



Corporate Parenting Panel

Date **Friday 28 January 2022**
Time **9.30 am**
Venue **Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham**

Business

Part A

Items which are open to the press and public

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Substitute Members
3. Minutes of the previous meeting, held on 22 November 2021 (Pages 3 - 12)
4. Declarations of Interest
5. Number of Looked After Children: - Verbal update from Head of Children's Social Care
6. Ofsted updates - Verbal update from Head of Children's Social Care
7. Proud moments - Verbal update from Strategic Manager, Looked After Children Resources
8. Investing in Children / Children in Care Council Update - Presentation by Project Officer, Investing in Children (Pages 13 - 16)
9. Virtual School Annual Report Summary
 - a) Report of Virtual School Head (Pages 17 - 84)
 - b) Presentation by Virtual School Head (Pages 85 - 90)
10. Supporting Care Leavers into Education, Employment and Training - Report of Strategic Manager, Progression and Learning (Pages 91 - 98)
11. Performance Update - Report of Corporate Equality and Strategy Manager (for information only) (Pages 99 - 116)
12. Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership Children Looked After Update (for information only) (Pages 117 - 146)

13. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.
14. Any resolution relating to the exclusion of the public during the discussion of items containing exempt information.

Part B

Items during which it is considered the meeting will not be open to the public (consideration of exempt or confidential information)

15. Regulation 44 Visits - Report of Head of Children's Social Care, Durham County Council, and Head of Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children (Pages 147 - 174)
16. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.

Helen Lynch

Head of Legal and Democratic Services

County Hall
Durham
20 January 2022

To: **The Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel**

Councillor M Simmons (Chair)
Councillor M Walton (Vice-Chair)

Councillors R Adcock-Forster, B Bainbridge, C Bell, J Charlton, B Coult, S Deinali, C Fletcher, J Griffiths, O Gunn, T Henderson, C Hood, C Hunt, J Miller, I Roberts, K Robson, K Rooney, S Townsend, C Varty.

Co-opted Members

C Baines, J Bell, L Burns, A Ferguson, W Taylor
Young persons representative - Children in Care Council CiCC)

Contact: Jill Hogg

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DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **Corporate Parenting Panel** held in the **Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham** on **Monday 22 November 2021** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor M Simmons in the Chair

Members of the Panel:

Councillors R Adcock-Forster, B Bainbridge, C Bell, B Coult, S Deinali, J Griffiths, O Gunn, T Henderson, C Hunt, J Miller, J Nicholson, I Roberts, K Robson, K Rooney, S Townsend, M Walton and C Varty

Co-opted Members:

J Bell, A Ferguson, C Gray and W Taylor

Also Present:

Kelsey Clayton – Legal Services Manager

Helen Fergusson - Head of Children's Social Care

Jodie Henderson – Strategic Manager for Looked After and Permanence

Robert Johnson - Project Manager, Investing in Children

Martyn Stenton – Head of Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children

Melanie Stubbs – Head of the Virtual School

Jayne Watson – Senior Partnerships Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor C Hood, C Baines, M Green and officer C Morris.

2. Substitute Members

No substitute members were present.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5. Number of Looked After Children

The Head of Children's Social Care reported the number of children looked after remained stable at 906.

6. Ofsted Updates

The Head of Children's Social Care informed the Panel that Ofsted inspections had taken place at High Etherley and Framwellgate Moor Children's Homes and there had been a mid-year review of Aycliffe Young People's Centre. Initial feedback is positive and further details will be shared with the Panel in due course. Councillor Gunn requested that letters of thanks be sent to the respective homes to acknowledge the good outcomes and thank all those involved for their hard work.

7. Proud Moments

The Strategic Manager for Looked After and Permanence congratulated Health Commissioning colleagues who were awarded the Fostering Network Fostering Excellence Award for Fostering Friendly Employer of the Year.

Commenting on how all the young people looked after are inspiring, the Strategic Manager shared two examples of proud moments this month. The first was a young person living in shared care arrangements who had experienced difficulties and disruption in his life, however he is now making remarkable progress, attending school regularly and achieving new goals both at school and in his personal life. Staff and his family have commented on how proud they are to see his progress and the kindness he is showing when caring for his younger sibling who has additional needs.

Another proud moment came when a young person with disabilities completed a sponsored walk for the Dogs Trust, raising over £100.

The Panel commended the achievements of the young people and wished them well going forward.

8. Update on Language

The Strategic Manager for Looked After and Permanence informed the Panel that staff are continuing to work with young people on the use of language to ensure that it is considerate, relevant and reflective of how young people communicate.

When preparing Care Plans, staff are using language that young people understand and events are being described in ways which are familiar to the individual young person. For example, if a young person refers to their grandmother as 'nanny' then that term is used their Care Plan. The feedback from young people is that these small changes mean a great deal to them.

The Strategic Manager highlighted that this is an ongoing exercise and the young people continue to challenge and encourage the service to use 'young-person friendly' language, where it is appropriate, as an alternative to professional terms.

As a result the term 'family time' is used as an alternative to 'contact' and the word 'home' is used instead of 'placement'. The Strategic Manager asked the Panel to consider the term 'Corporate Parent', and how the young people looked after feel about being corporately parented. She asked the Panel to bear in mind that young people mirror language and how sensitive they are to non-verbal cues, such as eye-contact, facial expressions and body-language. The Panel also noted the impact of trauma on young people may impair their attention and focus, making effective communication even more important in these circumstances.

Councillor Gunn thanked the Strategic Manager for highlighting the importance of this work and she asked whether consideration is being given to the language used by young people through social media. Referring to the good efforts by the young people to make these changes, she asked if Members could do more to improve how they communicate with young people. Caitlyn Gray of the Children n Care Council referred the Panel to the language guide produced by Durham County Council in conjunction with the Children in Care Council which details the terms young people prefer and would like to be used.

Councillor Hunt asked if work is done in schools to encourage education staff to adopt these terms. The Virtual School Head confirmed that the young people of the Children in Care Council attend regular meetings with Designated Teachers and policy changes have been made as a result of their discussions.

The Head of Children's Social Care spoke of how the service is committed to improving the use of language in liaison with young people and this is subject to continuous review.

Councillor Deinali informed the Panel that during the recent joint meeting with the Children in Care Council, the young people shared their concerns that complex language can create barriers and negatively impact how they perceive themselves and may exacerbate stigma and discrimination.

As a result, as a member of the National Education Union, she has put forward a motion to campaign for schools to address stigma and discrimination.

Recognising the importance of this matter, the Panel agreed that an update on language should become a regular agenda item.

9. Investing in Children / Children in Care Council Update

Robert Johnson, Project Manager of Investing in Children and Caitlyn Gray of the Children in Care Council presented an update on recent activities (for copy of presentation see file of minutes).

Caitlyn explained that a joint meeting of members of the Children in Care Council and the Corporate Parenting Panel was held on 19 October. Topics discussed included the importance of family time, support for care leavers and ways to challenge stigma and discrimination.

Referring to family time, the young people highlighted that some of the venues used for this purpose are in need of updating and some of the rooms are suitable for younger children but not older children and teenagers. Caitlyn explained that in 2017 funds were raised through donations from Members to refurbish some family time rooms, with young people being actively involved in helping to design the rooms. The young people of the Children in Care Council would like the Panel to consider donating funds for the refurbishment of more family time venues.

Another issue discussed at the joint meeting was support for care leavers and what more could be done to assist care leavers and how this is a corporate responsibility and, as such, all services across the Council should be encouraged to look at ways in which they can support young people on leaving care.

The Project Manager explained how the young people are continuing to highlight the issues of stigma and discrimination and two young people gave a presentation to social work students at Sunderland University. The presentation was thought provoking and challenged the students' thinking and it was so well received, the young people will be following this up with a presentation to master's degree students in the near future.

Other developments during the month include the production of the next CiCC newsletter and the launch of the Education Fun Fund project, which utilises pupil premium money for fun education activities.

Peer mentors hosted a Halloween session for 6 to 10 year olds which gave the mentors the opportunity to talk to the younger children about the roles of the people who care for them, including the roles of Social Workers and Independent Reviewing Officers.

The young people are also discussing ideas for the production of a film and encouraged thoughts from Members as to a theme for the film.

Caitlyn concluded the presentation by sharing the details of a fundraising project by a young person who is raising money for Pancreatic Cancer UK, in memory of a foster carer.

The Chair congratulated the young people of the Children in Care Council on their work during a busy month.

Councillor Miller spoke of how much he enjoyed the event and he thanked all those that took part, adding that he would like to see the meetings taking place more often. He agreed with the young people that location and venues are a key part of the family time experience and therefore it is important that the venues are fit for purpose. He asked if it would be possible for Members to visit some of the family time locations. The Head of Children's Social Care confirmed that a visit will be arranged for Members to view family time venues.

Councillor Bainbridge echoed Councillor Miller's positive feedback saying how much she had enjoyed the evening and thanked the young people for organising the event. She spoke of how keen the young people are to increase opportunities and challenging stigma.

She commented on how she had been disappointed to see the press releases circulated by the young people which painted a negative picture of young people looked after. Referring to the refurbishment of the family time rooms and speaking as a long-standing member of the Panel, she spoke in support of raising funds to extend this project.

Councillor Townsend thanked the young people for the joint meeting, saying how refreshing and rewarding the experience was for her. She congratulated the young people on being such good advocates for themselves, inspiring others by driving their messages forward and using their voices and leadership skills to achieve their goals. She agreed that language must be relevant and consistent, especially for young people who are new to being in care so that they are not confused by many different ways of saying the same thing. She added that the work the young people are doing will be of benefit, not only now but also to young people looked after in the future.

Councillor Hunt thanked the young people for the fantastic event, saying one issue in particular had resonated with her which was the discussion regarding discrimination and she recognised the Panel's duty to challenge that perception. She spoke of her support for the young people's plans for their artwork to be displayed in bus stops to showcase how talented they are and she encouraged the young people to continue to 'think big'.

Councillor Deinali referred to the proposal to display the artwork in bus stops at Chester le Street and Framwellgate Moor and requested that this be rolled-out to all areas of the county. Councillor Gunn requested that the smaller villages and rural areas of the county are also included. Councillor Miller agreed and suggested that, with some major regeneration projects in the pipeline, there should be consideration given to incorporating projects like this into the plans for the future.

Alison Ferguson, Designated Nurse for Safeguarding and Looked After Children asked for permission to share the artwork with paediatric services and GP surgeries as they would also like to celebrate the talents of the young people.

The Project Manager thanked the Panel for their comments adding that the young people have produced fantastic artwork and he is looking forward to informing the Panel of the launch of the project.

Councillor Varty thanked all the young people who worked to organise the joint event, saying they all made a lasting impression. She commented that she learnt a great deal and she encouraged the young people to keep up the good joint working through sharing their thoughts and views with Members.

9a Feedback from joint CiCC / CPP

The Head of Children's Social Care delivered a presentation summarising the key themes discussed at the joint Children in Care / Corporate Parenting Panel meeting (for copy of presentation see file of minutes).

As a result of the young people's comments regarding the family time venues, a review of the facilities will be carried out and more venues will be investigated such as community venues to provide local and convenient venues. An update on this work will be provided to the Panel in due course.

With regard to support for care leavers, the young people are keen to increase apprenticeships, employment opportunities and access to interviews within the Council. They also discussed the financial challenges faced on leaving care, the emotional aspects of the transition and the barriers that lack of access to transport can create. Members noted that the scheme to assist young people with the cost of driving lessons had been suspended during the pandemic and whilst this has resumed, there is now a long waiting list of young people waiting to access the scheme.

The young people also discussed how they can work with the Panel to continue to raise the profile of young people looked after, improve their experiences at school and provide them with support in their communities.

The Head of Children's Social Care explained that work will be done with the Children in Care Council to develop an action plan and bi-monthly meetings will be held to discuss progress on these themes. An update will be provided at the next joint meeting in March and a full update will be provided to Panel in April 2022.

In response to Councillor Miller's earlier comment regarding having more joint meetings, the Head of Children's Social Care explained that the joint meetings are currently scheduled to take place twice per year and the meetings are administered by the young people who also decide on the topics for discussion.

Councillor Miller commented that the issue of stigma was a focal point for discussion at the joint meeting and he had highlighted the good work of the Children in Care Council at the full Council meeting which was held on the day after the joint meeting. He suggested that the Council should give consideration to issuing a press release to show their commitment and pride in the county's young people. The Chair agreed this suggestion should be discussed with officers.

Caitlyn reiterated the importance of the use of language and how professional terms, which are often used subconsciously, may have negative connotations, such as the word 'vulnerable'. Caitlyn explained that the term is often used, however, young people looked after do not feel this term is relevant to them as they have a circle of support around them and feel safe, not vulnerable.

Councillor Hunt spoke of a young person she had spoken to at the event who had expressed a wish to have more family time.

The Head of Children's Social Care explained that decisions in respect of each young person are made at multiagency meetings and if the young person is of an appropriate age, they are involved in the decision making process. The service endeavours to ensure the voice of the child is heard and investigates specific issues.

10. Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Update

The Chair reported that this item was to be deferred to the next meeting.

11. Progress Report on the Care Leavers' Strategy and Action Plan

The Strategic Manager for Looked After and Permanence presented a report and presentation on the Care Leavers' Strategy and Action Plan which included progress against key areas of focus (for copy see file of minutes).

The Strategic Manager explained that Pathway Plans have been improved to ensure young people are fully involved in them which helps to make these plans functioning documents. She spoke of how Durham is proud of the work ethos shown by young people and colleagues in DurhamWorks and the Corporate Management Team recognise this and are working to explore more opportunities for care leavers.

The Panel noted that one of the main challenges for care leavers is accommodation. Durham offers a wide range of accommodation including Staying Put, Staying Close, Supported Lodgings and semi-independent living, however, rates of pay can make it difficult for care leavers to access benefits therefore further work is being done to ensure that care leavers are not disadvantaged.

Colleagues in health are mindful that young people are developing their skills, as young adults, to recognise when they need to see a doctor and it is important that they are supported to reach out and access that help. Therefore they continue to ensure health services are open and accessible for young people.

The Strategic Manager stressed that young people are not being prepared for 'independence', instead, they are being prepared for adult-life and being supported to establish successful relationships with others.

The Panel noted that a group of young people has been established to review the action plan and rate the offer against the national offer. An update on the matter will be brought to the Panel in the new year.

Councillor Gunn thanked the Strategic Manager for the presentation and referred to hearing a national radio programme on the subject in which a care leaver commented that leaving care had been a 'frightening' experience. She commented that a successful and supportive transition can pave the way for the quality of a care leaver's life which highlights the importance of a successful strategy. Councillor Gunn expressed concern that actions require funding which is becoming more and more difficult whilst budgets are squeezed, not only locally but nationally.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

12. Any other business

Councillor Gunn requested that consideration be given to starting the Panel meetings slightly later, at 9.45 am, to avoid traffic congestion.

13. Exclusion of the public

Resolved:

That under Section 100(a)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely discussion of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

14. Regulation 44 Visits and Regulatory Body ratings of Children's Residential Homes

The Head of Children's Social Care presented the monthly Regulation 44 Visits and regulatory body ratings report (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

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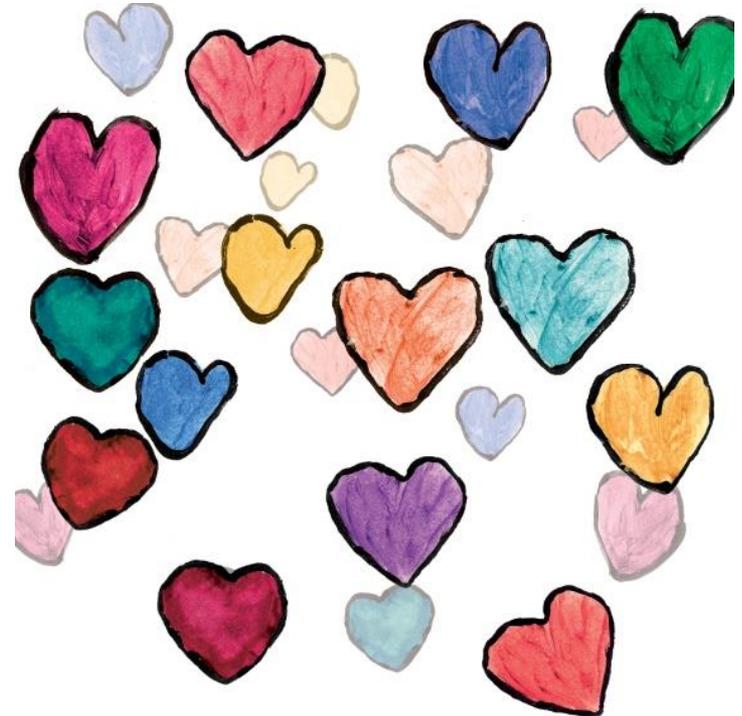
Durham Children in Care Council (CiCC)

12 care experienced young people have been involved in the Artstops project.

Several pieces are being displayed, including this one . . .

Presentation by:

- Mitchell and Caitlyn, CiCC CPP representatives
- Robert Johnson
Investing in Children



for every moment you lose a little hope,
your loved one whispers...

I ♥ You



CICC Highlights.

- Two CICC members delivered training to 15 Students from Sunderland University doing a Masters in Social Work
- Five CICC members have supported the development of Care Plan Documents.
- The younger CICC group are developing a project called 'All About Me' in the new year with disposable cameras – focusing on identity. An update will be brought to the CPP.



The older CICC members:

- Have successfully secured £2,000 from The Key, which will be used to celebrate Care Day 2022 in a variety of ways across County Durham. Further information can be found here: [The Key: Inspiring Belief in Young People | The Key \(thekeyuk.org\)](https://thekeyuk.org)



- Linked with Newcastle University's Street Law project to developed better information about care orders and rights. Further information can be found here: [Pro Bono Schemes | Newcastle Law School - Newcastle Law School - Newcastle University \(ncl.ac.uk\)](https://ncl.ac.uk)



- Developed a training session with 14 PCSO, focusing on relationship building with young people aligned to Children Homes.
- The sixth edition of the CICC newsletter is being finalised and will be circulated soon.



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Corporate Parenting Panel

28 January 2022

Virtual School Annual Report Summary**Report of Melanie Stubbs, Durham Virtual School Head, Children & Young People's Services, Durham County Council****Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of the report is to provide an outline summary of the full virtual school annual report for 2020-2021 (appendix 2). This summary focuses on children and young people of statutory school age.

Executive summary

- 2 In line with DfE reporting, the data reported in this document is based on those children and young people who have been continuously looked after for a minimum of 12 months from April 1st, 2020 to March 31st, 2021 – hereafter referred to as the reporting cohort. This executive summary covers statutory school age, whilst the body of the report also includes Early Years and Post 16.

At Durham virtual school we believe we are making a difference to the education of children and young people in care. This report is unable to evidence educational outcomes and strong progress from entry to care this year due to the COVID-19 restrictions placed upon schools. There are no KS 1 and 2 results, however there is evidence of progress for KS4 following the submission of Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs). Good attendance, few exclusions, high aspirations, strong vocational and academic pathways and effective preparation for adulthood continue to be evident for Children Looked After (CLA). This is all brought about by a virtual school team which advocates strongly and loudly for our young people and collaborative working with stakeholders. Over the last three years we have insisted on an increasing focus on the education of children in care within schools and with our partners and raised the profile of the work of the virtual school, developing very close working relationships with headteachers and designated teachers. The strengthening of the virtual school has allowed us to have increased capacity to attend PEP meetings and work more directly with social workers and schools to achieve the best outcomes for CLA.

Recommendation(s)

- 3 It is recommended that members CPP note the contents of the full annual report.
- 4 The virtual school head should ensure that looked after children and young people remain a priority focus within the wider team.
- 5 The virtual school head should ensure that the identified priorities are actioned to further improve the educational achievement of looked after children.
- 6 That the report be read with an understanding that the COVID19 pandemic has affected all measures this academic year and outcomes are only available for Year 11 students and based on Teacher Assessed Grads (TAGs). There are no outcomes for EYFS, KS1 or KS2 again this year.

