<http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/toolkit/>

Education Matters in Care

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Improving the attainment of looked after children in primary schools. Guidance for Schools, DCF 2009

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/190244/01047-2009.pdf

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