

Children & Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee

9 November 2016



Educational Attainment of Looked After Children

Joint Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Director of Transformation & Partnerships and Margaret Whellans, Interim Corporate Director of Children & Young People's Services

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to introduce a presentation to members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Young Carers in County Durham. The Presentation will be given by Strategic Lead Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, Standards and Improvement, Virtual School Head.

Background

2. The concept of the 'Virtual School Head' for Children Looked After was first outlined in the White Paper 'Care Matters: Time for Change' (DCSF, June 2007 and placed the statutory responsibility on Directors of Children's Services to make sure that their local authority promotes the educational achievement of the children they look after, regardless of where they are placed.
3. The Children and Families Act 2014 amended section 22 of the Children Act 1989 and placed a statutory duty on all local authorities to appoint a Virtual School Head (VSH) to promote the educational achievement of its Children Looked After. It is the responsibility of the Director of Children's Services and Lead Member for Children's Services to ensure that these duties are met.
4. In the DfE document 'Promoting the education of Children Looked After, statutory guidance for local authorities' July 2014, it prescribes that: Virtual School Heads (VSHs) are in place and that they have the resources, time, training and support they need to discharge the duty effectively.
5. The Durham Virtual School, under the current Head was established in 2015 and encompasses the previous LACES team (Looked after children education support.) In September 2016 the team was restructured to include: a Deputy Head of the Virtual School, two Casework Managers, nine Caseworkers and two Education Inclusion Support Workers. The team is part of Durham Education and works closely with other teams within the Local Authority to ensure the best possible support and outcomes for Looked after Children in Durham.

6. The number of Children Looked after by Durham is increasing and at the time of writing stands at 656, an increase from 2015. 468 are of school age, 26 of reception age and an additional 74 are post 16. The virtual school has a duty to promote the education of and support all Durham Looked after Children from Reception to year 13.
7. In Durham, 78 of our Looked after Children are educated in out of county schools and there are 115 children who are looked after by other local authorities, placed in Durham schools. The Durham Virtual School also supports our schools with the education of none Durham Looked after Children.
8. 73 of our school aged children are educated in special schools, 99 have either a Statement of special educational need or Education Health Care Plan. A further 188 have an identified special educational need.

National Context

9. Nationally, children who are looked after achieve better educational outcomes than children in need, but perform less well than non- looked after children. In addition, there is evidence to suggest, the earlier children enter the care system, the greater chance they have of reaching their educational potential.
10. Statistics also show that a greater proportion of looked after Children, have an identified special educational need, with the greatest need being Social, Emotional and Mental health (SEMH). When outcomes for non-looked after children with similar needs are compared to the outcomes for Looked after Children, the achievement gap is much narrower and closes completely for younger (primary aged) children.
11. Regular attendance at school is a major factor in improving outcomes for all children and national statistics show Looked after Children attend less regularly and are twice as likely to be permanently excluded as their peers. For Fixed term exclusions, this figure rises to five times as likely.
12. In 2015 53% of our care leavers (aged 19 to 21) were in education, employment or training compared to a national figure of 48% and 5% compared to a national figure of 6% were in higher education.
13. The presentation will focus on end of key stage **Outcomes of Durham's Looked after Children and will include attendance, exclusion and SEND data.**

Recommendations

14. Members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee are requested to note the information contained in the presentation and provide comment accordingly.

Background Papers

- None

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance – None

Staffing - None

Risk - None

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty - None

Accommodation - None

Crime and Disorder – None

Human Rights - None

Consultation – None

Procurement - None

Disability Issues – None

Legal Implications – None