Background

- 7 As of July 2021, there were 573 Durham looked after children of statutory school age. 48% were of primary age and 52% were of secondary age. 45.8% were female and 54.2% were male. 81% attended County Durham schools and 19% attend out of County schools, this is an increase of 3.6% from last year.
- 8 At the end of the academic year 2020-21, 61% attended a school with an Ofsted judgement of good or better. As of July 2021, 120 (19%) of children and young people attended a school with a grade of Requires Improvement or below. To avoid additional trauma, we do not routinely remove a child from a school which becomes Inadequate unless there was an exceptional reason, but we do provide additional scrutiny and academic support if required. 125 young people attended schools where a current Ofsted judgement isn't available due to a recent academy conversion.
- 9 In 2020-2021 there were 69 school moves, an increase of 81.6% from the previous year. 38% of school moves were to support moving to a permanent placement or due to distance placed from school, while 3% were due to a child returning to the care of their parents. 6 young people moved onto the roll of Ofsted Registered Alternative Provision and continued to be heavily supported by the Virtual School. 3 young people moved into secure placements due to their social care needs. In all cases appropriate education provision was in place to ensure both care and education needs were being met appropriately. Distance and movement of school due to permanent places remain the most significant factors in requesting a school move.

49% of Durham looked after children had an identified special educational need (SEN) in 2020-21, an increase of 6% from 2019/20 with 21% of them supported by an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). This has increased by 2% over the last two years. 28% had a school SEN Support Plan, an increase of 4% since 2019/20. A challenge for Durham Virtual School is to ensure that the needs of children with a SEN Support Plan are known and strategies put in place at transition points.

Headline Outcomes 2020

- 10 There were 47 young people in the Year 11 reporting cohort, which consisted of 49% boys and 51% girls. 22 had identified SEN, 47% of the group. 13 had an EHCP, 28% of the reporting cohort, a decrease of 12% from 2020. 66% were on the roll of a mainstream Secondary, a 15% increase from 2020. 13% attended a maintained/academy Special School with an additional 6% attending an Independent Special School. 1 young person attended a bespoke education package supported by his EHCP. 6 pupils attended an Ofsted registered Alternative Provision. From the reporting cohort 9 pupils were not following a curriculum that included GCSE's due to their SEN. All had needs met through an EHCP.
- 11 We are delighted to report further improvement from 2020, with a positive 3-year trend in pupils achieving maths at Grade 4+. After a dip last year in English grades, both English 9-4 and English 9-5 grades have increased. Both Maths and English grades at 5+ have increased with the number achieving a grade 5+ in Maths doubling from last year. The numbers of young people achieving grade 9 – 4 in both Maths and English, 38%, also rose significantly from last year.
- 12 28% of the cohort year group had an EHCP and 9 of these were not following a GCSE curriculum. However, of the 4 young people with an EHCP who were following a GCSE curriculum, 3 achieved a 9-1 grade in Maths and English. One of those young people achieved Grade 4 in the Basics.
- 13 Unlike last year, where boys outperformed girls across the board, this year has seen our girls achieve significantly more 9-4 grades than boys, in Maths, English and the Basics. However, there is a more even split in the 9-5 grades, with boys achieving more 9-5 grades in both Maths and the Basics. Further analysis will take place to consider how our boys can be supported to achieve higher grades, particularly in English. However, consideration needs to be given to the varying cohort and we must ensure further analysis takes place this year to identify areas of development within the current Year 11 cohort. 2021 – 2022 cohort will sit formal exams; this will bring challenges for a cohort of young people who will have experienced disruption over the last two years.

- 14 Durham CLA continue to do better than those regionally and nationally based upon 2019 outcomes.
- 15 Of the 56 young people leaving statutory education in June 2020, early indication shows that 43 have moved onto Sixth form or College, 4 are either in Apprenticeships or other training. At this point we believe 8 are NEET.
- 16 Early indication shows that 9 Care Leavers achieved A Levels and BTEC equivalents in August 2021.

Attendance and Exclusions

- 17 Attendance continues to be a strength of the virtual school. The slight increase in absence and persistent absence is in line with the national and local trend.
- 18 Due to the pandemic the attendance of CLA does not give a true reflection of the cohort's attendance as many carers chose to educate the children at home during the second lockdown. The Government had changed the attendance guidance, and CLA were marked as authorised absence.
- 19 We have not had any permanently excluded looked after children since 2014. We work closely with schools and settings to support children when there is a need for a FTE. Fixed Term Exclusions remain low for Durham CLA. The academic year 2020/21 has seen a rise against the Autumn term 2019/20. Data reflects the full academic year. 5.6% of CLA cohort experienced a Fixed term exclusion, this represents 22 children /young people, 18 were in the Secondary sector.

Quality Assurance of the PEP

- 20 During 2020-2021 all young people had a PEP on the Welfare Call system completed. This was an improvement of 5% from the previous year, when compliance was 95%. Introducing the electronic PEP has improved and streamlined many processes including tracking PEP completion; monitoring involvement; tracking and analysing Pupil Premium Plus use and the quality assurance process.
- 21 89.2% of PEPs were rated as high quality (green), an increase of 17% against 2019/20, with 10.8% rated as amber which indicates an aspect was missing. In these cases, the CLA PEP Caseworker raised the area for improvement with either the school or the Social worker.

Pupil Premium Plus Funding

- 22 In 2020-21 (Financial Year) our total PP+ budget was £1,634,388. Schools were allocated £1,700 of the government allocation of £2,345

in 3 instalments. However, due to continued school closures and a need for schools to be able to access funding to address gaps in knowledge and emotional health, we decided to increase all termly payments to £600. In total, approximately £958,336 was provided to schools during the 2020-21 academic year to support their work with children in care.

- 23 A significant amount of the PP+ funding given to schools is spent on one-to-one tuition. 58.3% of PP+ funding given to schools is used to support individuals with academic progress and achievement.
- 24 The top sliced PP+ is used to buy a variety of Service Level Agreements to support CLA and allow schools to act in a timely manner when a need is identified. In 2020-21 (Financial Year) Durham Virtual School retained approx. £698,152. The full report gives a detailed account of how this was used.
- 25 All schools were given an additional £135 for every child of statutory school age and asked to use it to support emotional wellbeing or “catch up” activities.

Durham Virtual School Team

- 26 The casework team of seven has been able to maintain the high level of support for our young people and challenge for schools. During the pandemic the team have been able to attend more meetings virtually. The agreement by Durham County Council to increase capacity of the virtual school from September 2020 has improved our offer to schools and allowed a more targeted response to our children. This has also led to improved communications with Social Workers and Carers.
- 27 We have continued to provide advice to parents of Previous CLA and those on Special Guardianship Orders, thus meeting our duties as a Virtual School.
- 28 The report for 2020-21 shows the inclusion of a Deputy Virtual School Head in the structure diagram. From September 2021 the holder of this post has returned to his substantive post in SEND and Inclusion full time, thus this post no longer exists as we move into the new academic year.

Virtual School Areas for Development.

- 29 The key priorities for 2021-22 have been identified through consultation, data analysis, response to the gaps COVID 19 has created the inclusion of EYFS and Post 16 in the ePEP system and the development of the new VS team.
 - Introduce the Nursery 1 ePEP through work with EY team

- Support KS1 to close gaps emerging during Lockdown
- Support more children to achieve high scores / greater depth at KS2
- Appropriate curriculum access / bespoke offers when a child requires a different approach.
- Work in partnership to develop clear academic and vocational pathways in preparation for adulthood
- Develop systems to support Post 16 through the ePEP for Year 12 and 13 and avoid NEETs.
- Further raise awareness in all schools and settings of the impact of early trauma and insecure attachment on behaviour and learning and support schools to review policies and implement change
- Improve the quality of the PEPs through a swift approach to quality assurance.
- Further strengthen links with the Children in Care Council (CICC).
- Contribute to an increasingly integrated and joined-up process with health and social care teams to provide a holistic and cohesive approach to support readiness to learn by building on the systems developed through the pandemic.
- Promote the role of the CLA PEP Caseworkers through their presence at PEP meetings.
- Ensure the additions to the casework team enhances our offer for children in care through support and challenge for schools.
- Distribute the CLA Covid Catch up fund to schools and hold them accountable for its effective use.
- Continue to offer advice and signposting for previously children in care
- Develop our therapeutic offer to schools through the Full Circle SLA, develop the training package provided by Full Circle to all Designated Teachers with a Durham CLA in school.
- Develop the use of the Clear Cut Tool at the entry into care PEP meeting to support CLA through better communication.

- Ensure a robust system is in place to increase school stability through monitoring and challenge.

Conclusion

The VS annual report provides a comprehensive overview of the performance of our CLA in schools across County Durham and those placed outside of Durham during the academic year 2020/21. The report also takes account of the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic and subsequent restrictions on learning and exam results. It highlights the support by the virtual school, schools, and other agencies to help CLA achieve better outcomes. It reflects the commitment we have to our children and young people and how we strive for excellence in our offer to meet their needs.

Background papers

- Virtual School Annual Report 2020-2021

Other useful documents

- Previous Cabinet reports

Author(s)

Melanie Stubbs

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The Local Authority has a statutory duty to ensure that top priority is given to creating a culture of high educational aspirations and strives for accelerated progress and age-related attainment or better for looked-after children.

Finance

De-Delegated funding of £73,000 by Maintained Primary Schools has been used to provide additional behaviour support in school through the Behaviour Intervention Team. Additional burdens grant determination funding of £78,068 has been allocated to Durham to support the work of the Virtual School head with previously looked after children for 2021/22.

Consultation

Ongoing consultation with schools through briefings and a designated teacher network meeting. Consultation with young people through the CiCC.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

As a public body, the Council must take into account the Equality Act 2010, a consolidating Act which brings together previous Acts dealing with discrimination. Decisions must be reviewed for potential impact on persons with "protected characteristics".

Climate Change

Text.

Human Rights

It is the right of the child to a high-quality PEP that identifies their needs, sets targets, and uses PP+ appropriately to support their educational outcomes. It is their right to have their voice heard and contribute to matters that affect them in education. We acknowledge the Children Promise and have highlighted this in the Children Looked After and Previously Looked After Policy we have shared with schools and settings.

Crime and Disorder

Young people who do not access full-time education are more at risk of criminality, CSE or criminal exploitation across county lines. The VS supports all CLA to find the right setting to support their needs and promotes high attendance in school.

Staffing

The seconded post for developing the offer for previously looked after children has become a permanent post of CLA and PCLA Manager. The increase of 4 CLA PEP caseworkers to 7. A new post of a CLA front door manager to strengthen the offer to schools and CLA. Moving forward through the decision of Secondary schools to no longer de-delegate funds there may be implications to the staff who run the Virtual School Inclusion Base at Lanchester, funding will need to come from top sliced Pupil premium Plus. This will have implications upon the wider offer to schools.

Due to the additional responsibilities given to Virtual Heads from September 2021 both the CLA/PCLA Manager and Front Door Manager have taken on extra responsibilities to allow the VSH to meet the requirements of the role and accountability for CIN/CP. They are currently receiving a temporary upgrade in salary funded through Grant 31.

From September 2021 the role of Deputy Virtual Head was removed from the Virtual School structure.

Accommodation

The Virtual School Head is based at Green Lane. Spennymoor whilst the CLA/PCLA Manager, Front Door Manager and Casework team are based at Broom Cottages Primary School. This is historic and stems back to when the Virtual School sat in SEND and Inclusion. The full team now sit in Education Durham.

The Inclusion Base is placed at Lanchester and is accommodated within the building known as The Bridge.

Risk

The extended offer to schools and settings relies upon Pupil Premium Plus. Staff costs are funded through the Corporate budget; however this does not apply to two members of staff at the Inclusion Base. The Base is an asset and supports CLA in times of crisis.

Procurement

The contract with Welfare Call will end in March 2022. It would not be wise to change the provider for the ePEP system due to the system we have established with schools and Social Care. Further discussions are necessary to look at this going forward.

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Durham Virtual School

Annual Report 2020-2021

This report will not include any Key Stage 1 or 2 data for 2021. The data for KS4 is based upon Centre Assessed Grades (CAG's) submitted to the examination boards due to the 2021 examination series being cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Durham Virtual School champions care-experienced children and young people. We support parents, corporate parents, carers, schools and educational settings to support looked after and previously children in care so that they:

- attend a school or setting which best meets their needs.
- feel safe, happy and settled.
- attend regularly.
- make progress and achieve.
- have a voice that positively impacts on the services they receive.
- have stability in home, care and education placement.
- receive good advice and guidance to progress into further education, employment and training and, where appropriate, university.
- are well-prepared for adulthood.
- receive recognition for their achievement and have their successes celebrated.

Contents

The Virtual School during the COVID-19 Pandemic	1
Executive Summary Children in Care 2019-20.....	2
Headlines.....	3
Attendance and Exclusions	3
Personal Education Plans and Pupil Premium Plus	3
1. Introduction	4
2. Durham Virtual School	4
2.1 What is the role of the Virtual School?	4
2.2 Who are we?	5
2.3 Structure Diagram.....	5
2.4 Who do we report to and how are we held accountable?	6
3. Profile of learners and numbers on roll at the virtual school	6
3.1 How many learners are on roll?	6
3.2 What is the profile of the statutory school age cohort?.....	7
3.3 How well do we promote placement and school stability?.....	7
3.4 How many of the cohort have Special Educational Needs (SEND)?	10
3.5 What are the primary needs of our cohort with an EHCP?	13
3.6 How do virtual school caseworkers support children in care with identified special educational needs?	14
3.7 How do we collaborate to support children in care with identified SEN?.....	15
4. Duties to previously looked after children	15
4.1 How do we meet our duty towards previously looked after children?	15
4.2 How many previously looked after children of statutory school age are there?	16
5. Achievement and Progress	16
5.1 Early Years Update	16
5.2 How well do our children do at KS1.....	17
5.3 How well do our children do at KS2.....	17
5.4 How well do our young people achieve in English and maths KS4.....	18
5.5 How well do our young people achieve and participate at KS5 / post 16?	20
5.6 What were the destinations for our young people?.....	21
5.7 How do we support our young people to ensure they participate in EET?	23

5.9 How did we make a difference for care leavers?.....	26
6. Attendance and Exclusion	27
6.1 How well do our young people attend school?	27
6.2 How many of our young people have been excluded?.....	29
7. Admissions, transitions, managed moves and OOC placements	30
7.1 How many children moved school mid-year?.....	30
7.2 How many of our children experienced managed moves?	30
7.3 How many of our children are placed in out of county education settings?.....	31
8. Personal Education Plans (PEP), (PP+) and Academic Progress	31
8.1 How does the virtual school ensure the quality of the PEPS?	31
8.2 What information does the PEP record?	32
8.3 What is the quality of the PEPs?	32
8.4 How do we distribute pupil premium plus funding?	34
8.5 What is the centrally held budget spent on?.....	35
8.6 What academic support and intervention do we provide from central funding?.....	36
8.7 What therapeutic support do we provide from central funding?	38
8.8 How do schools spend their allocation?	39
9. Training Provision	41
10. Support for mental and emotional wellbeing	42
10.1 What screening takes place?	42
10.2 How does our Educational Psychologist make a difference?	42
10.3 How do our counsellors make a difference?	45
11. Voice of the Young Person	49
12. Enrichment, Unleashing Aspiration and Celebration	49
12.1 What do we currently offer?.....	49
12.2 What are we planning for 2020-21 to support enrichment?.....	50
12.3 How do we celebrate success?	50
13. Summary	50
14. Outline Priorities for 2020-21	51
15. Recommendation	52
1. Appendix A – Wider Teams.....	53

The Virtual School September 20 to July 21

This has been another challenging year for the virtual school and Children Looked After (CLA) due to Covid. As schools returned in September life in school looked very different. Children had to adapt to being taught in bubbles, carry out LFD tests, and follow different rules and systems whilst in school to limit the transmission of Covid 19. The Virtual School has worked with carers, social workers, and schools to ensure that children were able to access the best possible education available within these constraints. The following information summarises how we have supported Children Looked After during this time:

- All schools were given an additional £135 for every child of statutory school age and asked to use it to support emotional wellbeing or “catch up” activities.
- Pupil Premium allocation to schools increased by £100
- Key Stage 1 and 2 tests were cancelled. GCSEs and A Levels have not taken place in a formal manner, yet again schools were asked to submit centre assessed grades (CAGS) for Year 11 and Year 13 students. This was supported through assessments and evidence of work that had been completed. For many this increased anxiety and they were concerned they wouldn’t achieve the grades needed to move onto their chosen courses. To support this, we liaised with Durham Works to ensure all Year 11 had an exit Personal Education Plan, (PEP) which reflected future aspirations and Year 13 knew what their next steps were.
- The virtual school supported carers and worked with them, the school, the social worker to support home schooling and then to help return children to school.
- Schools provided a range of support to those children not in school including online classrooms, packages of work, pastoral support for the children and continued access to counselling services through telephone conversations and virtual meetings.
- We provided an online learning platform for a number of children to access remote support from one of the Virtual School Teachers. This was helpful for those young people who were struggling at home or in their care setting.
- A range of learning materials were issued to children including Curious Kids and Story Time packs. Children in Year 2 to Year 8 were given access to Fiction Express to support their reading and comprehension.
- Blue Cabin Arts Packs were distributed to children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2
- The virtual school prepared a transition workbook for children in year 6 who were moving to secondary school in September 2021. A copy was sent out by post to every year 6 child.
- The virtual school put together wellbeing packs for young people in Years 9, 10 and 11 and worked with the fostering team to distribute these to Carers.
- The virtual school has developed a therapeutic offer for schools to help support children who have experienced trauma in their lives to support them with their

educational experiences. We have developed this to provide training focused on Attachment and Trauma for all Designated Teachers who have a Durham CLA on roll in their school.

- Staff from the virtual school liaised with various local authorities to secure education for several of our children who are placed out of area.
- The Caseworkers have attended PEP meetings to understand how CLA in statutory education coped with the COVID-19 period and how they engaged with their school and settings. This has helped to identify any extra interventions a child may need to prevent further gaps in learning developing.
- Caseworkers have supported year 11 students and have worked with DurhamWorks to provide a smooth transition onto Post 16 pathways. To provide stability for the young person they will continue to support them in year 12 and 13.
- Year 11, 12 and 13 received support from a Specialist Senior Progression Adviser, who was seconded to the Virtual School. This has developed relationships with Social Care, the Young Peoples Service (YPS) and Post 16 providers.
- Relationships with the Children in Care Council (CiCC) developed. Their contribution to Designated Teacher network meetings and to the Durham CLA Policy for schools has broadened their student voice in education.

Executive Summary Children in Care 2020-21

In line with DfE reporting, the examination data reported in this document is based on those children and young people who have been continuously looked after for a minimum of 12 months from April 1st, 2020 to March 31st, 2021 – hereafter referred to as the reporting cohort. This executive summary covers statutory school age, whilst the body of the report also includes Early Years and Post 16.

Summary statement

At Durham Virtual School we believe we are making a difference to the education of children and young people in care. This report is unable to evidence educational outcomes and strong progress from entry to care this year due to the COVID-19 restrictions. Good attendance, few exclusions, high aspirations, strong vocational and academic pathways and effective preparation for adulthood continue to be evident for CLA. This is all brought about by a virtual school team which advocates strongly and loudly for our young people through collaborative working. Over the last three years we have insisted on an increasing focus on the education of children in care within schools and with our partners and raised the profile of the work of the virtual school, developing very close working relationships with headteachers and Designated Teachers. The strengthening of the virtual school has allowed us to have increased capacity to attend PEP meetings and work more directly with social workers and schools to achieve the best outcomes for CLA.

Headlines

Key Stage 4

Of the 47 pupils in the reporting cohort, 31 attended mainstream secondary schools, 6 attended maintained or academy special schools, 3 attended an independent special school to meet their individual need, 1 young person attended a bespoke education package supported by his EHCP 6 attended an OFSTED registered Alternative Provision

34% attended schools with an Ofsted judgement of good or better. 1 pupil attended a school with an Ofsted inadequate rating. In this case the school was a local authority special school which received additional monitoring and additional tutoring was offered to this pupil and he achieved grades in both Maths and English GCSE. 15 pupils were in schools without Ofsted judgements, either because they were Independent Special Schools/Alternative Provisions or Academy Converters who have yet to be inspected.

Maths results have improved for the fourth consecutive year, with 47% achieving grade 9-4 and 28% achieving 9-5; an improvement of 13% and 14% respectively. Once again more young people achieved 9-5 in the Basics measure, continuing the positive trend from the last 3 years. English results have improved from last year, with 40% achieving grade 9-4 and 26% achieving 9-5; an improvement of 3% and 9% respectively.

