

VIRTUAL SCHOOL NEWSLETTER | SUMMER 2022

CLOSING THE GAP AND RAISING THE BAR



Meeting the team

Hi my name is
Angelina Ikeako



I am the Deputy Head of the Aspire Virtual School. I am one of the new kids on the block. I joined the team in 2018. It has been an amazing experience. My role is both operational and strategic. I am the lead for post 16's who are enroute to university or apprenticeship.

The strategic part of my role involves project management of different internal and external projects like the Aspire Higher Cohort, The Alumni Project, etc. I also have training and development under my portfolio. This means I lead on organising the Designated Teachers Network Forum which provides training to DTs on a range of topics. I also co-lead the training for Social Workers & DTs with Kathy Twin.

No two days are alike for me and the variety that comes with the role keeps it exciting for me.

Please contact me if you have a 16+ who is aspiring to higher education.

CELEBRATING AMAZING DESIGNATED TEACHERS



RICHARD HILL
SYDNEY RUSSELL SCHOOL

Having completed his GCSE with some of the best results, BJ's attainment started to drop when he joined the Sixth Form College. BJ's PEP records show that the young person was underperforming; therefore, he was at risk of not achieving the expected grades to move on to university.

Richard Hill, the designated teacher, decided to take control and personally coordinated all personalised catch-up sessions. He also ensured that support and mentoring were supervised so that every strategy in place was leading to help BJ raise the quality of his work rapidly. BJ needed to complete and submit his coursework on time; without that, he would not satisfy the university requirements.

Everybody in Mr Hill's team expected that BJ would make rapid progress. In the end, BJ effectively made huge progress and was able to submit his university application with the predicted grades. Richard Hill's supervision and guidance made a big difference to the life of our young person who has just received unconditional offers from two universities, Leeds and Plymouth.

YVONNE BURROW BARKING ABBEY SCHOOL

DB joined Barking Abbey at the end of Y9 in 2018 after she had also changed placement. For nearly four years, DB worked consistently well. But, more recently, she has been very emotional and not focusing enough on learning.

The designated teacher's investigation revealed that the young person was under pressure following the care plan transition as she had recently turned 18. More importantly, all these worrying situations had a negative impact on DB's education. She has been working below the expected standard in two key subjects - Psychology and Sociology - but she has been achieving brilliantly in Dance.

Knowing that DB has potential and can do well, and to ensure that she achieves good grades, the designated teachers made massive changes to the way the young person was supported. These included:

- ▶ Regular checks at home during her study leave to ensure she was still working hard.
- ▶ Providing quiet study venues in school.
- ▶ Extended deadlines so that work was handed in and submitted her coursework on time.
- ▶ DB was also offered emotional support to ensure she was ready to start a new life at the university.

Yvonne's care and support were a lifeline for DB, and she is off to University by September.

Thank you, Yvonne for not giving up on DB.



AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH OUR ALUMNI: TINA AND WILHEMENA

The editorial team caught up with these two young ladies Tina and Wilhemena. Tina is one of our care leavers who graduated from Gold Smith University and is now a qualified social worker and a mother of a beautiful baby girl. We also caught up with Wilhemena an undergraduate at the Greenwich School of Management studying for a degree in Event Management and a mother of 2 beautiful girls. We were curious to know who or what motivated them into higher education. Here are their responses:

THE INSPIRATIONAL SOCIAL WORKER - HOPE GAYLE



The VS:
What motivated you to want to go to university?

Tina: My Social Worker Hope Gayle.

As a child in care, it was rare to come across a black female Social Worker. After the death of my mum when I was 7 years I was taken into care and introduced to Hope Gayle who was a black female Social Worker.

Meeting her changed my life because I now had a strong, inspiring woman who looked like me. She became my icon and my inspiration. She was also a firm but compassionate person who could have a frank conversation with me and care enough to tell me the truth. I wanted to be like her. As I grew older my path was settled, I went to Gold Smith University and studied Social Work. Just so that I could walk in her footsteps. I was not an easy child to manage, and I was often labelled as a truly angry child.

