



# POST16 UPDATE

**Higher and Further Education Information for Young Care Leavers Autumn Term 2017**

## WELCOME

Since the start of this academic year I have no doubt there has been a turnaround of fantastic Designated Members of Staff (DMS) for CiC/CL's, so I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you and ask that you review this newsletter as an opportunity to find good practice and highlight important training opportunities around the county. We at the Virtual school have also seen considerable change, in saying farewell at the start of the academic year to our amazing Ann Parnell and Malcolm Thomas (Deputy Headteachers) who took a well-earned retirement in the summer leaving Marian Smith holding the fort. I am sure you are already familiar with my new Senior Leadership Team but I would like to introduce you to Rachel Calver (Deputy Headteacher Post16), Joanne Kelly (Deputy Headteacher Secondary and North & West Kent), our wonderful Marian Smith (Deputy Headteacher Primary and South & East Kent) and Joanne Carpenter (School Bursar & Project Officer) who has strategic responsibility for Participation and Engagement and also finance. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome back Carole Bailey (Assistant Head South East Kent) who joins us with a wealth of relevant experience and I am sure she will make a fantastic impact in South Kent.



With Christmas fast approaching, it is a good time to reflect back on what has been achieved so far this year. It has been difficult to evidence the amount of academic progress made this year in the secondary school phase as the DfE has significantly changed the assessment methodology, however we have seen some fantastic individual performances, great progression to Further Education pathways and record number of young people going on to Higher Education to study at University.

At Key Stage 2 despite assessment changes last year, the Summer of 2017 saw Kent's CiC achieve the greatest results on record. We outperformed both the South East and the National average by between 4 and 13% in Reading (R); Writing (W); Mathematics (M); Grammar Punctuation and Spelling (GPS) and RWM Combined. I am sure you would agree a fantastic achievement. These achievements along with many others were celebrated once again at our fantastic Post16 Awards Ceremony held at Canterbury Cricket Ground on the 19th October and it was great to meet so many inspirational young people and colleagues. As ever our Participation and Engagement Team including our fabulous apprentices have been working at breakneck speed around the county and as well as hosting two awards days since September have also delivered a host of activity days.

Please take the time to look at what is happening across the virtual school and feel free to contact us and let us know how you think we are doing and what other support you feel would be beneficial. Have a great Christmas and New Year!

*Tony Doran*

**Headteacher, Virtual School Kent**

## RACHEL CALVER, DEPUTY HEAD (POST16)

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Already we have reached the end of term 1 in the new academic year and it feels like it was only yesterday that we ended the summer holidays. The Post 16 Team have been working incredibly hard to support our young people with their plans for the new academic year, confirming enrolments and supporting those where plans have changed. Working in close collaboration with the Designated Members of Staff in the Colleges the team have been able to quickly identify where our young people are, and we currently know all of this for our young people. However, some young people still need support to identify the best possible option for them in education, training or employment so please make contact with VSK as soon as possible if your young person needs support.



The Post 16 Team has also had some recent staff changes with Tina Simpson and Lesley Lamb leaving VSK, and we welcome Catherine Burton to the team as a Post 16 Support Officer, and Jane Charlton has returned to VSK as support for Post 16 admin. Thank you to both Lesley and Tina for their hard work in supporting young people with their Post 16 journey, we wish you both well with your next steps.



And now to Kate. Kate Corbishley has left the team to return to teaching. She has been a fantastic member of the team who has helped to move the service forward in many ways, and also helped to keep us fed as she is a fantastic cake baker!! Kate has always shown professionalism, dedication, and passion in her role as a Post 16 Support Officer and has supported many young people to access provision. Her excellent organisational skills have kept the team on the straight and narrow.



And finally, to me, my role has changed slightly in this new academic year as I am now the Deputy Head for Key Stage 5, looking to develop good tracking systems for our entire Key Stage 5 cohort. I will remain as the line manager of the Post 16 Support Officers and the 18+ EET Support Officer, and work closely with the Locality Teams to support young people in school sixth forms.

## WELCOME CATHERINE!

Catherine says “For the past seventeen years I have specialised in working with offending behaviour and challenging behavioural issues with resistant learners from the age of 17 years plus. I love seeing people make positive changes in their lives, accepting responsibility for their actions and moving forward especially when life may have become a bit chaotic. In 2013 I completed my MSc in an area of Psychology which was challenging yet rewarding and I learnt a huge amount about my capabilities as a person. I have a Certificate in Education and I am a Level 5 qualified Coach. I realise how short life can be and I don't do stress; I choose to handle life with a relaxed attitude and can-do approach and I'm extremely excited to be the newest member of the VSK Post 16 team.”