Attendance and Exclusions

We are delighted that as a result of strong partnerships and swift support and intervention by virtual school caseworkers, there have been no permanent exclusions of Durham children in care since 2014. We have sought alternatives to permanent exclusions and caseworkers have been successful in working with social workers to engage young people in appropriate education settings and schools. Fixed term exclusions (FTE) had reduced for Durham children in care in the autumn term 2019/20, a positive trend was emerging prior to lockdown, however academic year 2020/21 has seen fixed term exclusions increasing. Twenty two CLA experienced at least one FTE, 5.6% of the CLA cohort. The overall attendance for children in care has remained consistently high since 2014. Local data for CLA has been obtained from schools and providers between September 2020 and July 2021. The local overall attendance for the whole CLA cohort was 89.3%. This reflects the guidance from the DFE when CLA were affected by Covid restrictions in schools

Personal Education Plans and Pupil Premium Plus

2019/20 saw the introduction of the Welfare Call electronic PEP system. Leading to an efficient process, allowing easy access for the Caseworker to monitor the quality of the PEP. Schools were encouraged to use Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) to support CLA as individuals but also as a Durham cohort. Progress and attainment data suggest that this is having a positive impact across the key stages. We have encouraged schools to use the funding effectively to meet emotional and social needs as well as focusing on the academic outcomes. We have challenged schools where we considered the spending of PP+ was not having an impact, or where it was unclear how a cohort spend was being used.

1. Introduction

As Virtual School Head for Durham County Council, I am pleased to present the Annual Report for Durham Virtual School 2020/2021 (Academic Year), which details our work, alongside our partners and the wider local authority to improve progress, outcomes and ultimately the life-chances of the children in our care.

The body of the report will outline successes, areas still to develop and priorities from Early Years to Post 16 and up to 25 where appropriate.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, again the report this year will not be data rich due to the announcement that KS1 and 2 SATs would not take place and that GCSE and A Level formal examinations would not be held and schools would submit Centre Assessed Grades (CAGs). The KS4 data presented in this report will not have comparisons to national or regional data and will reflect the performance of Durham CLA.

2. Durham Virtual School

2.1 What is the role of the Virtual School?

The role of the Virtual School Head and the Durham team is to take the lead in promoting the educational achievement of looked after children, and from September 2018, that of previously children looked after (PCLA), both are included in the scope of this report. We set aspirational targets and then work closely with schools, the wider local authority, and other partners to deliver the best experience possible so that children in care and young people can achieve success, thereby improving their life chances.

We want our children in care to attend, engage with and enjoy school so that they can achieve. We are working hard to ensure their voice is heard and has impact, this is an area for further development as we encourage children to become more active in the PEP (Personal Education Plan) process. Through COVID-19 we worked to ensure our children returned to school in September “Safe, Happy and Settled” and we worked alongside colleagues to produce guidance for schools and carers to enable this to happen.

Our priorities feed directly into, and support:

- Corporate Parenting Strategy and Key Lines of Enquiry
- The Children and Young People’s Strategy for Durham
- Durham Promise

As a virtual school we strive to build on the very strong provision in place for all children in care. This year we have continued to build on our strengths, using accurate and detailed data gathered at PEP meetings along with knowledge of the children and young people to target support more effectively. We have streamlined our allocation of the PP+ grant to schools to enable forward planning and we have focused on supporting schools to be more attachment and trauma aware. We intend to continue with our focus on reading and supporting schools to address our priorities for reading. This is a focus area for OFSTED and of high importance for

the Virtual School. We will support schools to help CLA to catch up as we move forward into the next academic year.

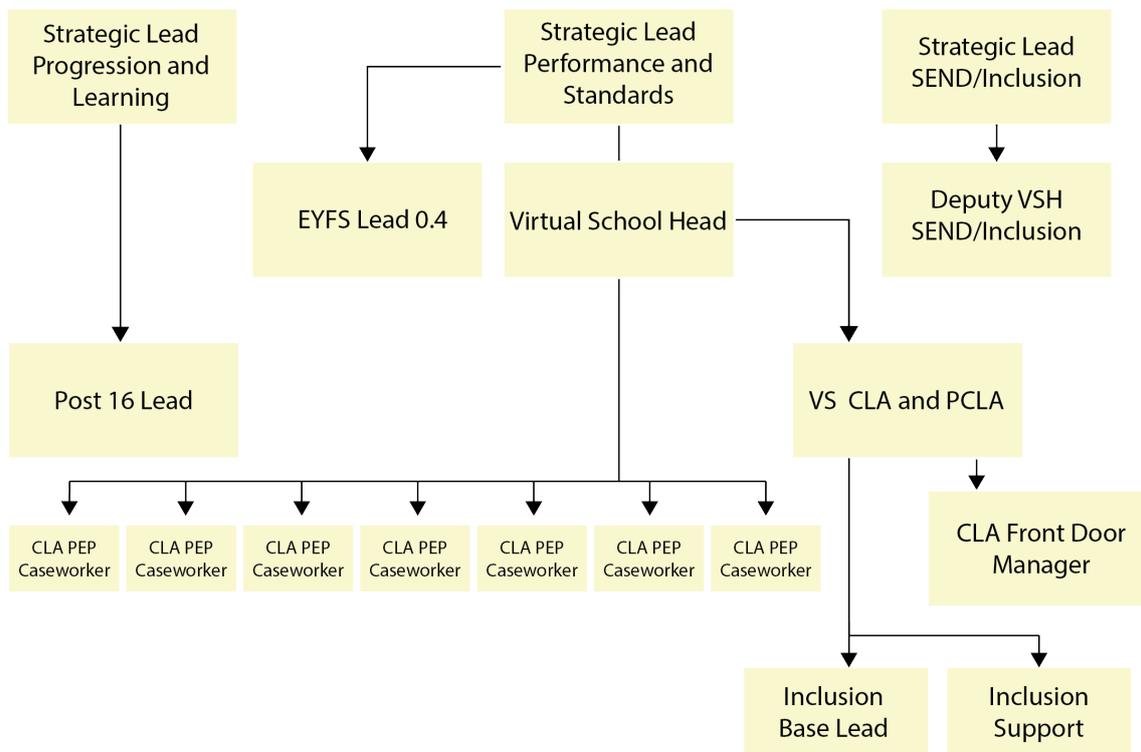
Despite the challenges, the casework team of seven has been able to maintain the high level of support for our young people and challenge for schools. During the pandemic the team have been able to attend more meetings virtually. The agreement by Durham County Council to increase capacity of the virtual school from September 2020 has improved our offer to schools and allowed a more targeted response to our children. This has led to improved communications with Social Workers and Carers.

2.2 Who are we?

The Virtual School Head (VSH) is an experienced school leader who sits within the Education Service and works in partnership across teams. Durham is a member of NAVSH and the VSH attends the local and national networks. The Deputy Virtual School Head sits within SEND and Inclusion and brings the additional expertise to the team as he is part of the High Cost Panels and can champion the cause for Children Looked After (CLA)

We work in close partnership with teams in Social Care, Health, Early Years, Progression and Learning and the wider Inclusion Team as well as the School Improvement Team. The VSH attends a wide number of strategic meetings and Chairs the Virtual School Operational Group. This group has become a strategic group to monitor and develop the changes within the VS structure through the work of task and finish working groups.

2.3 Structure Diagram



2.4 Who do we report to and how are we held accountable?

The virtual school develops an operational plan and carries out regular self-evaluation against this. The VSH reports to the Head of Service for Education and Skills through Education SMT and meets with the Head of Social Care. The VSH also attends the Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) and presents the annual report and education outcomes. Line management and reporting for the wider team sits within Education. Operational governance is now through the Operational Group (VSOG). As a virtual school we report to a subgroup of the CPP which is chaired by the vice-chair of the CPP and comprises elected members, local school leaders and representatives from care. We attend the Children Looked After Strategic Partnership group and report into this group three times a year.

3. Profile of learners and numbers on roll at the virtual school

3.1 How many learners are on roll?

As of September 2021, there were 598 learners (R – yr. 11) on roll of the virtual school. This is an increase of 1% on the same time last year. There were a further 120 post 16 and 179 pre-school (birth to Nursery 2). In total there were 897 children and young people in the care of Durham County Council.

Table 1:

Number of CLA by year group July 2021 (please note this is a different date to the section above)

	Male	Female	Total	% Total	Male	Female
R	16	11	27	3.89%	59%	41%
1	18	17	35	5.04%	51%	49%
2	35	20	55	7.93%	64%	36%
3	19	22	41	5.91%	46%	54%
4	28	26	54	7.78%	52%	48%
5	31	17	48	6.92%	65%	35%
6	26	17	43	6.20%	60%	40%
7	35	27	62	8.93%	56%	44%
8	38	40	78	11.24%	49%	51%
9	31	33	64	9.22%	48%	52%
10	35	31	66	9.51%	53%	47%
11	31	29	60	8.65%	52%	48%
12	35	26	61	8.79%	57%	43%
TOTAL	378	316	694		54%	46%

3.2 What is the profile of the statutory school age cohort?

There is a roughly equal primary / secondary split. 47.9% in primary and 52.1% in secondary. The gender split is 45.8% girls and 54.2% boys. 19% of children and young people (R - yr 11) attend out of county schools; this is an increase of 3.6% from last year. 81% are educated in schools based in County Durham.

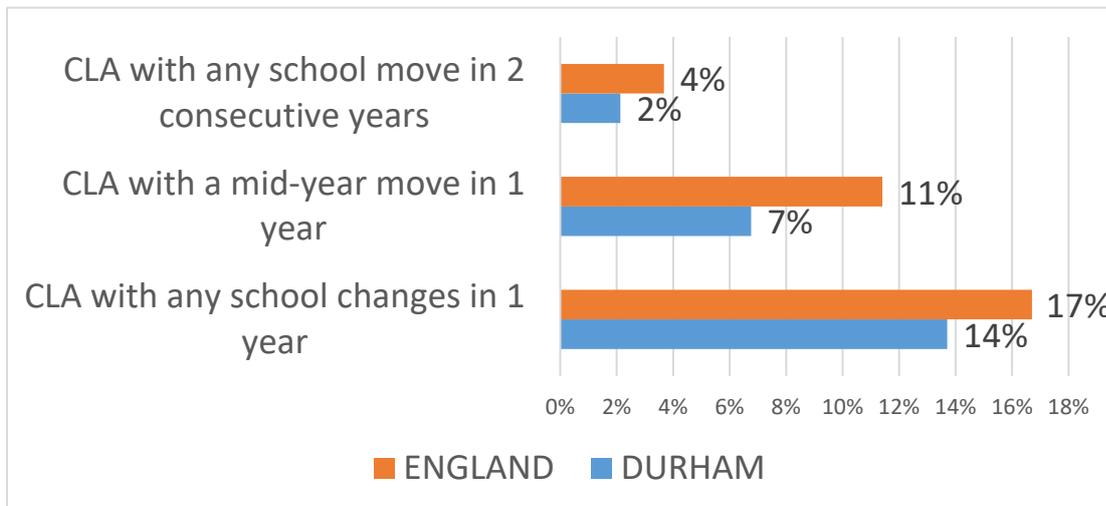
As of July 2021, 61% of the cohort attended a school with an Ofsted judgement of good or better. As of July 2021, 120 (19%) of children and young people attended a school with a grade of Requires Improvement or below. To avoid additional trauma, we do not routinely remove a child from a school which becomes inadequate unless there was an exceptional reason, but we do provide additional scrutiny and academic support if required. 125 young people attended schools where a current Ofsted judgement isn't available due to a recent academy conversion.

Any school in Durham that is not judged to be Good or better will receive extra scrutiny and the LA will work closely with these schools to improve provision. As a virtual school we provide additional tuition and scrutiny to all schools, as required.

3.3 How well do we promote placement and school stability?

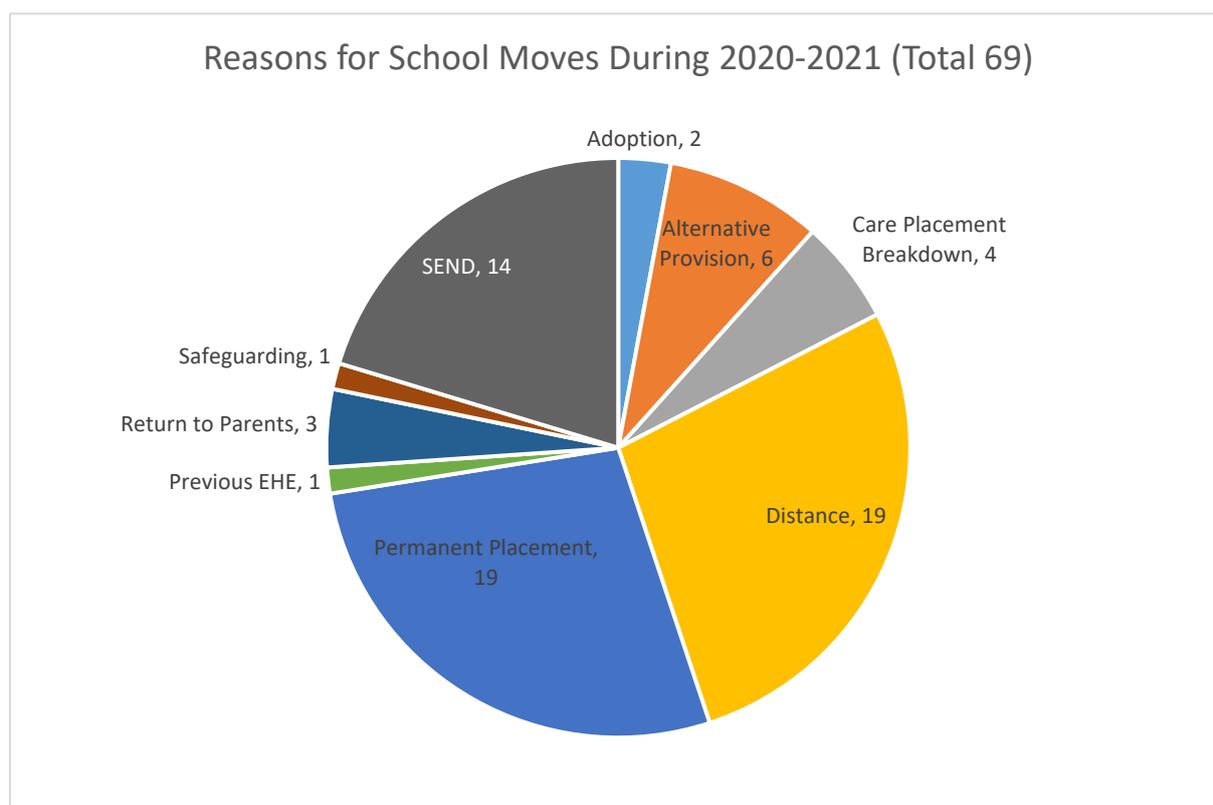
School and placement stability are crucial to provide the security children in care need in order to learn. We advise social care teams to help them to maintain stability in the education setting. Where change is unavoidable or is advisable, the casework team ensure there is enhanced transition, and that all key information is shared. For an emergency placement, caseworkers work closely with the school to support integration. Those children who need to move schools during an academic year are supported by additional planning and, if required, funding to meet their needs. The collation of data for the Stability report was cancelled this year due to COVID-19, however the 2019 report from Children's Commissioner's Office^[1] shows that fewer Durham children had multiple placement and school moves than nationally. The instability score was significantly better than our stability index neighbours. For repeated instability, both placement and school scores were broadly in line with national and regional levels. School moves have remained consistent over the past 4 years: 31 in 2016, 35 in 2016-2017, 34 in 2017-2018, but increased to 55 in 2018-2019.

School Stability from 2019 CCO Stability Index Underlying Data



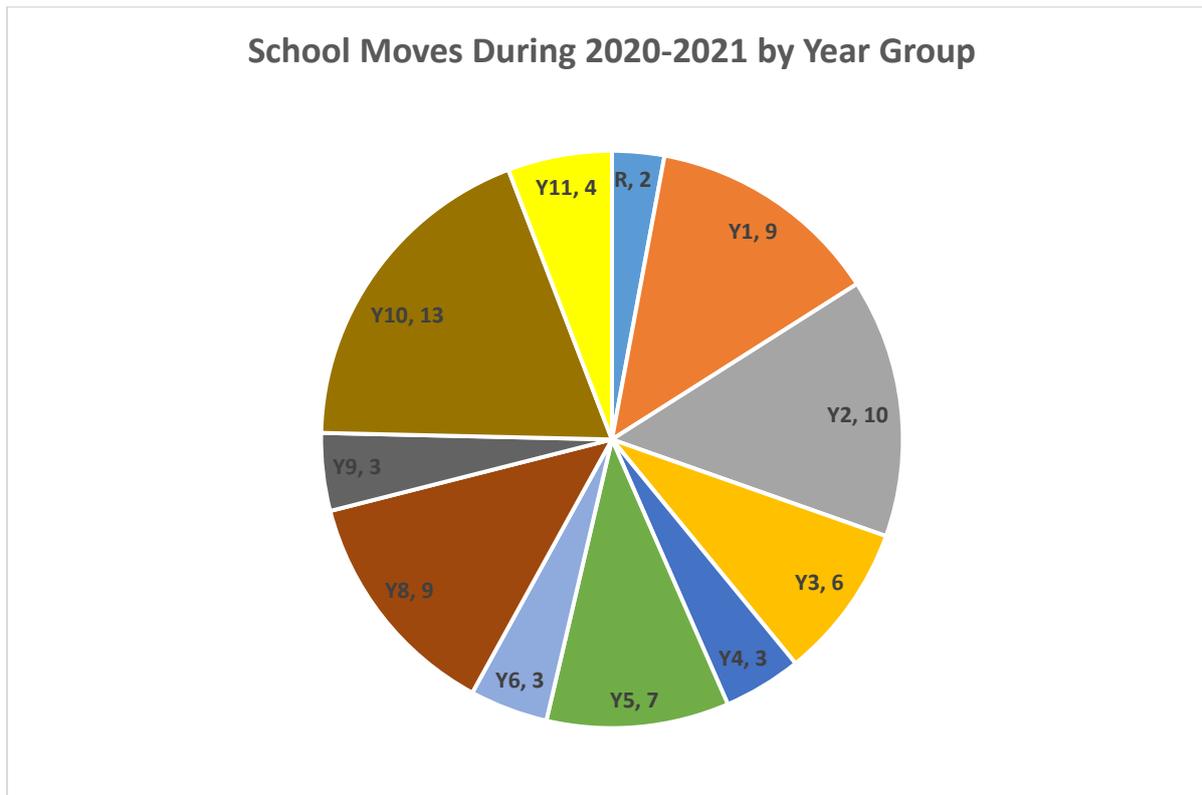
It is important to note that this is the most recent data, there was not a report from the Childrens Commisioner in August 2021.

<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/cco-stability-index-2019.pdf> and <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/publication/stability-index-2019/>

Table 2: School Moves 2020-21

In 2020-2021 there were 69 in year school moves, an increase of 81.6% from the previous year. 38% of school moves were to support moving to a permanent placement or due to distance, while 3% were due to a child returning to the care of their parents. 6 young people moved onto the roll of Ofsted Registered Alternative Provision and continued to be heavily supported by the Virtual School. 3 young people moved into secure placements due to their social care needs. In all cases appropriate education provision was in place to ensure both care and education needs were being met appropriately. Distance and movement of school due to permanent places remain the most significant factors in requesting a school move. However, in all cases the PEP Caseworker oversees the move, including agreeing the chosen school. The Virtual School Head has the final say in agreeing school moves and the PEP Caseworker ensures they are consulted fully in the process.

3 Year 6 children moved schools due to safeguarding/placement changes. We would not normally sanction a change of school during Year 6, but all moves were supported with a robust transition plan and additional Caseworker monitoring. 4 young people in Year 11 moved schools, but in all cases, this was because they were at risk of permanent exclusion or school refusal and the move was to an Alternative Provision which best met their needs. All moves took place at the beginning of the school year and arrangements were made to move them to their new school roll once a successful period of transition had taken place.