My placements kept breaking down. But the truth was I was not an angry child. I was just a child suffering from the trauma of losing my mum. Anger management classes were recommended for me. But I kept saying I am not an angry child. Hope Gayle was the only one who stuck with me and insisted on seeing the best version of me. I almost got excluded from school. But she guided me in a firm but compassionate manner and stayed connected even after I left care and was at university. Having her in my life has been my game changer.

THE INSPIRATIONAL FOSTER CARER - ALALA

The VS: What motivated you to want to go to university?

Wilhemenia: My foster carer Alala. I had never had anyone care for me like she did. All my previous foster carers did not care about me. I was placed with her when I was eight months pregnant. After my baby I thought I would wait for 3 years till my child was in nursery before I went back to school. But she said no, you can go when she is 1 year old. She encouraged me and helped to remove any mental barriers that I had regarding University. I think just her acceptance of me and her belief in me became my springboard. I did not want to let her down. Also knowing that she was a chartered accountant herself helped me believe that if she could do it so can I. Today I am in Greenwich School of Management studying for a degree in Event Management.



I CAME TO THE
UK ALONE AS
A YOUNG BOY
WITH NO
ENGLISH, NO
PARENTS AND
NO FAMILY
OR FRIENDS.



However, I want to achieve my absolute best to help myself and others through learning more English day by day. I want to study Mechanical Engineering because I love cars, and my goal is to work on a mechanical planning project which will lead me one day to opening my own business. I did not finish schooling in Congo due to terrible disruptions in schools, but my desire for learning, achieving, educating myself and helping others stays the same.

Background: David came into foster care speaking zero English; he could not even say 'Hello' or what his name was. He came to the U.K on 28th August 2020 fleeing from civil war and fighting in his home state. He became an orphan as a baby and was fortunate to be adopted by his uncle who was able to raise him. As David grew older, he came to realise the traumatic truth about what happened to his dear parents. Both were brutally and tragically murdered during the civil war. David has only seen photos of his mother and father and goes by the stories and history his uncle relays to him. In addition, David undertook the terrible journey with the traffickers.

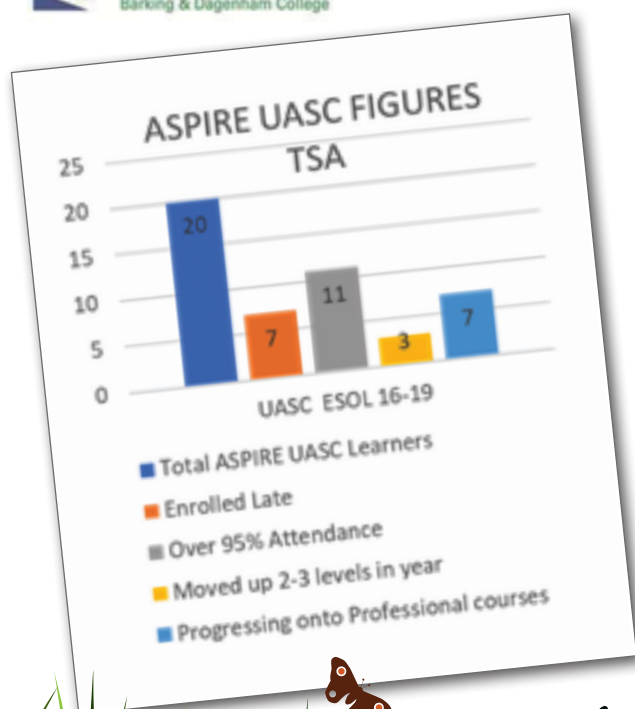
Interventions: Since David had no English language knowledge, the Virtual School assessed him in his first language, French. This showed that he had 6 years of primary education in Congo and was literate in French. He enrolled into FE Pre-Entry B class at TSA which is a zero-beginner level of English (before Entry level). Due to his traumatic past experiences, David was offered counselling and weekly 1:1 with the Learning Mentor and Student Support Advisor. These interventions helped David make fast progress and benefitted from the systems that TSA has put in place for differentiated rate of progress for advanced



learners. As a result, he was offered the flexibility to progress from Pre-Entry to Entry 3 in only 2 years.