## POST16 TEAM NEW AREA ALLOCATIONS

With the recent changes in staff in the Post 16 team we have had to temporarily reallocate the areas each member covers. The areas the team now cover are:

- Catherine Burton – Canterbury, Costal and Swale
- Vicky Crompton – Thanet, Dover and Folkestone
- Jade Fray – Ashford, West and Mid Kent
- Sam Sharkey - North and Medway
- Rob Sparks – 18+ Support Officer – all county

The Post 16 Support Officers track and monitor those young people who are accessing education, training or employment, and those who need support to identify the best possible option for them. Young People in school Sixth Forms are supported and tracked by the VSK Locality Teams.

## UPDATE FROM ROB SPARKS, 18+ EET SUPPORT OFFICER



It has been a busy summer supporting our care leavers as they prepare for a new year of college, university, or looking for their next steps into employment or training. Those looking for quicker routes into employment have benefited from a number of short skills courses that have been available across the county and I recommend visiting [www.readytoworkkent.co.uk](http://www.readytoworkkent.co.uk) to see what opportunities are available in your area.

There are also lots of training providers who offer support with functional skills, which has been great for our young people who have wanted to improve on their Maths and English in order to progress themselves. Although we have made progress, there is still lots of work to do in supporting our young people who are not engaged in education, employment or training and it is my job to make sure they are aware of the opportunities available to them, and in doing so hoping it will motivate them to get involved!

## FIRST TERM SUMMARY

As we come to the end of the first term we are pleased to share that thanks to great transition work from the Key Stage 4 Progression Advisors in VSK and our Designated Members of Staff in Colleges, we have been able to support over 400 young people to access College and Sixth Form. We also have more young people starting apprenticeships with 14 starting courses.

There is still time to access provision across the county so please contact VSK if your young person has not found the right option for them and the team will be glad to help. Our strong links with professionals and providers means that we have been able to support more young people into provision quicker during the last three years reducing the number of young people who are NEET (Not in Education, Training or Employment) or destination Not Known.

Data from the third week in October over the last 3 years:

- 2015-2016 NEET and Not Knowns – 49.5%
- 2016-2017 NEET and Not Knowns – 18.2%
- 2017-2018 NEET – 15.2%

For the 18+ Care Leavers, supported by Rob Sparks, VSK 18+ EET Support Officer, in March 2017 24% of the cohort were NEET and as of October 2017 this was down to 19.5% - a great achievement for Rob and the 18+ Service.

## POST16 TRANSITION 2018

Its never to early to start thinking about transition to the Post 16 world of education, employment and training for 2018. There are many options open to you which include:

- College
- Apprenticeships
- Volunteering
- Sixth Form
- Training Providers
- Employment

All colleges and some providers offer open days/evenings where you can go along to meet the tutors and find out more about the courses they offer. In some areas there are also careers events held to showcase the variety of employment and training provider opportunities.

If you are attending a College or a Training Provider on an accredited course you will be entitled to a bursary up to £1200. This can be used to fund travel, food and any kit and equipment you may need for your course.

Your Key Stage 4 Progression Advisors are a key point of contact to signpost and guide you through the transition process.

# NATIONAL CITIZEN SERVICE



## What is NCS?

It's a four weeks programme during the summer holidays:

- The first 5 days are away at an outdoor activity centre in a group of 12-15 where they'll take part in lots of team building activities (rock climbing, canoeing, raft building etc..) then home for two days.
- Reunited with the same group for a further 5 days at a University (staying in halls of residence) budgeting, developing confidence, leadership & communication skills then back home.
- About 10 days meeting their group regularly working on a 'social action project' fundraising for the local community

## Points to Remember

- Your young person **MUST** be in either Year 11 or Year 12 (16/17 years old)
- It's **FREE!** The NCS fee of £50 is waived for **ALL** Children in Care.
- They can take a friend & are guaranteed to be in the same group (the friend if not a Child in Care would have to pay £50 (concessions apply)).

## If they say 'YES'?

For young people living in Medway, please contact Sam Sharkey at [samantha.sharkey@kent.gov.uk](mailto:samantha.sharkey@kent.gov.uk) or 07795 834466 and for all other young people please contact Catherine Burton at [Catherine.Burton@kent.gov.uk](mailto:Catherine.Burton@kent.gov.uk) or call 07795 036695. They will arrange for you and your young person to link in with a representative from NCS

## YOUTH HUBS - SUPPORT FOR CARE LEAVERS IN KENT

The 18+ Leaving Care Service are supporting drop-in services in Youth Hubs across the County providing information, advice and support or a place to hang out with friends. So pop along to see how the Youth Hub services can support you.

For further details visit <http://www.virtualschool.lea.kent.sch.uk/news/21-08-2017-youth-hubs-support-for-care-leavers-in-kent>

- Ashford
- Dartford
- Gravesham (Northfleet)
- Sevenoaks (Swanley)
- Swale (Sittingbourne)
- Tonbridge
- Canterbury (Whitstable)
- Dover (Deal)
- Maidstone
- Shepway (Folkestone)
- Thanet (Margate)
- Tunbridge Wells

## VSK AWARDS CEREMONY

On 19th October we held the fourth annual Post 16 Awards Ceremony to recognise and celebrate the achievements of our young people – the event was a fantastic evening with over 40 young people attending, supported by their friends, carers, social workers and personal advisers. The evening took an Oscars theme, with red carpet, photo screen, popcorn, sports activities and buffet.

Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education opened the ceremony followed by Tony Doran, VSK Head Teacher who spoke about how high the standard of entries were again this year. This was followed by a presentation from the Participation Team on the Young Adults Council.

Our guest speakers Michelle Smith, from Liberty Training gave an inspirational talk about believing in yourself, and not taking no for an answer and Martin Collins, The Kent Magician spoke about having courage and conviction to follow your career dreams, and not giving up at the first hurdle. Sarah Hammond, Interim Director Specialist Children's Services closed the evening.



Awards were presented by Roger Gough and Andrew Ireland, Corporate Director Social Care Health and Wellbeing to:

- Young people achieving excellent Key Stage 4 results
- Superstars of the Young Adults Council
- Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards for our Post16 students
- Rebecca Jones from Canterbury College received an award for the fantastic support she gives as the Designated Member of Staff
- Naintara Khosla, Assistant Director Corporate Parenting presented Chloe Mutton with the Outstanding VSK Apprentice Award



Congratulations to all our young people and thank you to everyone that supported the event!

## FOSTER CARER SEMINAR- SUPPORTING TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD



At the end of September, we attended the second workshop for Foster Carers around supporting transition to adulthood for our young people. The event was well attended with a wide range of topics presented by representatives from the IRO service, Social Care, VSK, Health – including ‘Staying Put Policy’, The 18+ Leaving Care Service and accommodation, the role of Health in transitions, VSK Apprentices, the role of the Social Worker and of course the role of VSK. The most inspiring presentation came from the voice of two foster carers and a young person currently transitioning to adulthood. The newly published workbooks for young people and Foster Carers were also shared at the seminar.

### GOOD LUCK REBECCA!

We were able to say a huge thank you to Rebecca Jones for her hard work and support she has provided to Children in Care and Care Leavers in her role as Designated Member of Staff at Canterbury College at our Post 16 Awards event last week. Rebecca has worked alongside Kay O’Connell at the College for many years and has been a leading example of how good collaboration works. Her students at the College also awarded her for her dedication.

We would like to wish Rebecca all the very best in her new career at the University of Kent in Canterbury. Rebecca has been an “award winning” and outstanding member of the Student Information Centre at Canterbury College and she has worked extremely hard to build strong links between the College and VSK. You will be greatly missed Rebecca.



## VSK PARTICIPATION TEAM UPDATE

The VSK Participation Team has had a busy summer organising lots of fun activities for children in care. The summer started with our annual children in care celebration event where the members of our three children in care councils (YAC, OCYPC and the Super Council) got together to review and celebrate the excellent work they have done this year. First everyone took part in an activity identifying barriers as to why children don't attend council meetings, then we discussed ways we can ensure everyone feels welcome and is included. After a break for lunch we then held a sports day and invited the children's Corporate Parents to join in the fun!

In July, some of the Participation Team went to the Research Launch at Portcullis House in London. The Launch was run by a charity called From Care to Where? (who supports care leavers). The research launch looked at the reasons why Care Leavers struggle to find their own homes when they leave the care system and how Local Authorities can help prevent this. We will be taking the findings to the Young Adult Council to see if Kent has the same issues that were highlighted nationally.

Please get in touch if you would like more information about the activities we support and have young people that you think would like to get involved. [VSK\\_Participation@kent.gov.uk](mailto:VSK_Participation@kent.gov.uk)



*Participation Team Photo taken at the Post16 Awards Evening (Chelsea, Sophia, Jo, Chloe and Reece)*

## VIRTUAL TRIATHLON CHARITY CHALLENGE

On Thursday 26th October members of the Young Adult Council (YAC) and VSK Apprentices completed a virtual triathlon – running, walking, cycling and rowing from County Hall in Maidstone to Calais and back again.



The Young Adult Council (YAC) represent young people in care and young care leavers. They help ensure that young people get to have their say about the services they receive and identify positive things they would like changed about the care system. Every year YAC chooses a charity that means something to them to support and this year they decided to raise funds for The Umbrella Centre, a mental health charity based in Canterbury.

Jo Carpenter from the Virtual School Kent said *"The young people have been amazing and so determined to complete the virtual trip from Maidstone to Calais and back, which is an incredible 142 miles! We are not just proud of what the Young Adult Council has achieved today but proud of what they do every single day through their work with young people in care and care leavers in Kent. They are a determined and passionate bunch!"*

So far the Young Adult Council has raised £568 with more pledges and sponsors coming in. If you would like to donate, please go to: <https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/youngadulthoodcouncil>