Table 3: School Moves 2020-21 by year group

3.4 How many of the cohort have Special Educational Needs (SEND)?

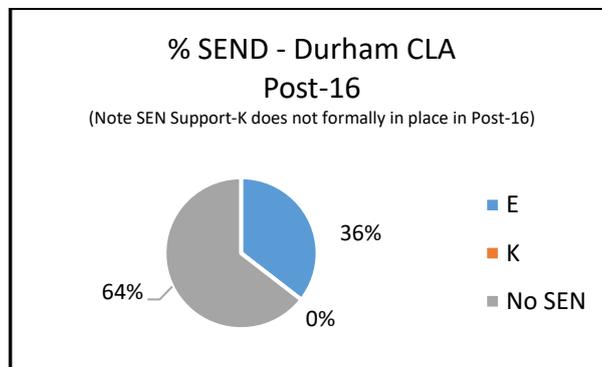
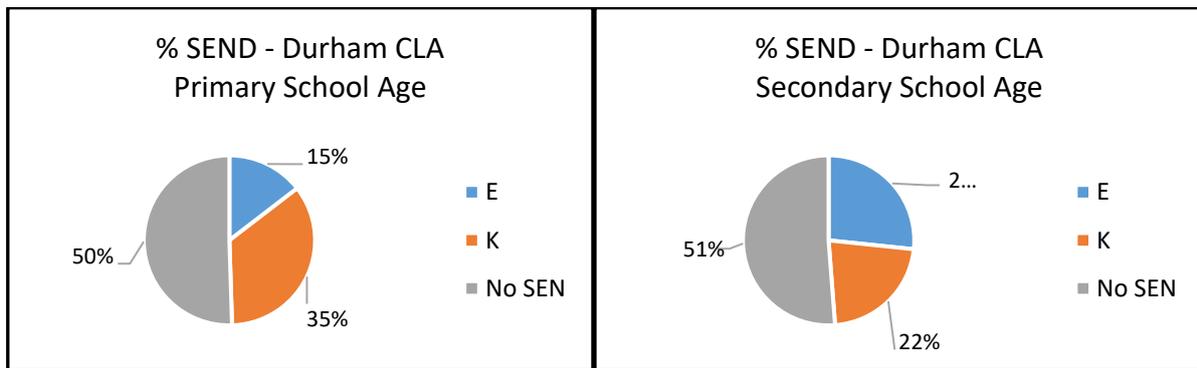
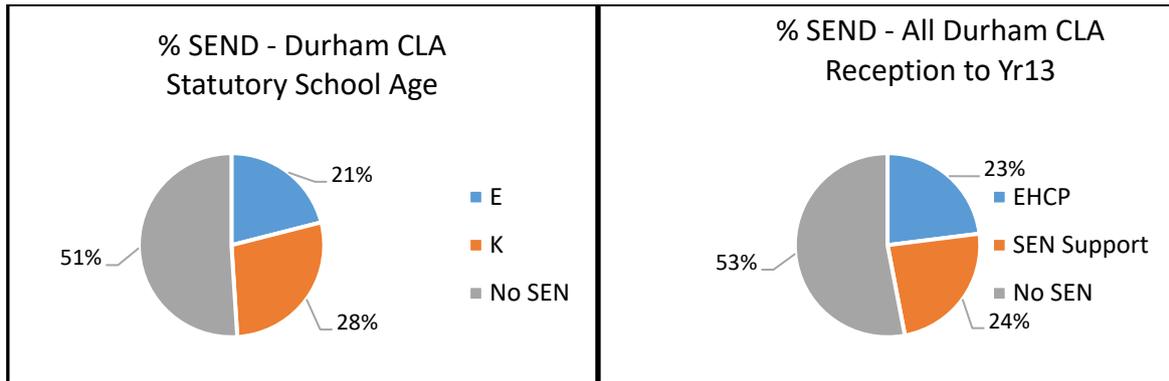
Children in care are four times more likely to have an identified SEN and nine times more likely to have an Educational Health and Care Plan (EHCP) than all children. Nationally in 2020, 55.9% of children in care had a special educational need compared to 14.9% of all children. In Durham 2020-21, 49% of children and young people (R-Y11) had identified special educational needs; 21% were supported by an EHCP whilst 28% had school SEN support plans (K code). There is a slight increase in Durham children looked after with an EHCP from 19% the previous year and a greater increase for children supported by a SEN Support Plan from 24% in 2019-20.

Table 4: Number of CLA with SEND by year group July 2021 (for academic year 2020-21)

	E	K	No SEN	Total
R	3	6	18	27
1	1	11	23	35
2	9	21	25	55
3	3	20	18	41
4	14	15	25	54
5	4	19	25	48
6	10	14	19	43
7	20	17	25	62
8	17	22	39	78
9	18	13	33	64
10	19	9	38	66
11	14	12	34	60
12	20	0	41	61
13	23	0	37	60
TOTAL	175	179	400	754

The percentage of Durham children looked after with an EHCP doubles from primary to secondary school. There are more Durham children looked after of primary school age with a SEN Support Plan in place. A challenge for Durham Virtual School is to ensure that the needs of children with a SEN Support plan are known and strategies put in place on their transition to secondary school.

Table 5: Charts to show the rates of SEN across different phases



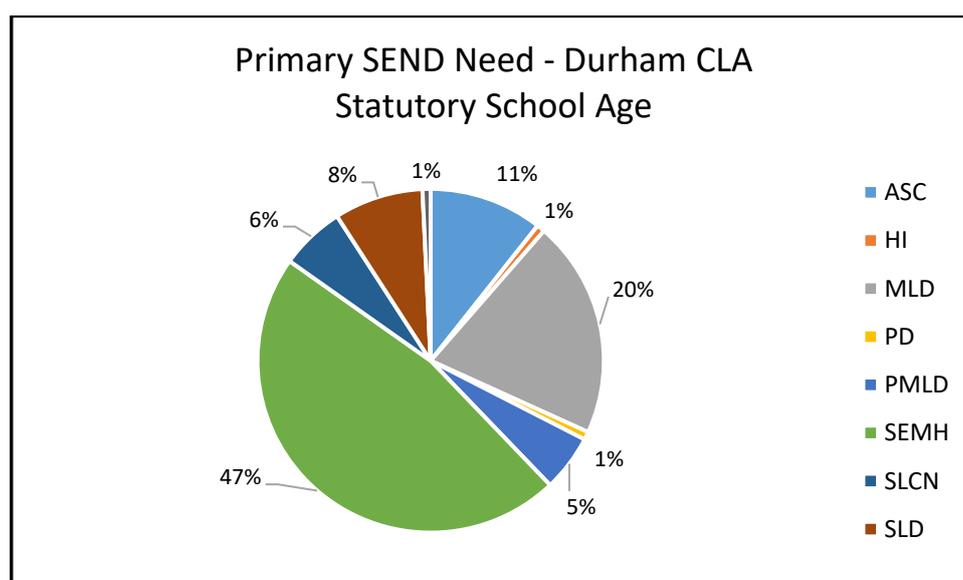
3.5 What are the primary needs of our cohort with an EHCP?

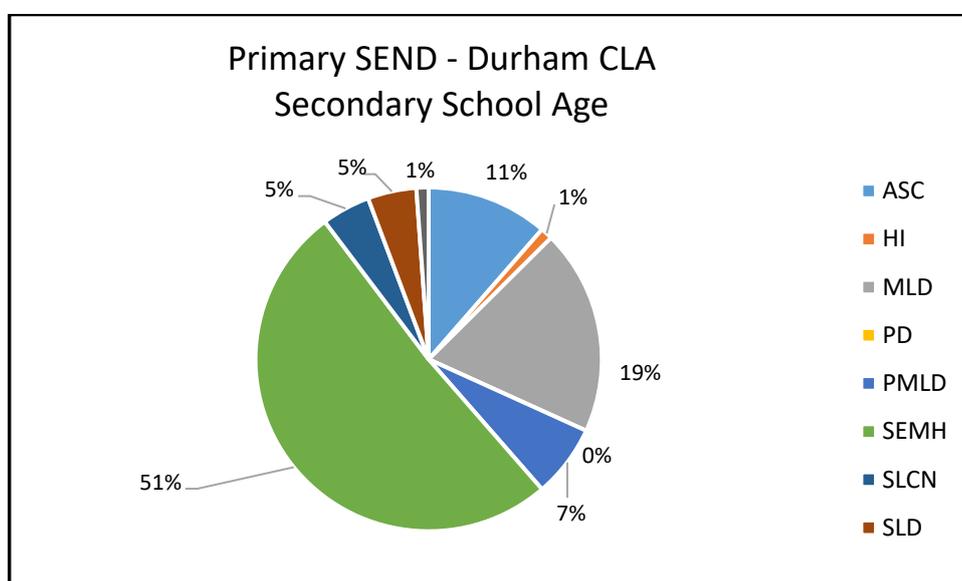
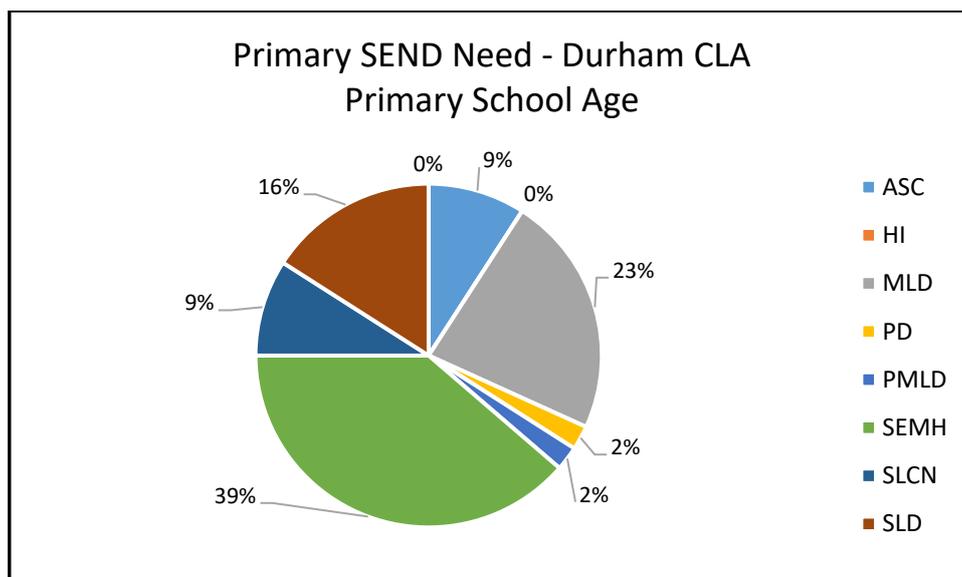
Nationally children in care are 3 times more likely to have social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) as their primary need than their peers. This is reflected in Durham where 47% of our young people (R-Yr11) have SEMH identified as their primary need. SEMH needs across the Durham children looked after cohort has decreased over the past 2 years from 54% in 2019. There is a significant difference of the levels of SEMH needs between secondary and primary aged Durham children looked after of 12%. It is important that schools work effectively with the Durham Virtual School to ensure that the needs of children looked after are fully recognised and that a child presenting with attachment-based behaviours, for example, is provided with the correct level of therapeutic support. The virtual School are developing the offer it has for Durham schools to include a higher level of therapeutic support for children and young people having difficulty in engaging in learning due to the impact of the trauma and challenge and uncertainty that they have faced prior to and after entering care including:

- Additional support for KS1 and KS2 children at risk of exclusion from their school
- An enhanced support agreement with the Local Authority EWEL Team
- School counsellor support for Durham children looked after
- Enhanced support from a Senior Educational Psychologist

Our casework team has expertise in SEND and offers strong advice and support in all areas of SEND. To meet increased need in 2019-20 we used the PP+ grant to increase our counselling offer and are now working with Full Circle to ensure schools have access to advice and support through a dedicated helpline. We also provide dedicated Occupational Therapy and Speech and Language support to help to support our children in care with SEND.

Table 6: Charts to show primary need of CLA with EHCP





3.6 How do virtual school caseworkers support children in care with identified special educational needs?

Virtual School Caseworkers advise schools to make sure that the SEN graduated approach is followed. This includes:

- considering the needs of the looked after child and exploring with the school how they can be supported at the PEP meeting.
- working with the Designated Teacher to ensure an SEN Support Plan is put in place if required.
- supporting the school in requesting additional top up funding through the High Needs Budget if required to meet need.

- been part of key discussion to identify if a child requires specialist provision to meet their needs.
- working with the SEND Caseworker to identify the correct provision for a CLA with an EHCP

3.7 How do we collaborate to support children in care with identified SEN?

The virtual school caseworkers liaise closely with the SEND Casework Team who are responsible for the statutory processes to assess and review the EHCPs for each child. We work closely with social workers and increasingly closely with health teams within this process. The Local Authority makes available additional financial support to Durham schools for children and young people supported by a SEN Support Plan, the Virtual School Caseworkers are aware of the process of request and work with schools to ensure Durham children looked after are offered the best possible support.

4. Duties to previously looked after children

4.1 How do we meet our duty towards previously looked after children?

We adhere to the statutory guidance from 2018 which arose from the Children and Social Care Act 2017 to provide information and advice to parents, carers and educators or to signpost this. We have promoted this with schools, provided advice and training for designated teachers and governors. From April 2019, we allocated the DfE additional funding provided to local authorities to a temporary specialist manager post so that there is some dedicated time within the team to support the education of previously looked after children. The remit of this post is to develop a sustainable offer for previously looked after children through building links with agencies and teams and raising the profile of this cohort in schools. The post was extended in March 2020 and then incorporated into the new virtual school team as a permanent post in September 2020. We have ensured that other teams within the authority are aware of the priority admission for these children and have briefed social care managers about effective use of PP+. Support for schools has ranged from advising on staff training to supporting with the effective use of PP+ and how to report it. Support for parents and carers has been on an individual basis to respond to queries and requests for support to ensure their child is accessing the right support for their needs. We have had a significant amount of contact from families and schools seeking advice around the use of PP+ funding, access to support and mental health services, the use of adoption support funding, academic support and becoming attachment and trauma aware. We have worked closely with the SGO team, to support guardians to understand the child's entitlement to PP+ and how to inform schools of the child's situation. This must be recorded on the October census each year for a child to be entitled to the premium. We have produced a frequently asked question sheet to make the process simpler when contacting school. The relevant information is on the virtual school website and we continue to provide advice and support.

4.2 How many previously looked after children of statutory school age are there?

According to the Spring Census 2021, there are currently 871 previously looked after children on roll in Durham schools (maintained). This reflects an increase of 94 children from January 2021

The breakdown is:

Category	Number of pupils
Adoption	398
Child arrangement order	53
Special guardianship order	376
Residence order	44

Not all adoptive parents want schools to record the status of their children, so these figures reflect those who have shared the information in the October Census. The data is from the census for maintained schools, January 2021. This shows an increase of 94 children, based upon the joint figure of 777 last year. This is a rise of 12%, compared to a rise of 8.4%.

Whilst these children are not on the roll of Durham Virtual School and we do not monitor the progress of individual children through the PEP system, this extends the reach and remit of our support and advice for those of statutory school age to over 1500 children and young people.

5. Achievement and Progress

At Durham Virtual School we use FFT targets to measure how well our children achieve against their previous attainment. We use series 50 to account for the disruption many children in care have faced. However, we are looking to use series 50 as a minimum target. We had hoped to use series 20 as a more aspirational target from 2020, however this has not been possible due to the pandemic. As our cohorts are small and vary in terms of their profile from year to year it is difficult to measure trends.

5.1 Early Years Update

There would have been 24 children in the EYFS Profile reporting cohort for 2020/21. 19 of these were in Durham schools and settings and 5 attended out of county settings and schools. This is a larger cohort 26% increase than the previous year when we had 19 children.

Of those 24 children, 4 had identified SEND, 3 children having an EHCP and 1 who was in receipt of SEN Support. This is the same number of children as the previous year.

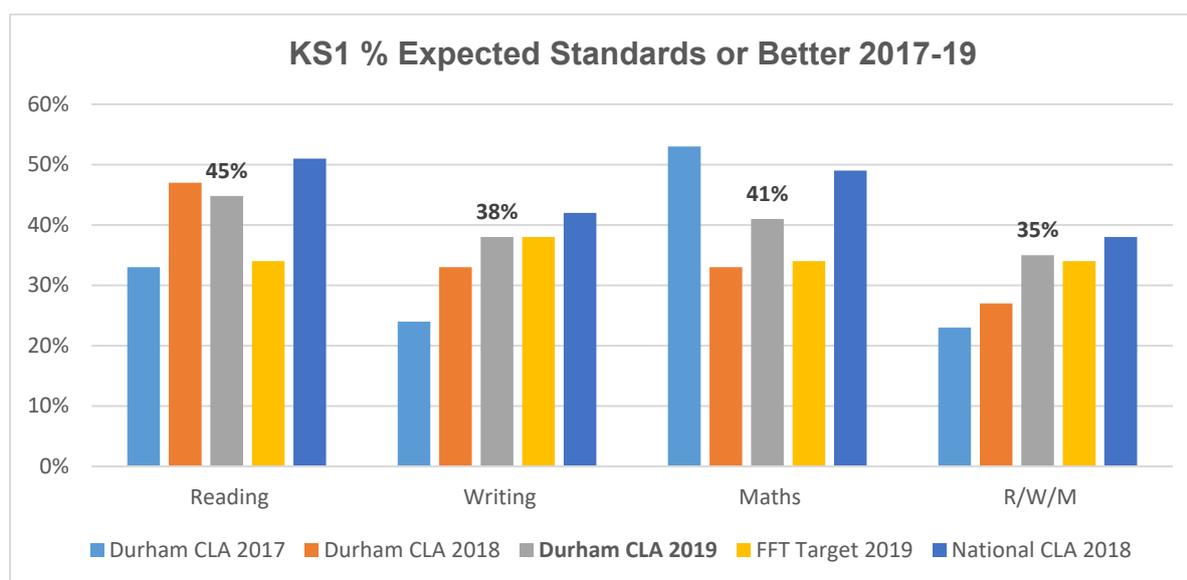
From Autumn 2020 an Early Years PEP was developed and introduced across County Durham schools and settings for 3- and 4- year- olds accessing their nursery education the year prior to starting reception. For children attending maintained schools and academies, designated teachers, and social workers co-ordinated the PEP in line with their arrangements for school age children. This was a new requirement and responsibility for nursery schools and PVI settings.

The Early Years Equalities and Inclusion Team continue to work with PVI settings to support their provision for children looked after attending their settings, promoting high quality planning and provision.

5.2 How well do our children do at KS1

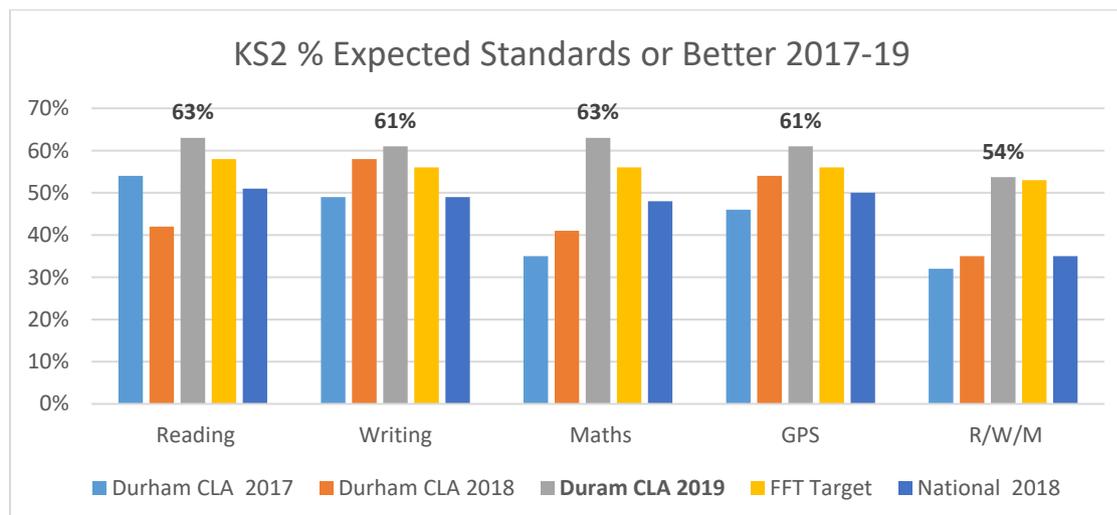
Due to the Covid pandemic there is no KS1 data to report on in this year's annual report. However, the previous three years data is shown below and shows a dip in reading against 2018. This continues to be a focus for the Virtual School, we continue to provide Story Time reading materials to support this area.