Outcome: In year 1 David studied in Pre-Entry English whilst accessing counselling support, study skills, citizenship and careers advice. In year 2, David moved up by 2 levels, from Entry 1 to Entry 3. He was given the opportunity to catch up and take all his exams with the rest of his peers once he moved up to Entry 3. During his time in TSA, he became a Class Rep and received two certificates including being a Google Classroom Champion and achieving the BASK (Behaviours, Attitude, Skills, and Knowledge) benchmarks. Finally, he was nominated for the Jack Petchey Award and the Principal's Award.

IMPACT OF COLLABORATIVE JOURNEY BETWEEN TSA AND ASPIRE VIRTUAL SCHOOL



TRANSITION FROM PRIMARY TO SECONDARY

Transition is often considered to be a milestone change in someone's life, whether it is getting married, becoming a priest, or going into university. For young people transferring from Primary to Secondary school, the experience of going through change, the fear of the unknown can be daunting for most of the youngsters. A snapshot survey carried out with secondary designated teachers identifies new features that help reduce fear, anxiety, and uncertainty when young people transfer to secondary schools.

The following features have been identified as key to ensuring a smooth transition to secondary:

▶ The presence of committed and experienced designated teachers as the young person's first point of contact for a stress-free admission into the new school

▶ The transfer of young people's educational portfolio, a summary of their history in care and the type of support and interventions offered in primary

▶ The importance of a face-to-face meeting between the designated teacher, the young person, and their carer before admission

▶ The opportunity for young people to ask questions about the secondary school to equip themselves with what they need to know before they join the school

▶ Outstanding Key stage 2 results

For more information, The Aspire Virtual School in Barking and Dagenham have in place procedures for transferring Year 6 looked after children into secondary schools. Those procedures are detailed in the booklet 'Transition from Primary to Secondary School: A Protocol for LAC, Designated Teachers, and Foster Carers' available on request.

To request a copy please email Jean:
jean.mayala2@lbdd.gov.uk

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A DESIGNATED TEACHER IN A YOUNG OFFENDER'S INSTITUTION (YOI)...



Well, I suppose I should start by pointing out that I am not a teacher! That is probably the first thing that is so different about working in a YOI.

My name is Yasmine, and I am part of the Engagement and Resettlement team in the education department at HMYOI Feltham.

I and other members of my team often take on parts of the 'designated teacher' role when it comes to liaising with services and other agencies in the community, completing PEP meetings and documents and everything or anything in between.

Our teachers are often in class with the boys for most of the day, and any minute spare is used for planning, marking and having 5 minutes to relax!

Before COVID, our designated teacher role was much simpler. We would attend all the Personal Education Plan meetings (in person) for our young people, complete the paperwork either online or as a hard copy and give it to whoever required it.

Since COVID, this process has almost become completely virtual due to people working at home, schools being closed (at the start of the pandemic) and several other reasons. As you can imagine, for someone who works in a prison, this was an absolute nightmare – we do not have access to the technology that most people see as standard. We only got our computers upgraded about two months ago, so we now have Teams... HOWEVER you will not be able to see me or hear me if we have a meeting, unless I can find a laptop that the (very weak) Wi-Fi will reach!

I think my most asked question has been 'sorry, are you in your car?'

Obviously, the prison could not close during lockdown and I was still at work full-time, which meant I had to spend a lot of my time attending meetings on my phone in my car.

While I do parts of the DT role, it is not my key role, so a typical day if I had a PEP meeting would probably go something like this...

Once the PEP had been organised, I would complete as much of the online document as possible and save it. I would also see the young person who the PEP was for and get their views and comments for that section of the PEP.

I'd come into the prison and get together all the information I need for the PEP (changing all the names on the paperwork that I needed to print as we are not allowed to take anything out of the prison that has a boy's name on!). Although I would have already completed the document, someone definitely always asks a question that I do not know the answer to, and obviously cannot access any of my files! I would then have to forward the PEP meeting invite to another secure email address as I cannot access my prison email outside of the prison.