Table 7 KS1 Expected Standards or above



5.3 How well do our children do at KS2

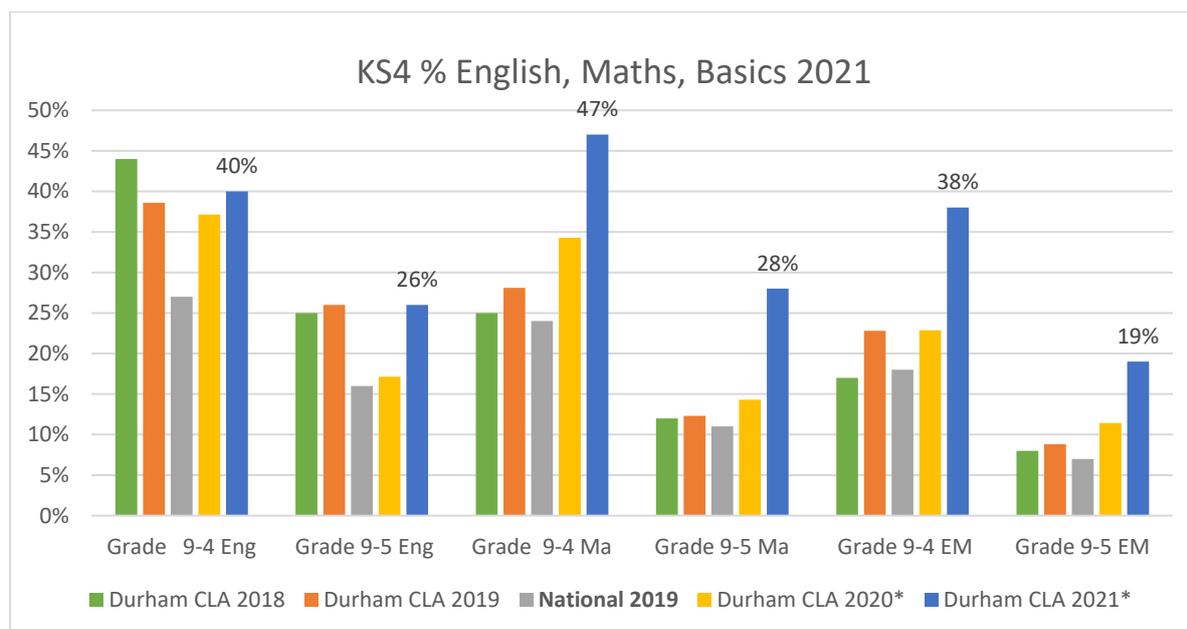
Due to the Covid pandemic there is no KS2 data to report on in this year's annual report. However, the previous three years data is shown below with positive trends in all areas:

Table 8: KS2 Expected Standards or above

We expect CLA will need additional support to help close any emerging gaps created through the Pandemic. This is a focus for every PEP meeting. To support reading we continue to provide reading packages through Fiction Express.

5.4 How well do our young people achieve in English and maths KS4

- There were 47 young people in the reporting cohort with a full cohort of 56. The reporting cohort consisted of:-
- 49% boys and 51% girls
- 22 pupils with identified SEN, 47% of year group.
- 13 of these had an EHCP, 28% of the reporting cohort, a decrease of 12% from 2020.
- 66% were on roll of a mainstream school, an increase of 15% from 2020. 13% of young people attended a maintained/academy special school, with an additional 6% attending an Independent special school. 1 young person attended a bespoke education package supported by his EHCP.
- 6 pupils (13%) attended an Ofsted Registered Alternative Provision.
- From the reporting cohort, 9 pupils were not following a curriculum that included GCSE's due to their SEN. All young people had needs that were met through an EHCP.

Table 9: KS4 English, Maths and Basics Outcomes

*2020-2021 Based on Centre Assessment Grade

2021 validated data

It is important to note that due to the cancellation of formal exams, all grades for 2021 are based on centre assessment grades.

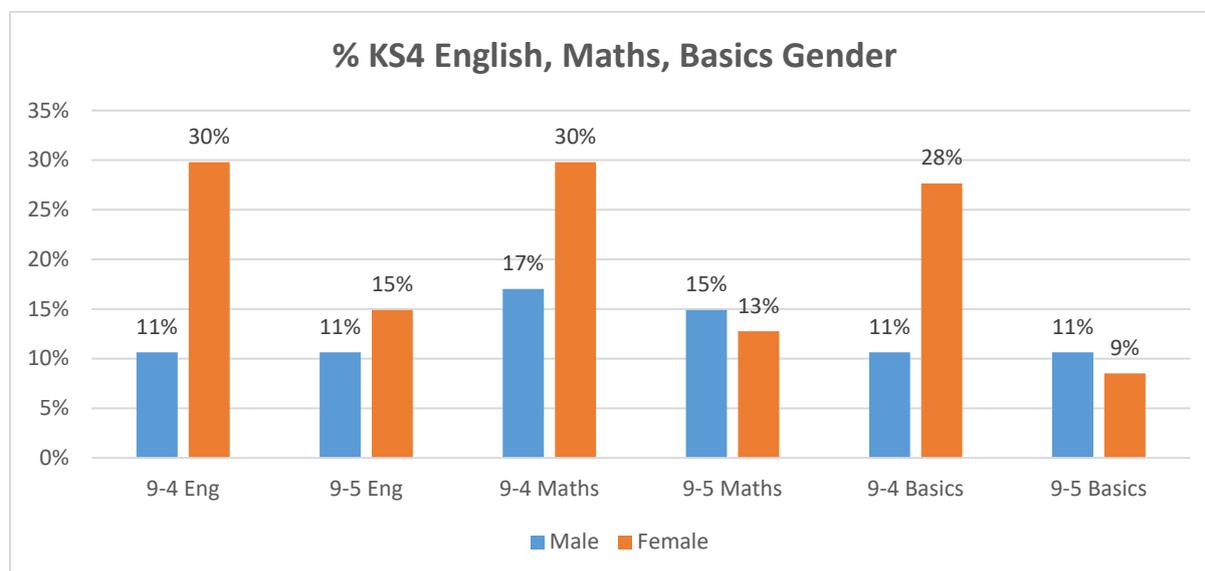
Our cohort has continued to perform well at GCSE 9-4 and significant improvements have once again been made in Maths. Work has been done previously with schools and caseworkers to highlight the additional oversight required in this subject and, over the years, a number of our young people have received additional tutor support from the virtual school. We are delighted to report further improvement from 2020, with a positive 3-year trend in pupils achieving maths at Grade 4+. After a dip last year in English grades, both English 9-4 and English 9-5 grades have increased. Both Maths and English grades at 5+ have increased with the number achieving a grade 5+ in Maths doubling from last year. The numbers of young people achieving the basics also rose significantly from last year.

28% of the cohort year group had an EHCP and 9 of these were not following a GCSE curriculum. However, of the 4 young people with an EHCP who were following a GCSE curriculum, 3 achieved a 9-1 grade in Maths and English. One of those young people achieved Grade 4 in the Basics.

We assessed the progress of our cohort in February and for some, used tutor support to provide additional tutoring for those that required it. It is also common practice during exam periods to put in some additional emotional support and revision sessions to complement those that school already provide. However, due to the cancellation of formal exams these plans were revised and instead our caseworkers concentrated on maintaining regular attendance, ensuring support was in place for assessments and preparing our young people for their transition into post 16 provision. There are still gaps with all Durham children, but we would have expected these results to be above the national averages for children in care. We

are fully aware that the outcomes for 2021 are not comparable to previous years, however we are delighted that our young people were able to achieve outcomes to support their next steps.

Table 10: Gender Breakdown at KS4



Unlike last year, where boys outperformed girls across the board, this year has seen our girls achieve significantly more 9-4 grades than boys, in Maths, English and the Basics. However, there is a more even split in the 9-5 grades, with boys achieving more 9-5 grades in both Maths and the Basics. Further analysis will take place to consider how our boys can be supported to achieve higher grades, particularly in English. However, consideration needs to be given to the varying cohort and we must ensure further analysis takes place this year to identify areas of development within the current Year 11 cohort.

5.5 How well do our young people achieve and participate at KS5 / post 16?

In 2020, there were 5,228 Year 11 school leavers. 63 of these young people were identified as CLA or Care Leavers.

Our Teenagers to Work programme supports young people to complete some work experience during the summer, Easter and October breaks. In the academic year 2018- 2019, we provided our young people with 123 opportunities. Some young people took up more than one opportunity. They have engaged in a wide range of businesses and organisations

During the academic yr 20 - 21, as part of DCC's apprenticeship recruitment programme, 3 apprenticeship positions were ringfenced and appointed to – 2 within Business Admin and 1 with HR. The scope and size of the apprenticeship recruitment programme during this period was adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in fewer overall opportunities than originally planned, including the number of ring-fenced positions. It is the ambition of DCC to offer more ringfenced positions in future recruitment programmes. One of our apprentices

from 2019 has been successful in gaining employment as a Young Persons Adviser with the Social Care team.

Further funding was secured for 2020/21 to support young people leaving yr 11 with their progression into a post 16 destination. The DurhamWorks Programme for Schools project has been working preventatively by offering IAG and mentoring support and liaising closely with Virtual School and SEND casework colleagues to identify and ensure the appropriate placements are maintained. The results of which are unavailable as yet owing to the below activity survey being taken in Nov 21 for this year's 20/21 leavers.

5.6 What were the destinations for our young people?

We will receive the data for 2021 leavers in November. The cohort is 56 young people, initial indicators are:

- 43 young people are attending Sixth Form or College
- 3 following Apprenticeship
- 1 applying for the Armed Forces
- 1 into Full Time Training
- 8 are potential NEET and/or could be living out of County Durham

Table 11: Destinations post 16 2020

Destination	No of 2020 Year 11 School Leavers	% of 2020 Year 11 School Leavers	No of 2020 Year 11 School Leavers CLA/CL	% of 2020 Year 11 School Leavers CLA/CL
Total Participation in Learning (including custodial sentence)	4907	93.9	48	76.2
Re-engagement	34	0.7	4	6.3
Temporary Break in Learning	16	0.3	0	0.0
Employment without training	49	0.9	0	0.0
NEET Total	169	3.2	11	17.5
Other including destination not known	53	1.0	0	0.0

Table 12: Destinations post 16 2019

Destination	No of 2019 Year 11 School Leavers	% of 2019 Year 11 School Leavers	No of 2019 Year 11 School Leavers CLA/CL	% of 2019 Year 11 School Leavers CLA/CL
Total Participation in Learning (including custodial sentence)	4706	94.9	53	86.9
Re-engagement	29	0.6	2	3.3
Temporary Break in Learning	19	0.4	0	0.0
Employment without training	46	0.9	2	3.3
NEET Total	130	2.6	4	6.6
Other including destination not known	31	0.6	0	0.0

Table 13: Destinations post 16 2018

Destination	No of 2018 Year 11 School Leavers	% of 2018 Year 11 School Leavers	No of 2018 Year 11 School Leavers CLA/CL	% of 2018 Year 11 School Leavers CLA/CL
Total Participation in Learning (including custodial sentence)	4586	94.4	55	82.1
Re-engagement	18	0.4	3	4.5
Temporary Break in Learning	17	0.3	0	0
Employment without training	34	0.7	1	1.5
NEET Total	125	2.6	4	6.0
Other including destination not known	80	1.6	4	6.0

The tables above demonstrate the numbers entering and maintaining post 16 placements as of 1st November for the past 3 years. Table 12 shows a growth in the numbers maintaining Education and Employment with a large reduction in those Not Known, however there is a significant drop for those leaving school in 2020 (Table 11) with the numbers in EET and a rise in the numbers NEET. This correlates with the below information as in the early indicators show this is a result of the impact of COVID-19.

5.7 How do we support our young people to ensure they participate in EET?

The following table shows the proportion of Children Looked After and Care Leavers aged 16+ who are: Participating in Learning, Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), and whose current destination is Not Known.

This data is based on the March snapshot over the last three year period. March is considered a representative and stable snapshot, by the Department for Education, and used widely for monitoring participation rates.

It is worth noting that the cohort size for certain groups of identified young people e.g. Children Looked After, Care Leavers etc. are small, which can have a disproportionate impact on percentages.

Table 14: 2015 –18 Participation in EET of Children Looked After / Care Leavers aged 16 +

	March 2019 %	March 2020 %	March 2021%
Education	45.8	46.8	47.5
Employment	10.8	10.2	10.9
Training	6.6	5.7	3.5
Re-engagement Activities	3.3	10.2	3.1
Total EET	66.5	72.8	65.0
NEET	29.2	23.4	30.7
Not Known	3.3	3.4	2.3
Combined NEET and Not Known	32.5	26.8	33.1

Table 14 demonstrates that participation was much improved in March 2020, this was just prior to the onset of COVID-19 in which a lot of support and provision described below was in place with high levels of engagement from young people. The biggest change was the higher numbers on re-engagement activities offered through DurhamWorks with provision such as First Point and the Plan Ahead programme, all very bespoke and tailored to the young person's needs. This resulted in a reduction in NEET and increase in EET.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 then led to the reduction in the offer of re-engagement and training provision owing to lockdowns and working from home with virtual contact being much of the support being provided. A rise in the numbers of NEET was a direct result with this being mirrored across other vulnerable groups. A positive is that the full-time education option has continued to rise year on year and those whose destination is Not Known to us has decreased.

Care Leavers receive additional support to enable them to progress into education, employment or training through DurhamWorks. This is a European funded, Durham County Council led partnership programme to support young people aged 16-24 who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). All Care Leavers have access to a specialist Progression Adviser who provides on-going information, advice, guidance and support. There are also bespoke activities available to motivate young people and to develop their skills for employment.

DurhamWorks has a specific focus on engaging with employers to develop a range of opportunities for young people, including Care Leavers, from work experience placements through to paid employment. As part of the offer to employers, there is a DurhamWorks Grant, which provides financial support to small and medium sized enterprises to enable them to employ young people.

County Durham Adult Learning and Skills Service delivers a range of programmes which support young people, including Care Leavers, to develop skills and gain qualifications to progress into employment. Programmes include Apprenticeships as well as a Traineeship programmes specially designed to meet the needs of Care Leavers. In addition, the Service has a Supported Internship programme for young people, including Care Leavers, who have Special Educational Needs.

Durham Works Delivery Partners provide programmes designed to engage and progress all Durham Works young people into EET. In July -August 2021 Citizen's Advice County Durham (CACD) delivered an online apprenticeship application support programme helping young people with applications and interviews for DCC apprenticeship posts, including supporting care leavers. During 2020/21 First Point Training were funded by DurhamWorks to deliver a bespoke programme for NEET young people with social and emotional difficulties, (including LAC and Care leavers) who required additional SEMH support. Following the success of this a further programme will be delivered in 21/22 to offer the extra support required.

Since the commencement of DurhamWorks, 659 young people who have been supported by the programme have identified themselves as Looked After or a Care Leaver. Of these 324 have completed the programme, with 240 progressing into education, employment and training destination – a progression rate of 81.6%. The remaining young people continue to be supported by DurhamWorks.

As above the implementation of DurhamWorks Programme for Schools is a new initiative and extra support to aid progression. Out of the cohort leaving yr 11 in 2020/21 89% have been identified and signed up for the support, with 7% being referred on to the generic DurhamWorks programme to access provision and the remaining 4% not being eligible owing to plans being firmly in place to progress onto a specialist post 16 placement.

5.8 How well do our young people achieve and participate in Higher Education?

Despite covid19 care leavers have excelled again in higher Education. We currently have 27 young people in University and 17 are enrolled to start in September. Of the 27, 2 have graduated one young person gaining a first in biological studies. Unfortunately, 3 YP dropped out after re sitting year 2. The YPS have continued to support these young people one YP has applied for an apprenticeship, one is working and living in Leeds and the other is living and working in Middleborough. The YPS continue to have a designated YPA to support young people in University. This year we have worked closely with YPA's Durham Works and young people who are enrolling for the first time to help them better prepare for what is an exciting but often daunting opportunity

5.9 How did we make a difference for care leavers?

'C' was originally referred to DurhamWorks in June 2016 when she was 17. She was enrolled in 6th Form but she had not been attending for the last 2 months. We were updated she was NEET and a Care Leaver. C was difficult to engage at that time even with support of her YPA.



When she attended the first appointment C spoke very little and when she did she kept saying she wasn't bothered in response to many questions and her body language was of total disinterest. C agreed that I could work with her on her CV and applying for vacancies. C received CEIAG & decided an apprenticeship was her preferred pathway. C is a very bright young girl with many good GCSE's.



In Sept 2017, C was successful in gaining a Level 2 customer service apprenticeship in a cake shop. C kept in touch to say that she was enjoying her apprenticeship, but it wasn't what she wanted to do forever. C was later taken on as an employee following her apprenticeship and continued there for another year. C kept in regular contact.



In 2019, C said she was very unhappy in her job and had been applying to other places but with no success. She was informed that the DCC Social Work apprenticeships were coming out and she was really keen and based on her own care leaver experience we believed she would be a very strong candidate. She was supported with her application and interview process and C stood out as being the most suitable candidate who had taken time to do a lot of preparation for the interview. C was successful and started her apprenticeship with DCC in Sept 2019.



C lived independently & was struggling financially to support herself on her apprenticeship wage. We looked into whether this apprenticeship wage would be able to be matched and brought up to the minimum wage so that she would not be any worse off for doing the apprenticeship. We completed the 'Request for Funding for Care Leavers form' which looked in depth at her income and expenditure and once completed it was granted.



In Sept 2020 C was now doing the Social Work Apprenticeship at Advanced Level and was in her 2nd year. This was all in the middle of the Covid-19 Pandemic. In March 2021 Durham County Council Advertised Young Persons Adviser Vacancies. C was informed & requested support to apply. C prepared for the interview & the excellent outcome was that she was successful in being offered Employment as a YPA in our Young Peoples Service within Durham County Council. C started her new role in July 2021 and is now supporting other Care Leavers.

6. Attendance and Exclusion

6.1 How well do our young people attend school?

Attendance continues to be a strength of the virtual school. The slight increase in absence and persistent absence is in line with the national and local trend.

Due to the pandemic the attendance of CLA does not give a true reflection of the cohort's attendance as many carers chose to educate the children at home during the second lockdown, as the Government had changed the attendance guidance, they were not awarded an attendance mark.

The local overall attendance for the whole CLA cohort was 89.3%. This can be broken down as follows:

- Attendance of primary school age CLA (including foundation year group) = 94%
- Attendance of primary school age CLA (not including foundation year group) = 94.1%
- Attendance of secondary school age CLA = 84.5%
- Attendance of CLA in County Durham schools and settings = 90%
- Attendance of CLA in out of County schools and settings = 89%

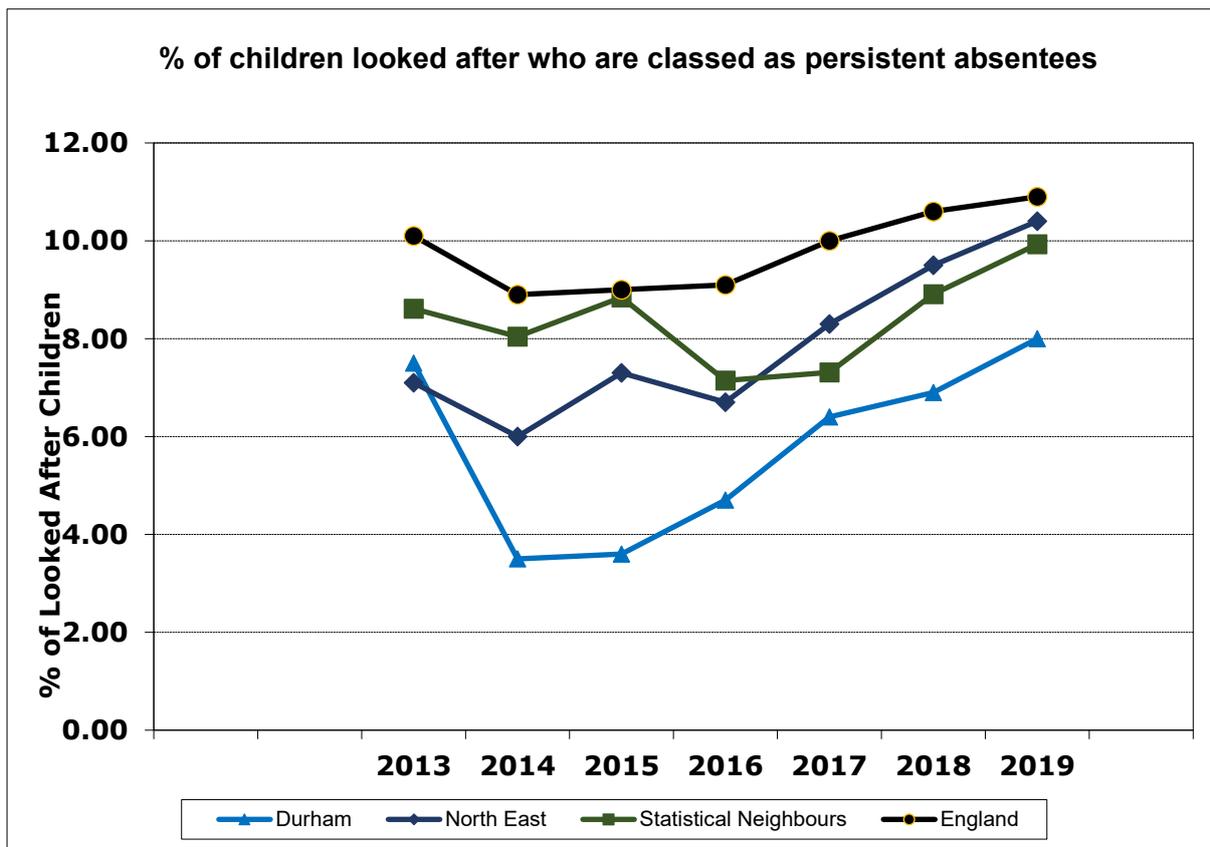
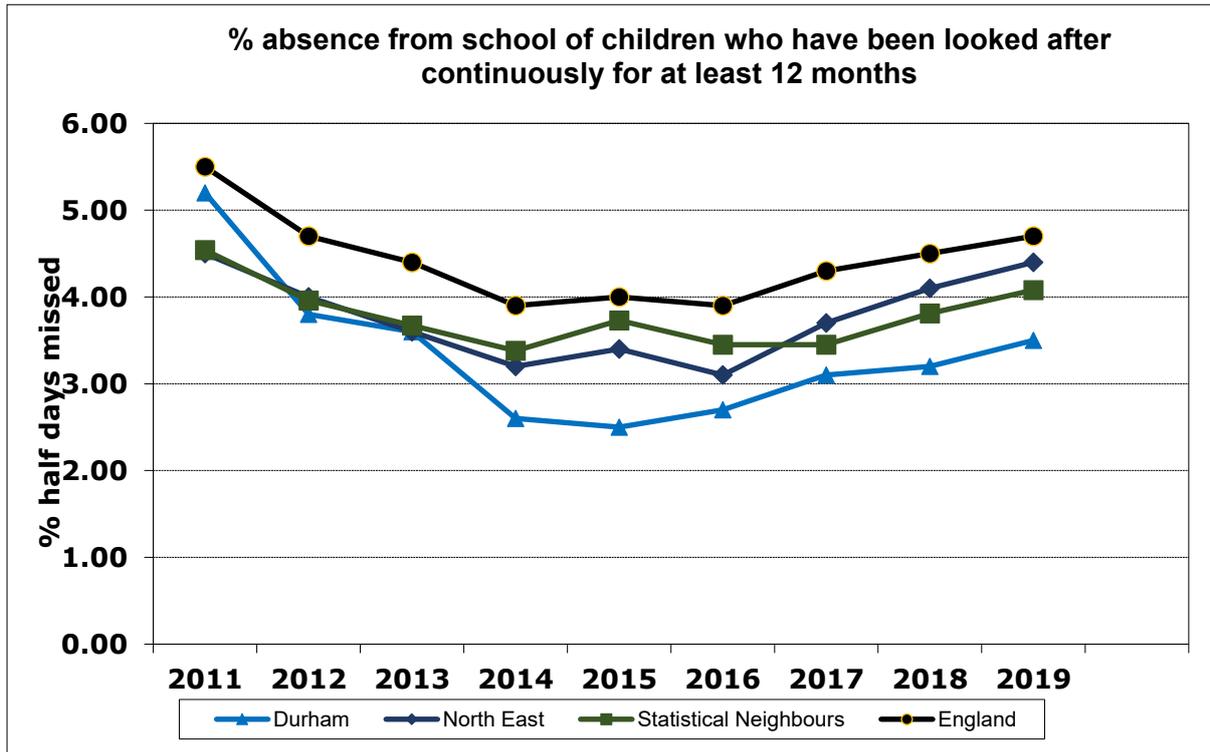
The strong attendance of our young people is testament to the work of the DVS casework team who maintain regular contact with both schools and carers and to our schools who recognise the importance of attendance for children in care and young people and seek to engage them and meet their needs.

We work closely with the Attendance Improvement Team to ensure CLA are monitored closely and any concerns with attendance can be addressed swiftly.

Durham CLA attendance shows a positive trend over several years as presented in the graphs taken from the LAIT. This places Durham CLA in Quartile A and presents a positive picture across both absence and persistent absence.

Due to covid the graphs below have not been updated since 2019. We are expecting data in April 2022.

Table 15: Attendance and Persistent Absence over time for CLA



6.2 How many of our young people have been excluded?

There have been no permanent exclusions since 2014. The casework team work closely with schools to prevent any issues reaching crisis point and explore appropriate alternative pathways better suited to meeting the need of the young person. We challenge any schools which consider permanent exclusion, and then implement appropriate support, using Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) funding to avoid this.

Fixed Term Exclusions remain low for Durham CLA. The academic year 2020/21 has seen a rise against the Autumn term 2019/20. Data reflects the full academic year. 5.6% of CLA cohort experienced a Fixed term exclusion, this represents 22 children, 18 were in the Secondary sector.

We are working closely with schools to address this. We have also allocated funding to the four behaviour panels across the county to support a locality-based approach to inclusion for children in care. We now ask schools to contact the virtual school team before implementing a Fixed Term Exclusion (FTE) to discuss alternative approaches.

The VSH works closely with the Behaviour and Inclusion Panels (BIPs). To provide additional support and act as the corporate parent for children who are displaying challenging behaviour, the VSH will attend behaviour panel meetings to support the case for a CLA not to be excluded

We provide a support package at our Inclusion Base for those young people where a fixed term exclusion is unavoidable and where it could put pressure on the home placement. We also offer this to some schools to relieve some pressure, before a crisis point is reached, to give them some time to plan more appropriately for a young person's needs.

7. Admissions, transitions, managed moves and OOC placements

We work hard to meet our statutory duty to avoid any ‘drift and delay’² in securing full-time education which meets the needs of the child. It remains a challenge to secure mid-year admissions, particularly to secondary schools. We consult closely with headteachers to ensure the best provision. We do place children and young people in schools which are judged to require improvement, where the provision offered meets the need of the child and we believe that it offers them the best chance of a settled education where they can make good progress. The casework team provide enhanced transition for the most vulnerable children and young people at key points. This will be enhanced following the restructure with the focus of the new team on seamless transition from 0-18.

7.1 How many children moved school mid-year?

In 2019-20, 69 children and young people moved mid-year. We aim to ensure moves take place at the end of an academic year, but there are occasions where a move mid-year is beneficial. Working with the care teams, we have supported moves which:

- were as a result of statutory assessment
- supported the long-term care pathway for permanence
- for safeguarding reasons
- enhanced the experience of the child within the family unit – attending school with others from the family
- enabled them to feel part of the local community – developing relationships with peers in their locality
- avoided trauma which could have resulted from attending a school with siblings still with birth parents or near birth parents
- provided an opportunity to develop friendships prior to KS2/3 transition.

7.2 How many of our children experienced managed moves?

We do not routinely support managed moves for children in care, however, there have been some occasions where we have sanctioned this, based on the specific needs of the child. For example, where a child had experienced significant trauma and was unable to continue to attend their present school we worked with social workers and a school in the community they had moved to and provided additional funding to enable an effective managed move until a placement. It was not possible to return to their present school. As a result, the virtual school worked with social workers and a school in the community in which they were now living. The

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-the-education-of-looked-after-children>

virtual school made available additional Pupil Premium Plus to enable gaps in learning to be addressed. The VS has shared the view with headteachers that a CLA needs to have a sense of belonging. Short term moves to The Bridge, Willows and Beeches is acceptable for an interim period and requires an entry and exit strategy.

7.3 How many of our children are placed in out of county education settings?

120 (19%) of the school age cohort (633 children and young people) were educated out of the boundaries of County Durham in 2020-21. This is a slight increase of 3.6% from 2019-2020.

8. Personal Education Plans (PEP), (PP+) and Academic Progress

8.1 How does the virtual school ensure the quality of the PEPS?

In 2016 it was decided to move greater responsibility for ensuring the completion of the PEP to schools which are best placed to have an in-depth knowledge of the young person alongside the social worker. For 2016-17, virtual school caseworkers worked alongside schools to ensure they quality of these PEPS and a quality assurance process was implemented. This has been adjusted to match changes to the structure of the casework team.

We found that, after the restructure within the Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Groups Service, standardisation was more difficult within a much larger and wider team. Following an in-depth review, there was a refocussing of some of the caseworkers. During 2019-2020 there were a team of 4 dedicated Caseworkers who had sole responsibility for monitoring and supporting an allocated caseload. This means each Durham CLA has a dedicated virtual school worker. In September 2019 the virtual school implemented an online system for PEPs through Welfare Call. We were confident this would enable swifter QA and, consequently, faster and more robust challenge to schools and settings where needed. This system has now been embedded for statutory school age children and this year was rolled out for nursery 2 and Year 12.

During 2018-2019 we identified early years and post 16 PEPs as an area for improvement and we worked closely with these teams to streamline practice and embed quality assurance. Our Early Years Team produced a PEP which better matches the phase and they now lead on the quality assurance. This ensures a level of expertise appropriate to these schools and settings. The emphasis last year was taking this good practice and embedding it into the new online PEP system. Both early years and Post 16 colleagues have been involved in the development of the new PEPs and will be responsible for training settings and social workers. During the last year the Early Years and Post 16 PEPs have been developed and added to the Welfare Call system. Our Early Years colleagues are responsible for the QA of Nursery PEPS, whilst the PEP Caseworkers complete QA for the Post 16 PEPS. All PEPS have a QA document embedded in them which allows communication between the Caseworkers and settings.

8.2 What information does the PEP record?

The PEP is a live, working document which provides a record of the young person's journey through education. In developing the new PEP, we reviewed the effectiveness of the document and asked for the views of young people through the Children in Care Council (CiCC), who contributed their ideas to the new e-pep document. When we launched the document, we returned to the CiCC to ensure they understood the changes and to ask about their experiences during the meetings. This is an ongoing process and we want to work more closely with our young people to ensure the document and process is developed with their involvement. We stress with schools that the PEP document is a snapshot; it is the implementation of the actions which make a difference. Our document is developed to show the strategies in place to support our children and young people and to measure the impact of interventions. Central to this are the views and experiences of our children and young people, and numerous opportunities are given for them to contribute to their PEP meeting. We have worked with the CiCC to develop a fact sheet for CLA to help them to understand how the PEP process works.

8.3 What is the quality of the PEPs?

Since adopting the electronic PEP document, all young people have at least 1 PEP on the Welfare Call system. This was an improvement of 5% from 2018-2019, when compliance was 95%. Using the electronic PEP has improved and streamlined many processes including tracking PEP completion; monitoring involvement; tracking and analysing Pupil Premium Plus use and quality assurance.

When the ePEP was introduced in September 2019 there were a series of training sessions to introduce the new system and familiarise both designated teachers and social workers with the document. 119 people attended this training and over 98% of attendees found the training worthwhile/significant. The training was repeated in October for those unable to attend. Caseworkers were encouraged to attend as many PEP meetings as possible to improve understanding and ensure quality documents were held. Ongoing support was provided to schools through caseworker involvement, business admin and manager support from the Virtual School and also the Welfare Call support helpline. PEP quality and feedback on issues and developments are provided to Designated Teachers regularly either through sharing emails or at DT network/training sessions.

During 20/21 the focus has been on providing ongoing support on completion of PEPs for Designated Teachers through increased PEP Caseworker participation in PEP meetings. The PEP Caseworkers work very closely with the DTs and provide advice and guidance on high quality PEP completion. They also work closely on ensuring PEP completion within timescales, and this year we have made further improvements in this area. In addition to the support given to DTs PEP Caseworkers also work closely with colleagues in Social Care to offer the same support and guidance. This year we have focussed on providing additional support to Social Workers and during the year Virtual School Managers have provided:-

- Regular communication with senior Social Care managers to ensure key messages are disseminated throughout teams
- IROs have access to the PEP documents

- Improved system in place to ensure Social Worker and Team information is regularly updated to improve access to the Welfare Call system
- Virtual School Manager attended a number of Social Care locality Team Meetings to improve understanding of the PEP process
- A series of weekly drop in sessions were offered to all Social Workers to ensure they could access quality support in accessing the system and completing the document
- Specific written guidance on Welfare Call and the EPEP shared with Social Workers
- Training offered to Team Co-Ordinators and IROs on PEPS and the Welfare Call System

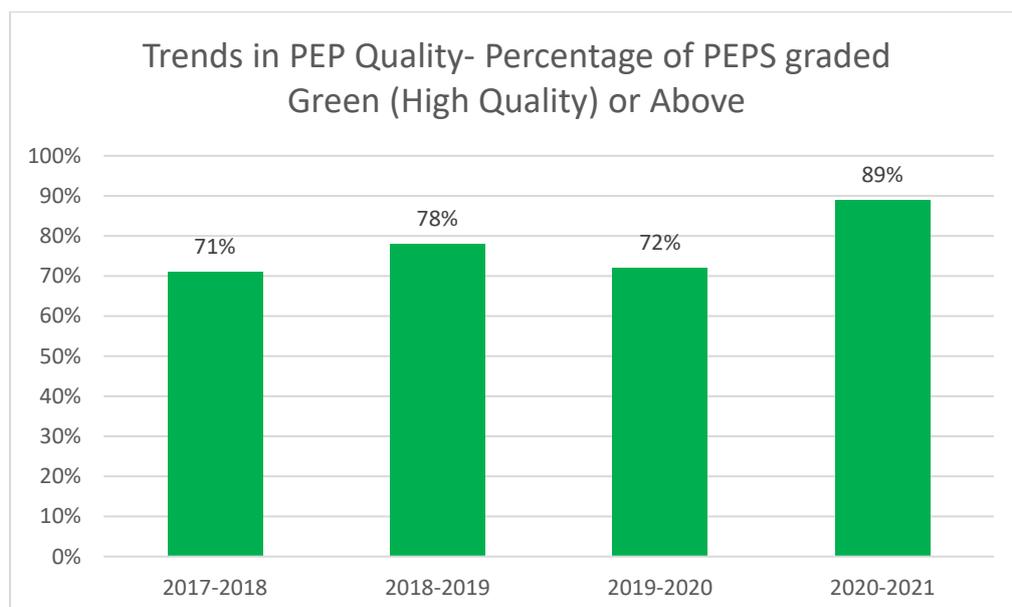
During the last year there has been an improvement in the Social Worker sign off rate and quality of contribution, which we believe is due to the focus we have placed on supporting our Social Care colleagues.

A quality assurance document was introduced and embedded in the ePEP document and process. This increased transparency and gave schools and social workers feedback on how the quality can be improved. During 20/21 the Autumn ePEP quality was rated as 83.07% Green (High Quality) and 16.93% Amber (did not meet expected standard to achieve high quality). This is an increase of 25.27% from the same time last year. Over the year the number rated as Green (High Quality) has improved by 17.27% to 89.17%. There was a slight dip in the High Quality judgement in the Summer PEP, however we are not concerned about this and believe that this is a natural variation.

Table 16: Quality of PEPs Statutory School Age 2020-21

Term	Green High Quality	Amber Below expected quality
Autumn	83.07%	16.93%
Spring	92.73%	7.27%
Summer	91.70%	8.30%
Grand Total	89.17%	10.83%

The numbers indicate that the quality of educational provision for our children and young people is strong. However, although increasing the numbers of PEP Caseworkers has no doubt improved our capacity to support DTs and Social Workers with the process, resulting in an increase in High Quality ratings, we also understand this may impact on standardisation of judgements. Therefore the focus next year will be on standardising quality judgements and improving awareness of the features of a High Quality PEP. Quality Assurance training for CLA PEP Caseworkers has taken place and a moderation exercise was carried out.

Table 17: Quality of PEPs Statutory School Age 2019-20

During the year we have continued to challenge schools who submitted PEPs late or below our expectations. We tackled the reduction in social worker involvement through team managers and briefings and provided further training to new designated teachers. This has resulted in an improvement in sign-off times for PEPS:-

- Of the 663 PEPs completed during the Summer Term:
 - 74.81% were signed off by Social Worker within the 10 day deadline
 - 75.72% were signed off by Designated Teacher within the 10 day deadline
 - 93.06% were signed off by PEP Caseworker within the 5 day deadline (Virtual School to QA and sign off PEP within 5 days of the last sign off by SW/DT)

We have always advised schools to ensure that social and emotional wellbeing needs are recorded in the PEP alongside academic needs and we have incorporated this into our new template for the e-pep.

The quality of early years PEPS are overseen by colleagues in this service area. However, it has been decided to incorporate all early years and post 16 PEPs into the ePEP system and documents have been created in consultation with early years advisers and colleagues in the Improving Progression and Social Work Teams. These have been extended to Nursery -2 and Year 13 this academic year. Additional training is being developed for settings and social workers to ensure they are confident with the documents and the system. This will hopefully ensure a similar improvement in quality of PEPS in both early years and Post 16.

8.4 How do we distribute pupil premium plus funding?

Durham Virtual School (DVS) publishes guidance for schools on the distribution of PP+. In 2018-19 we adjusted our distribution so that the funding is available without undue bureaucracy when a child enters care and to aid forward planning for schools. From

September 2020 we now allocate £600 each term. In line with the DfE guidance of Feb 2018³, we have encouraged schools to look at evidenced practice and to consider how the funding can support the cohort of looked after children in care as well as provide individual intervention. Schools account for this in the PEP where we ask whether funding has been used to support the cohort. This process will be strengthened this year with the introduction of a yearly funding resource plan.

School leaders across the county were consulted through the Durham Association of both Primary and Secondary Headteachers (DAPH and DASH) to support the retention of some of the PP+ to fund additional centrally managed support. For 2018-19 we retained £600 from the increased funding and this was the same for 2019-20. Financial year 2020-21 we have retained £645 as the funding increased. For 2021-22 we have reduced the amount we retain to £545 to ensure schools retain additional funding to support children and young people to catch-up from time missed because of Covid.

8.5 What is the centrally held budget spent on?

In 2020-21 (Financial Year) Durham Virtual School retained approx. £698,152. This funding was used to provide the following centrally managed provision for Durham children in care:

- Additional senior EP capacity for children in care
- Occupational Health support
- School Counsellor support for children in care – additional capacity to full time equivalent
- Supporting the development of the designated teacher role
- Curious Kids reading packages for year 2 – 6.
- Storytime magazine subscription to promote a love of stories for reception and year one children
- Fiction Express for year 2-8
- Wellbeing packs for year 9 – 11
- Blue cabin Art Packs for Reception – Year 2
- Reach to Teach App for Designated Teachers
- Anspear Catch Up App for Carers and Schools.
- Continued to provide additional resources to the 5 location-based inclusion panels (previously behaviour support panels) to encourage locality and school-based solutions to avoid exclusion or school moves. This also provides additional access to the EWEL (Emotional Wellbeing and Effective Learning Team)

3

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683556/Promoting_the_education_of_looked-after_children_and_previously_looked-after_children.pdf

- Help line provision from Full Circle to provide therapeutic advice and training to the virtual school and the schools our CLA attend for one year and to be reviewed in January 2021 – this is in process for the Spring term 2020 and is in response to requests from schools for additional support for emotional wellbeing and readiness to learn. This has been successful and the therapeutic offer will now extend to training for Designated teachers in every school where a Durham CLA is placed regardless of locality.
- Targeted resources / materials for identified children
- EWEL Credits for Schools to access emotional Wellbeing support for CLA
- Alternative provision / curriculum for children in care at risk of disengaging from learning
- 1:1 curriculum support for year 6 and 11
- Turnaround / outreach places secured with The Bridge (secondary) and The Beeches / Willows (primary) teams to provide short term placements or outreach work during a period of crisis at school.

The importance of schools recognising and understanding the impact of insecure attachment and early trauma on the behaviour and progress of young people is well documented. Children and young people who experience toxic stress, emotional turmoil and insecurity will not be ready to learn and are more likely to be excluded from school. This has continued to be a driver in 2020-21 as we increase the allocation of retained funding to inclusion and therapeutic support. This is an area discussed in PEP meetings and highlight the support available. This has been further developed through our offer from Full Circle.

8.6 What academic support and intervention do we provide from central funding?

As in previous years, every child in year 6 and 11 was offered up to 6 sessions of tutoring at no cost to the school. This was funded through Pupil Premium Plus. In addition to this, we offered additional support to some of our Year 5 and Year 10's in an attempt to help children catch up on teaching missed during school and bubble closures. Last academic year we supported 51 young people individually and offered tutor sessions totalling 362.6 hours.