I would then go out to my car, usually giving myself around 10 minutes before the meeting starts in case there are any technical issues. Obviously, our boys don't / cannot have access to Teams, which is something I became an expert in explaining!

Once the actual meeting has been completed, I would go back into the prison and complete any outstanding sections in the online document. This was always a slow process before our computers were upgraded – the old ones definitely did not like ePEP or Welfare Call!

One thing that always stood out, though, was how understanding people were once I explained that I might not have all the information required but would send it over as soon as I got back into the prison. There were a few times I accidentally beeped my horn whilst taking notes, but we have made it happen and it has been a pleasure working with everyone that I have known so far!



THE ASPIRE VIRTUAL SCHOOL 'ASPIRE HIGHER COHORT'

The 'Aspire Higher Cohort' is composed of young people who are both high achievers academically and passionate about a particular extra-curricular activity such as sports, music, fashion and many more. Although no one is born gifted or talented, research shows that consistent challenging work, continued practice and unparalleled determination can lead to greater success. The young people in the 'Aspire Higher Cohort' are also children who have developed a winning mindset, children who take what they do to the highest level. At school, these are children who give the best of themselves and are always motivated to do better.

For a looked after child to be recommended for the 'Aim Higher Cohort,' they must fulfil at least two of the criteria listed below:

- a. Be a higher achiever academically (a potential university candidate)
- b. Have been achieving consistently at a higher level for at least a year
- c. Have a passion for and have been regularly practising a particular extra-curricular activity (like music, sports, fashion, etc...) at an elevated level

The Aspire Virtual School have plans to offer these young people opportunities to further develop their talents and aspirations.

VIRTUAL SCHOOL SUMMER ACTIVITIES FOR THE 'ASPIRE HIGHER COHORT'

A TALENT TASTER DAY
23rd July 2022

FREE COURSE DESIGNATED TEACHER TRAINING

**Are you a newly appointed
Designated Teacher?**

**Would you like training on
the role of the Designated
Teacher?**

**IF YOUR ANSWER TO EITHER OF
THESE QUESTIONS IS YES, THEN
THE DESIGNATED TEACHER
TRAINING HAS BEEN DESIGNED
ESPECIALLY FOR YOU**

STATISTICS REGARDING LOOKED AFTER
CHILDREN:

- Did you know that in the year ending 31 March 2021, the number of children looked after by local authorities was approx. 80,850.
- Attainment for the looked after population is lower than national levels at all ages of assessment
- Only 6% of Looked After Children progress to university

The designated teacher plays a crucial role in helping school staff understand the issues and support which enable looked after children to progress and thrive.

**THIS COURSE WILL ENABLE THE
PARTICIPANTS TO;**

1. Understand the roles and responsibilities of the Designated Teacher
2. Understand what is included in a Personal Educational Plan (PEP) and how to write one
3. Understand how the Pupil Premium Grant can be used to support Looked After Children
4. Understand the wider role of the DT and the role of the governing body

ATTENTION...

ATTENTION ALL
FOSTER CARERS
AND SOCIAL
WORKERS!!!

Summer Activities

ORGANISED BY THE
VIRTUAL SCHOOL
REGISTER YOUR
YOUNG PERSON NOW

2ND AUGUST 2022

A DAY TRIP TO COVENTRY UNIVERSITY for children ages 14-17

The day trip will include:

- Games
- Lunch
- University Tour
- Questions & Answer Session

12TH- 15TH AUGUST 2022



AMAZING TALENT... A BUDDING ARTIST



PATRICK IS A Y8 STUDENT at one of the excellent school in Kent. He has earned many school awards and house points for good behaviour and helpfulness.

Pat loves to spend his spare time in school and at home sketching and drawing, and as you will see from his self-portrait, he is exceptionally talented. We have discovered an artist



A WEEKEND TRIP TO TREWEN

This will be in the lovely region
of Wales

Where young people ages 9-14 years will have an opportunity to network and have fun activities. The activities will include Mountain walking, caving, Gorge walking, canoeing full day activities or climbing wall, bushcraft, BMXing.

To register a child for the weekend trip, please email
Kathy Adams: kathleen.adam@lbbd.gov.uk