We also commission three places at The Bridge turnaround base, which is part of The Woodlands. 11 pupils accessed this during 2020-2021. 6 pupils attended the full time KS3 turnaround provision. Of the 6 on KS3 turnaround, 3 went through statutory assessment and have transitioned to special schools and 1 young person has a place at a mainstream secondary school. transitioned to alternative provision and another has a place at a mainstream secondary school. 2 young people continue to attend the KS3 provision as their placements were extended on the basis of individual need.

Of the 5 KS4 pupils what accessed the Bridge, 3 accessed full-time placements and 2 attended part-time, whilst remaining in their mainstream schools. To support the pupils in mainstream, The Bridge provided additional outreach support in their schools. 1 pupil moved out of County, 3 were Year 11 leavers and 1 pupil continued to attend the provision in September 2021. Support is also offered to our primary children through the Willows/Beeches

linked to the Pupil Referral Unit. Support has been offered both in school and as a temporary off-site placement to avoid exclusion.

In addition to the centrally funded provision, we have an Inclusion Base, which during 2020-2021 was funded through de-delegated school funds. 46 young people accessed our Inclusion Base over the year, to avoid an exclusion, to give some space in a more nurturing environment during times of crisis or to offer support for emotional wellbeing. Over the year 689 (attendance 87.5%) sessions were offered over a variety of packages including inclusion support to prevent exclusion, bridging packages before transition and a 6 week part-time programme looking at communication skills. The majority of young people made a successful reintegration back to their schools or alternative provision. This number also included provision made for 2 non-Durham CLA and one CIN.

In addition to this, when schools closed due to COVID-19 the team, which included 2 Inclusion Support Officers and an Agency Teacher helped to produce resources for our young people and continued to offer support on site for one young person in Year 11 who was attending a bespoke programme. Online/virtual support was also offered to a number of young people during school closures. This was also offered throughout the year for those struggling to engage with their learning in school. 8 young people were supported 'virtually'. 223 sessions were offered throughout the year by both the teacher and the Inclusion staff, although these were not as well attended as the sessions in the base.

What difference does our support make? – Case study

- ✓ E has been supported throughout KS4 both personally and in his GCSE Maths, English and Science.
- ✓ Through his attendance at the Inclusion Base, E made great progress both academically and personally.
- ✓ His self-esteem improved considerably, especially in his last few months of Year 11, where he showed remarkable resilience.
- ✓ E confidently and independently wrote a covering letter and CV which was submitted to a local firm, securing himself an interview for an apprenticeship in horticulture.
- ✓ On E's final day of Year 11 he secured the apprenticeship and a course in College, which was to start a few weeks after leaving school.

Staff at Inclusion along with School, Carer and Social Worker remarked on the overwhelming changes in his confidence and body language. E worked incredibly hard with the teachers the Durham Virtual School put in place and received excellent results in his GCSE exams, consisting of 7's in English and Maths, 6 in English Literature and 7,6 in Science.

E's Carer has remarked that she can't thank us enough for all the support offered to E, not only that offered during term time but also when arrangements were made for him to attend during the school holidays to support care placement and to keep the continuity of his routine.

8.7 What therapeutic support do we provide from central funding?

For all our children looked after we offer access to a Speech and Language Therapy (SALT), Occupational Therapy, Counselling and additional Educational Psychology time. This support is funded through the retained PP+ funding and is open to all of our young people. Due to the ongoing Covid pandemic and school closures there was an inevitable suspension of some services and most of the SLA's had to be adapted to allow for support and advice to be given remotely. Unfortunately, due to the redistribution of staff within the NHS, we were unable to continue with the PP+ funded SALT SLA this year. However, we were still able to access SALT through referral directly to the NHS service, although staffing shortages did mean referrals were not picked up as quickly as they had been previously.

We also work closely with Full Circle to ensure a joined-up approach to the emotional and mental wellbeing of our children and young people. Full Circle now offer a therapist staffed helpline for our Schools with Durham CLA as well as delivering training in schools where they are struggling to meet a child's needs due to trauma and attachment.

During 2020-2021 the Virtual School established a task and finish group working with colleagues in Full Circle, the Emotional Wellbeing and Effective Learning (EWEL) Service and the CLA EP to establish a more robust emotional and therapeutic offer for our children. Through this group we developed a training package for our schools to improve DT's understanding of attachment and trauma informed approaches in school. This package will be delivered and developed throughout 2021-2022. One of the aims of this training is to allow

DTs to help their schools become more trauma informed and attachment aware. We also identified that our children would benefit from increased support from the EWEL team and purchased 200 credits with them to be able to offer assessment and intervention in order to be more proactive in addressing issues. 3 referrals were actioned prior to the Summer break, but the majority of these will be used during 2021-2022.

8.8 How do schools spend their allocation?

In 2020-21 (Financial Year) our total PP+ budget was £1,634,388. Schools were allocated £1,700 of the government allocation of £2,345 in 3 instalments. However, due to continued school closures and a need for schools to be able to access funding to address gaps in knowledge and emotional health, we decided to increase all termly payments to £600. In total, approximately £958,336 was provided to schools during the 2020-21 academic year to support their work with children in care. One to one support is used effectively by schools to help to close the gaps in knowledge caused by school moves and poor attendance prior to entering care. Pastoral support for the looked after cohort includes additional staffing to provide mentoring and advocacy, a safe space, someone to check readiness to learn etc. A significant amount of the PP+ funding given to schools is spent on one to one tuition. 58.3% of PP+ funding given to schools is used to support individuals with academic progress and achievement. This has proved effective in improving basic skills and basic building blocks that our children need to progress, particularly important after the disruption caused by Covid. For our cohort, additional one to one tutoring is found to be effective especially for those children who have moved schools a number of times prior to entering care. As was the case last year, the next highest expenditure is on social and emotional wellbeing, as ensuring our children's emotional needs are met is crucial to their readiness to learn; this again will have been impacted due to Covid. When considering the outcomes, the majority are either fully or partly achieved. This is something we wish to improve upon this year and our Caseworkers will be attending meetings to ensure outcomes that are set are SMART.

Table 18: How schools spent their PP+ budget on individual pupils

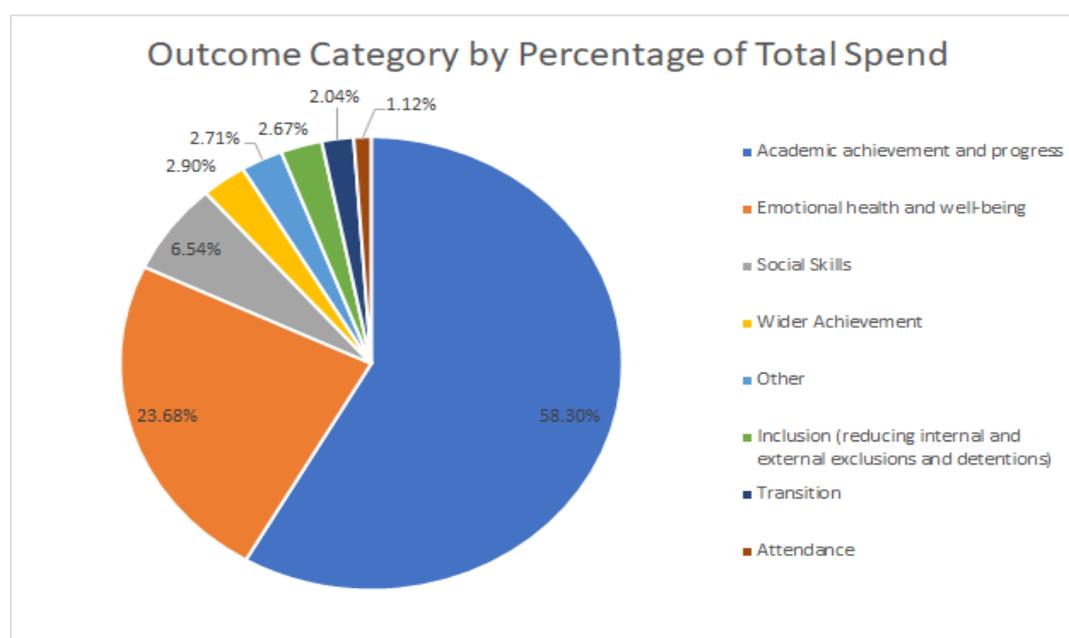


Table 19: Total spend linked to EEF Intervention category of spend

EEF Category of Spend	Amount
One to one tuition	18.63%
Social and emotional learning	17.42%
Small group tuition	12.38%
Other	9.75%
Individualised instruction	9.43%
Mentoring	4.09%
Digital technology	3.99%
Behaviour Interventions	3.87%
Metacognition and self-regulation	3.29%
Phonics	3.23%
Within-class attainment grouping	2.12%
Mastery learning	2.08%
Homework	1.79%
Reading comprehension strategy	1.48%
Early years interventions	1.22%
Oral language interventions	1.09%
Arts participation	1.09%
Collaborative learning	1.04%
Outdoor adventure learning	0.62%
Sports participation	0.58%
Peer tutoring	0.36%
Feedback	0.26%
Parental engagement	0.13%
Summer schools	0.07%
Grand Total	100.00%

Outcomes Achieved in Each Category	Achieved	Partial	Not Achieved
Academic achievement and progress	35.64%	49.63%	14.73%
Attendance	43.18%	26.14%	30.68%
Emotional health and well-being	32.27%	52.62%	15.12%
Inclusion (reducing internal and external exclusions and detentions)	42.86%	33.33%	23.81%
Other	41.60%	39.20%	19.20%
Social Skills	26.91%	58.91%	14.18%
Transition	48.60%	34.58%	16.82%
Wider Achievement	42.22%	42.22%	15.56%
Grand Total	35.29%	49.22%	15.49%

9. Training Provision

Training is one of our core duties and one which we believe can make a real difference to the lives of looked after young people. We provide (without charge) training for social workers, IROs, foster carers, designated teachers and governors as well as for the full education improvement team. Our governor training encourages governors to review policies with designated teachers and equips them to provide appropriate challenge around outcomes for children in care.

We also run designated teacher networks. The training is well attended and well-received. We contribute to the Head of Education's briefings for schools, service days for the education team and team business days. Updates and other information are disseminated through briefing papers and we provide bespoke support and advice for schools. At the request of designated teachers, we now seek to bring an external speaker to network events.

Future Steps (OT) have provided three Webinars throughout June and July to support schools in understanding the needs of children, their Service and the method of referral.

Within the team we share resources, research and best practice at our development days. Our virtual school team have expertise in supporting children in care and have accessed a wide range of training.

The team attended the virtual National NAVSH Conference in February to update their knowledge and understanding of systems.

The team have been trained in the use of the Clear Cut Tool and will carry out this communication assessment for all new children coming into care who are aged 10 and above. They have also attended training on Trauma Informed Approaches in Education delivered by Full Circle.

New member to the team completed a strong induction programme to develop their skills and knowledge of the Virtual School systems.

The social distancing measures put in place as part of the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on how training was and will be delivered into the future. The Virtual School have conducted Designated Teacher Network meetings via a shared multi-media platform (Microsoft Teams). The Virtual School intends to deliver all its training and support meetings via this method from September 2020. Initial feedback from participants has been positive and increased numbers of Designated Teachers have accessed the support including those from out of authority schools where Durham children are placed.

Durham Virtual School are in the process of updating the online offer that it provides, and this will include access to up-to-date resources for schools, Designated Teachers, Carers, children and young people and Social Care and other professionals. The online offer will include access to video guidance and tutorials, examples of good practice and access to support materials for use with children and young people.

10. Support for mental and emotional wellbeing

We are very aware that research on attachment and trauma indicates that learning can only happen when a child feels safe, secure and regulated, with children in care four times more likely to have a mental health disorder than those with their birth families. Many children in care will have experienced a number of childhood experiences (ACES) and, as corporate parents, we have a duty to alleviate the long-term impact of these on learning, health, life chances, but without this simply becoming another label. Colleagues in education, SEND and Inclusion and Early Help are exploring how to develop this understanding to support schools. Our therapeutic provision described above supports schools to be able to understand the context of our young people and support the children directly to be able to feel safe and succeed.

10.1 What screening takes place?

The VS does not carry out screening. We have several service level agreements we can sign post schools and providers to if there are concerns about a child. We use the PEP meetings as a platform to discuss the SDQ scores, a screening tool used by Social workers. Practice guidance has been added to the Welfare Call platform so it is easily accessible for all practitioners. Caseworkers have been trained in the use of the Clear Cut Tool. This assesses the communication skills of the child from age 10. Any new child coming into care will take part in this assessment 10 to 12 weeks after their initial PEP. This will allow professionals to understand if there is a need for further intervention. The outcome is recorded on the PEP.

10.2 How does our Educational Psychologist make a difference?

The EP for the Virtual School (0.5 full time equivalent) was involved with approximately young people between September 2020 and July 2021. Consultation has also been provided to the Virtual School regarding un-named individual children, not formally referred. Involvement over this academic year was affected significantly by Covid lockdowns, periods of children not being at school or educated in bubbles and by young people being absent due to Covid. Most specifically this affected the way that work has been conducted with an increase in virtual consultations and observation of children and a reduction in face to face assessment.

However, where there have been concerns or referrals it was always possible to offer a service, with adaptations as needed. The following report has been provided by our CLA EP.

Work has been across all Key Stages and in nursery and across mainstream and specialist provision. A small amount of work has been delivered for previously looked after/adopted children. Work was very varied, depending on the needs of the child and the timescales for decision making, but typically included:

Individual assessment with the child (incorporating observation and discussion with key adults) to establish or clarify the nature of their SEND, ensuring appropriate understanding, appropriate desired outcomes and associated provision.

The emotional difficulties faced by CLA are often very evident but there is considerable research indicating that language and communication difficulties can be overlooked and under-identified. Atypical neurodevelopmental issues may also be under-recognised as difficulties may present very similarly to the attachment difficulties that affect many CLA.

Learning difficulties can be easily overlooked as CLA have sometimes learnt to present as more mature than is the case and their 'behaviour' becomes the focus for attention, concern and referral.

Following holistic assessment of the child in context, appropriate further referrals or review of existing provision can be made, ensuring that the support provided is of the right kind and at the right level.

Consultation with school staff, social workers, caseworkers and carers. Consultation with school staff (teachers and support staff) often involves supporting them to understand the presenting, often challenging behaviours within the framework of trauma and attachment and helping them to see that change may be slow or erratic but this does not mean that they are not meeting the child's needs. Teachers can feel very disempowered by the responses of CLA and need support to recognise their own successes, feel effective and maintain their confidence. Emotional progress for CLA can be very slow and regression can be sudden. School staff are a great resource for CLA and so much of the CLA EP work involves supporting them professionally and personally in their work for CLA. Consultation was typical undertaken remotely.

Training school staff and other colleagues in the LA was much more limited than in previous years as other services have become part of the broader offer. Such training usually has attachment/emotional wellbeing as its focus and has been for small groups of school staff working with individual children. This was particularly where the Covid 19 pandemic had presented additional challenges for school staff in terms of continuity of curriculum provision and intervention.

Attending PEPs, CTMs, LAR reviews and statutory annual reviews to support good decision making for CLA. The implications of care led decisions on the child's education and sense of belonging and continuity in an educational context are important and the CLA EP role is to facilitate planning based on a holistic view of the child's needs.

Impact is not formally measured but positive change has been reported by school staff, caseworkers and carers and has included:

- Special educational needs more fully assessed to inform planning and support (PEP, care team, SEN Support Plan, EHCP)

- Teaching staff understanding difficult behaviour in the context of the child's trauma and attachment difficulties and responding to it differently
- Reduced stress and increased resilience and feelings of personal efficacy in teachers and support staff so that they are better placed to support the child
- Children who might otherwise be excluded or moved into more specialist provision remaining included in their mainstream school
- Learning and/or language difficulties identified (where 'behaviour' is the presenting problem) to enable the child's needs to be better understood and met
- Signposting and facilitating access to other services where there is a gap in assessment or provision identified
- Continuity of service where repeated changes of carer and school can lead to children missing out on services/'falling through the gaps'

Cases providing examples of impact include:

- In line with the Revised SEN Code of Practice, the level and complexity of several children's needs being identified and assessed leading to the provision of SEN Support Plans and Education Health and Care Plans
- Assessment with a young person vulnerable to exclusion to help school staff understand her presentation as emotionally based and reframe support
- Involvement in multiagency planning for a child in the process of being adopted where there was conflict between education and care views on school attendance issues
- Assessment enabling a resolution to ongoing difficulties in securing education for a Key Stage 3 child living in residential provision in Scotland
- Assessment and casework allowing a school and carer to be reassured that needs of a Year 5 girl were being fully met, following carer concerns being raised.

10.3 How do our counsellors make a difference?

Mental health and wellbeing for vulnerable groups continues to be an area of priority in County Durham, particularly in the wake of managing the impact of Covid-19 and the global pandemic. Children referred through the virtual school for counselling have already by nature had to cope with a great deal of transition and loss, therefore being able to continue to provide this bespoke service to children and young people in times of uncertainty has been paramount.

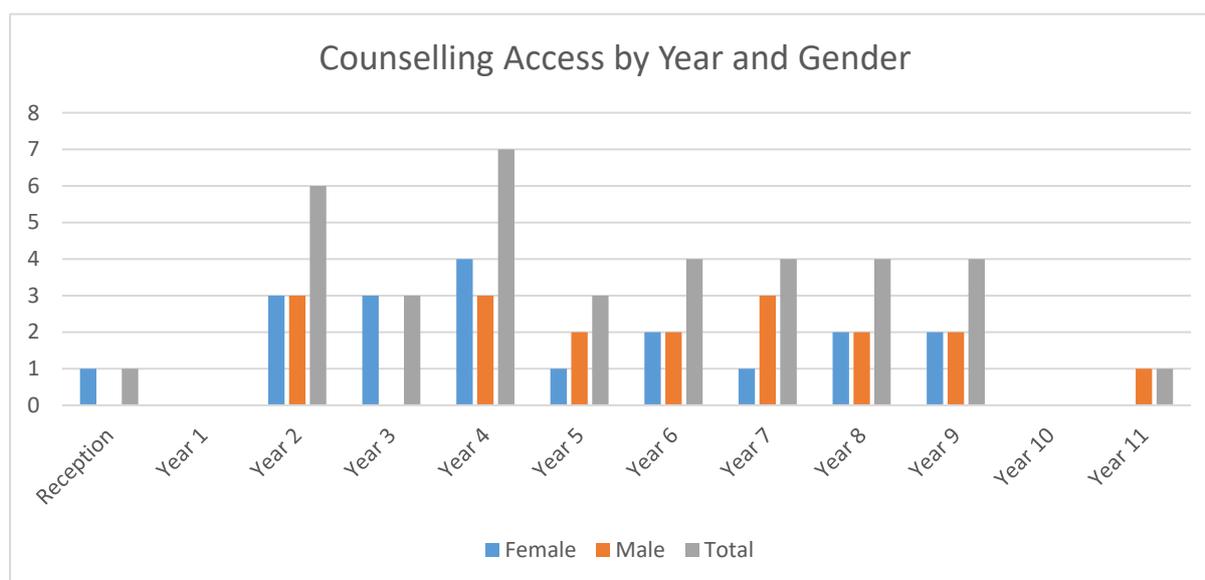
Counselling is a specialist intervention that supports children and young people to build awareness of, work through and express their emotions in a safe and contained space. Counselling may be required in response to a particular difficulty or life event, or in working through a developmental need. Counselling can take the form of talking therapy, but may also include play and creative therapy to promote self-expression.

Children referred for counselling through the virtual school caseworkers have been significantly impacted by external events and counselling can support them in developing their resilience, while working within a multi-agency system that supports their wellbeing as a whole.

During 2020-2021 we increased the capacity for Counselling support through our service level agreement with the Durham Schools Counselling Service. The capacity for support increased to 5 days per week and is delivered by a team of 3 counsellors. This has significantly reduced waiting times and has ensured that we have been able to offer timely support to children in crisis. Continued disruption to schools and education has impacted on service delivery, but alternatives have been offered wherever possible, for example; online/telephone sessions where appropriate and check-in support to carers and consultation with schools.

37 children and young people accessed counselling this year with most referrals from primary schools. In addition to this, 5 referrals were made where, once contact was established with the care team, counselling was not considered to be the right intervention due to the circumstances/other service involvement. Unlike last year where the majority of the referrals were for males, this year has seen a very even split between male/female.

Table 20: Counselling Access by Year and Gender



Total number of counselling sessions attended	323
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online sessions • Telephone sessions 	75 34
Meetings with other professionals*:	37
Meetings with carers*:	42

*Excludes general contact with carers/professionals as required for updates, safeguarding, arranging sessions etc.

Children and young people from 22 primary schools and 8 secondary schools received support. Attendance and engagement in the sessions remains good and 323 direct intervention sessions were offered, with an attendance rate of 87%. This is a slight reduction from last year and is largely due to children having to self-isolate as per Covid restrictions. A small number of sessions took place over the summer holidays to support young people who were needing to access support quickly before September.

The children and young people we work with are part of a vulnerable group, many of whom have experienced trauma. The majority of the children referred are going through transitions or waiting to find out about their future living arrangements and as such prevalent themes in the work have been in supporting these transitions and managing the feelings that surface in times of uncertainty, supporting their resilience and coping strategies, and providing some containment and emotional regulation.

Particular presenting issues so far this year have been in response to trauma, domestic violence, bereavement, separation from siblings and impact of parental mental health and/or substance misuse, as well as low mood and self-esteem. Many of the concerns manifest themselves in school in challenging behaviour and difficulties building relationships with staff. Many of these difficulties have been exacerbated by Covid-19 - work has also included support with anxieties around the pandemic but the impact school closures and restrictions on seeing friends and family and having consistent access to support networks.

Interventions are 10 weeks as standard, with the option of extending to provide more in- depth long-term work where there is clinical need and it has been agreed by all parties. This flexibility is essential in providing children and young people with the child-centred support that they need, especially when there are transitions in placements.

Casestudy

'Anna' is in Y2 and was referred for counselling as she had been removed from her parents and siblings, having been subjected to neglect and abuse. Anna found it hard to understand why she had been separated from her family and didn't want to engage with the social worker and other professionals. In school she would often appear tearful and was very negative about herself.



Anna was offered a non-judgemental and safe space to explore her feelings and experiences. She engaged in therapeutic play to process the confusion she felt around what had happened, and her sadness about missing her family. She used metaphor to explore themes of 'keeping secrets' and feeling safe. It became clear that Anna felt responsible for the separation and carried a great deal of guilt and shame. She was able to express this through Lego and miniature figures in a way that felt comfortable, as well as being supported to understand that she was not to blame for what had happened.



As the sessions were ending, I worked closely with the social worker to support her to develop some resources to use with Anna to build on this work and to think about the messages and language that she would be receptive to.



At the end of the work, Anna was feeling a lot more confident in herself, presented as happier in school, and was ready to engage with other professionals.

Feedback from children, carers and Head Teachers on the counselling:

Carer feedback

"I'm absolutely over the moon with the support, I have really seen the progression week to week and X seems happier in herself and is dealing with problems better. She is also opening up more to me at home and coming to me when she's got a worry. I cannot thank you enough for working with her"

Primary child

"My counsellor really helped me, she was kind and made me feel stronger."

Feedback from a Head Teacher

"Thank you so much for everything you have done for X and for all the help and advice you've given us as a school. I feel a lot more confident in supporting X and you've helped me feel calmer in how I'm approaching situations with her"

11. Voice of the Young Person

All children and young people have an opportunity to have their voice heard through the PEP process. However, young people tell us this is not always child-friendly and is often rushed in the busy school day. Many did not wish to attend so we adjusted our recording to enable them to complete their sections at a different time. We also consulted with the Children in Care Council (CiCC) about the new ePEP. The new ePEP system allows us to collate information from the Young Person's Voice section, which will help us to better understand the issues they are facing.

We have joined the CiCC meetings virtually and have been part of one meeting with the junior group to answer questions about the PEP process and help them produce a fact sheet to raise the understanding of the purpose and process of the meeting for other CLA. Although COVID-19 meant the training they had planned for designated teachers was cancelled, arrangements were made for them to deliver a workshop via Teams at the DT Network meeting. This was a very positive experience and raised awareness about their thoughts and feelings. The workshop was "We are no different". Following this the CiCC worked with the VSH to produce a CLA Policy for all Durham schools. This was shared with schools in July 2021

To further strengthen links with the CiCC the VSH is happy to attend their meetings and has produced a Podcast with a member of the CiCC. This is part of a series of podcasts funded by the Virtual School and explores what it is like to be a child in care, their hopes, concerns and aspirations for their own futures.

12. Enrichment, Unleashing Aspiration and Celebration

12.1 What do we currently offer?

As good corporate parents we want all our care-experienced young people to have the opportunity to experience enrichment activities and resources which will broaden their horizons and show them what might be possible. We support schools through provision of funding or resources to enable this, but we want to extend the provision which currently includes:

- Curious Kids and Storytime for primary children (we also linked this to the summer activity and libraries programme in Co Durham)
- Durham Music Service provides music lessons and instrument hire for looked after young people.
- University experiences (Through Choices Together programme, which became virtual this year)

The CiCC also provides a range of opportunities for children and young people and our closer working relationship will enable us to plan some of these in partnership.

12.2 What are we planning for 2021-22 to support enrichment?

This is a focus for us for 2021-22. As we adhere to the restrictions placed upon our work due to the Covid Pandemic we will continue to provide training through Teams.

- Continue to work closely with Durham Works to support CLA onto their Post 16 pathway. Making sure that the Year 11 PEP includes the support of the Durham Works Adviser.
- We hope to work with colleagues from our Special Schools to provide relevant support for CLA in their settings. This includes looking at the Forest school initiative.

12.3 How do we celebrate success?

Schools are asked at the PEP meeting how they celebrate success for the child. This ranges from celebration assemblies, achievement points, reward trips, attendance awards, certificates, vouchers, celebration evenings, well done cards posted home, and top student awards.

Children Looked After achievements are recognised at the annual Celebrate Me Awards.

13. Summary

In terms of educational outcomes, we do not have the data this year from KS1 and 2 tests to comment on the progress our children have made. KS4 data has shown a positive trend in all areas. PEP meetings inform us of the progress a child is making through the year. We use these meetings to identify where interventions should take place in a timely manner to support CLA to achieve better outcomes. We are working with schools to ensure that gaps in learning which may affect future progress are addressed. Our aim continues to be to close the gap for all CLA. The report notes that for some young people at KS4, high GCSE grades are not within reach yet, but we acknowledge and celebrate the enormous effort they have made to make progress in the face of often huge barriers to enable them to move into education and training. The development of monitoring questions as part of the Note of Visit for School Leadership Advisers to discuss with headteachers, along with the CLA PEP caseworker team will ensure that looked after and previously children in care continue to be fully supported to identify and address need and PP+ is spent effectively. We acknowledge and thank those schools which went the extra mile to build confidence and self-esteem, for making a difference and providing strong foundations for next steps for our young people.

This report highlights the strength of Durham Virtual School in supporting children in care to make progress and achieve. It highlights the support and challenge we offer to schools, settings and partners and the wide range of intervention we offer to the young people. Improved tracking systems are starting to enable us to do this in a timelier fashion. We are now starting to seek the views of young people more often and responding more effectively, listening to them to inform practice. We welcome their contribution to the Designated Teacher Network Meetings. With the increased capacity within the Virtual School we believe we will develop the role of the CLA PEP Caseworker further and provide the expertise which will lead to swifter more timely interventions. With the introduction of the Front Door Manager post we

have developed smoother transition for any CLA who must move school due to a placement move so that a full pupil profile transfers with them to avoid delay in meeting their needs. The Virtual School will always promote the importance of school stability, however sometimes the decision to move a child is care led and we need to move swiftly.

14. Outline Priorities for 2021-22

The key priorities for 2021-22 have been identified through consultation, data analysis, response to the gaps COVID19 may have created the inclusion of EYFS and Post 16 in the ePEP system and the development of the new VS team.

- Introduce the Nursery 1 ePEP through work with EY team
- Support KS1 to close gaps emerging during Lockdown
- Support more children to achieve high scores / greater depth at KS2
- Appropriate curriculum access / bespoke offers when a child requires a different approach.
- Work in partnership to develop clear academic and vocational pathways in preparation for adulthood
- Develop systems to support Post 16 through the ePEP for Year 12 and 13 and avoid NEETs.
- Further raise awareness in all schools and settings of the impact of early trauma and insecure attachment on behaviour and learning and support schools to review policies and implement change
- Improve the quality of the PEPs through a swift approach to quality assurance.
- Further strengthen links with CICC.
- Contribute to an increasingly integrated and joined-up process with health and social care teams to provide a holistic and cohesive approach to support readiness to learn by building on the systems developed through the pandemic.
- Promote the role of the CLA PEP Caseworkers through their presence at PEP meetings.
- Ensure the additions to the casework team enhances our offer for children in care through support and challenge for schools.
- Distribute the CLA Covid Catch up fund to schools and hold them accountable for its effective use.
- Continue to offer advice and signposting for previously children in care
- Develop our therapeutic offer to schools through the Full Circle SLA, develop the training package provided by Full Circle to all Designated Teachers with a Durham CLA school.

- Develop the use of the Clear Cut Tool at the entry into care PEP meeting to support CLA through better communication.
- Ensure a robust system is in place to increase school stability through monitoring and challenge.

15. Recommendation

That this annual report is noted by members of the Corporate Parenting Panel, Virtual School Sub Group, Virtual School Operational group, Looked After Children Strategic Partnership Group and Education SMT.

Appendix A – Wider Teams

<p>Education Durham Team Primary, Secondary and Special SLA's, EYFS EDAs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Liaison with VSH and VS team for advice, challenge and support to schools and settings to improve outcomes – Work with Leadership Advisors to make CLA a focus in their offer to schools – Work with EYFS to embed the ePEP for -1 and -2 children.
<p>Wider SEND and Inclusion Team EPS, Equalities, EWEL teams</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Liaison with VSH and VS team for advice, challenge and support to schools and setting to improve SEN provision – Provide a named SEND Caseworker for every Durham CLA who has an EHCP – 0.5 of EP time support for schools, social workers, carers re SEMH and educational advice – Counselling support – Signpost schools to the EWEL assessment as a tool to support CLA.
<p>Social Care, Health, Youth Offending Teams, Adoption, Full Circle, MACC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Liaison with VSH and VS to provide enhanced wraparound care with a focus on stability for CLA and swift access to appropriate professional support – Attend PEP meetings – Support monitoring of progress and QA of PEPs – Full Circle liaison around support for CLA and carers / parents – Full Circle advice to schools – Attend Multi-agency Collaborative Care Meetings
<p>Attendance, Admissions and Casework Teams</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Support VSH and schools to maintain good attendance of CLA – Support VSH and schools with inclusion issues around CLA – Support collection and analysis of data re attendance and exclusion
<p>Progression and Learning team / YPS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Provide Information, Advice, Guidance and Support through Specialist Progression Advisers to enable looked after young people to progress and remain in education, employment or training. – Provide bespoke activities and interventions to prepare looked after young people for engagement in education, employment or training through the DurhamWorks Programme. – Offer learning opportunities including Traineeships, Supported Internships and Apprenticeships through County Durham Adult Learning and Skills Service. – Provide data and monitor performance in relation to the participation of looked after YP in education, employment or training, utilising the CCIS Client Caseload Information System. – Seconded Post to VS for 20 months to strengthen work with Post 16 providers as CLA PEP Caseworkers support Post 16 – Embed the Post 16 PEP across providers – Support CLA to avoid them from becoming NEET
<p>Schools, Colleges and Educational Settings Designated Teacher</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Provide, coordinate and monitor internal school support for CLA and PCLA – Lead on PEPs – Monitor and be accountable for outcomes for LA and PCLA – Attend review meetings – Organise, coordinate and monitor intervention and support – Keep up to date with DfE guidance, training etc – Introduce the Durham CLA Policy

Appendix B

Name	Abbreviation
Children Looked After	CLA
Previously Children Looked After	PCLA
Virtual School Head	VSH
Personal Education Plan	PEP
Children in Care Council	CiCC
Fixed Term Exclusion	FTE _x
Centre Assessed Grades	CAG's
National Association Virtual School Heads	NAVSH
North East Virtual School Heads	NEVSH
Early Years Foundation Stage	EYFS
Children Looked After Personal Education Plan Caseworker	CLA PEP Caseworker
Virtual School Operational Group	VSOG
Corporate Parent Panel	CPP
Education Health Care Plan	EHCP
Social Emotional Mental Health	SEMH
General Certificate Secondary Education	GCSE
Not in Education, Employment or Training	NEET
Education Employment Training	EET
Out of County	OOC
Looked After Review	LAR
Care Team Meeting	CTM
Independent Reviewing Officer	IRO

Headlines- Virtual School Annual Report.

September 2020 – July 2021

Context

- As of July 2021, there were 573 Durham looked after children of statutory school age.
- 48% were of primary age and 52% were of secondary age.
- 45.8% were female and 54.2% were male.
- 81% attended County Durham schools and 19% attend out of County schools. An increase of 3.6% from last year.
- 61% attended a school with an Ofsted judgement of good or better.
- 120 (19%) of children and young people attended a school with a grade of Requires Improvement or below.
- 125 young people attended schools where a current Ofsted judgement isn't available due to a recent academy conversion.

The full report highlights how the Virtual School works with education settings, social care and other agencies to support CLA to achieve the best outcomes for them.. The body of the report also covers those who are in the Early Years and Post 16 Sector.

SEND

- 49% of Durham children looked after had an identified special educational need (SEN) in 2020-21, an increase of 6% from 2019/20.
- 21% of them are supported by an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). This has increased by 2% over the last two years.
- 28% had a school SEN Support Plan, an increase of 4% since 2019/20.
- SEMH is the primary need for 39% of Primary aged children and 51% of those in the secondary sector. The VS are proactive in this area and ensure interventions are available for schools to access.
- A challenge for Durham Virtual School is to ensure that the needs of children with a SEN Support Plan are known and strategies put in place at transition points. This is an area of priority in PEP meetings.
- It is important if a child with an EHCP is moved out of the LA due to Care needs that Durham retain the plan for that child until an appropriate setting has been found. Every Durham CLA with an EHCP has an identified SEND Caseworker as well as their CLA PEP Caseworker.

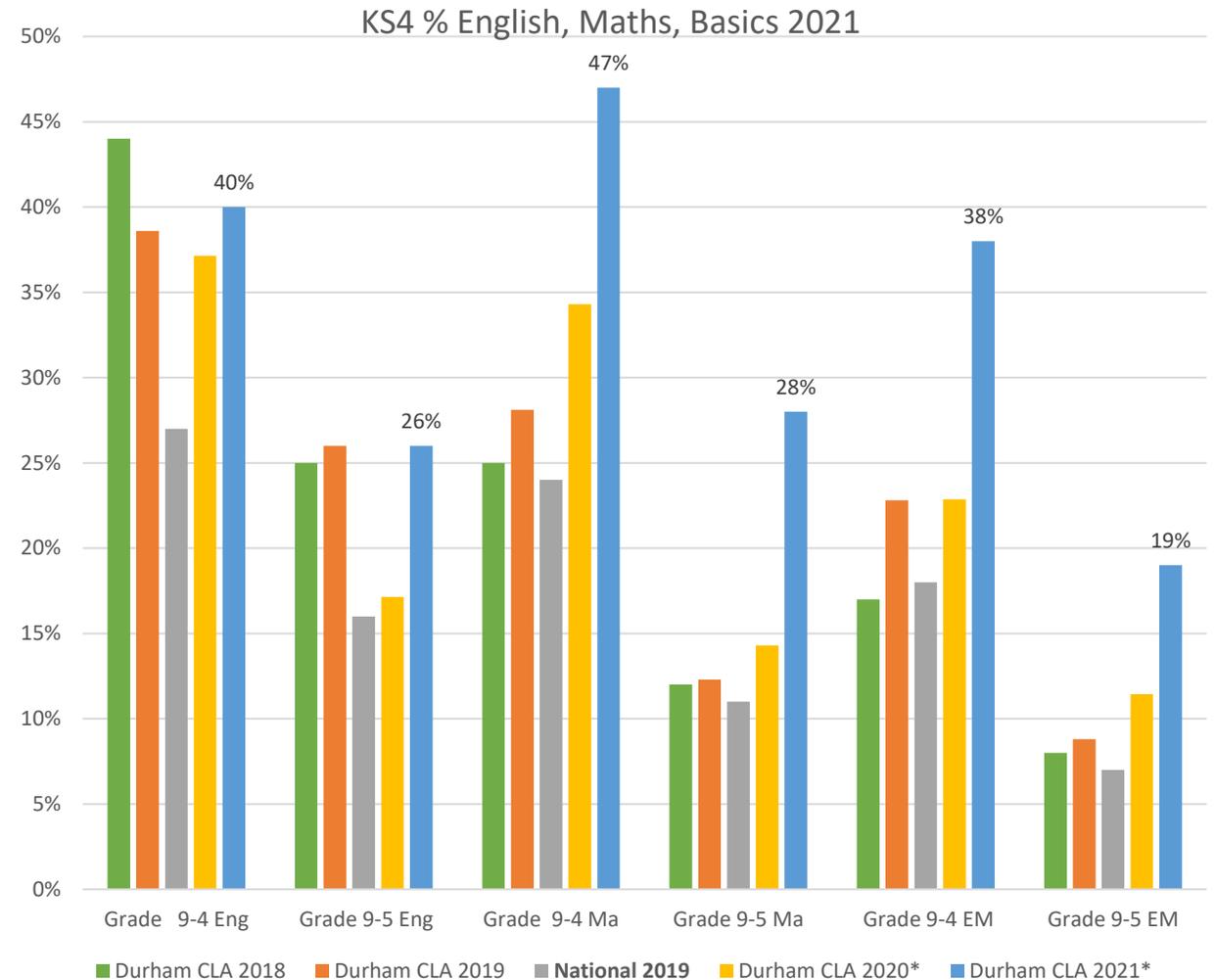
Attendance and Fixed Term Exclusions

The local overall attendance for the whole CLA cohort was 89.3%. This can be broken down as follows:

- Attendance of primary school age CLA (including foundation year group) = 94%
- Attendance of primary school age CLA (not including foundation year group) = 94.1%
- Attendance of secondary school age CLA = 84.5%
- Attendance of CLA in County Durham schools and settings = 90%
- Attendance of CLA in out of County schools and settings = 89%
- Fixed Term Exclusions remain low for Durham CLA. The academic year 2020/21 has seen a rise against the Autumn term 2019/20. Data reflects the full academic year. 5.6% of CLA cohort experienced a Fixed term exclusion, this represents 22 children, 18 were in the Secondary sector.

Other Headlines

- Year 11 GCSE Results:
- Centre Assessed Grades were used. No formal examinations.
- The 20/21 cohort have performed well with some young people achieving strong sets of results.



Priorities for 2021 - 2022

- Work with schools to support children to catch up and assure appropriate use of the Covid Recovery Fund.
- Appropriate curriculum access / bespoke offers when a child requires a different approach.
- Work in partnership to develop clear academic and vocational pathways in preparation for adulthood
- Develop systems to support Post 16 through the ePEP for Year 12 and 13 and avoid NEETs.
- Further raise awareness in all schools and settings of the impact of early trauma and insecure attachment on behaviour and learning and support schools to review policies and implement change. Develop our therapeutic offer to schools through our work with Full Circle.
- Further strengthen links with CICC.
- Ensure the additions to the casework team enhances our offer for children in care through support and challenge for schools.
- Develop the use of the Clear Cut Tool at the entry into care PEP meeting to support CLA through better communication.
- Ensure a robust system is in place to increase school stability through monitoring and challenge.
- Contribute to an increasingly integrated and joined-up process with health and social care teams to provide a holistic and cohesive approach to support readiness to learn by building on the systems developed through the pandemic.

Corporate Parenting Panel

28 January 2022

**Supporting Care Leavers into
Education, Employment and Training****Report of Linda Bailey, Strategic Lead: Progression and Learning,
Children and Young People's Services, Durham County Council****Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide.

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To update members of the Corporate Parenting Panel on the support available to Care Leavers to enable them to progress into Education, Employment and Training.

Executive summary

- 2 A number of measures are being implemented to support Care Leavers into Education, Employment or Training. These include transition support for young people aged 15 to 16 through the DurhamWorks Programme for Schools, the introduction of a new DurhamEnable (Supported Employment) Service, continued support provided through the DurhamWorks Programme, and further embedding of the Durham County Council Pathway for Young People - incorporating a Sessional Employment Programme, Kickstart placements and Apprenticeships.
- 3 Outcomes from these actions are closely monitored and this report contains the latest performance data in relation to the participation of Care Leavers in Education, Employment and Training. This report also contains an outline of future priorities.

Recommendation

- 4 Members of Corporate Parenting Panel are requested to:
 - (a) Note the information contained in this report.

Background

- 5 A number of measures are being implemented to support Care Leavers into Education, Employment and Training, as well as to enable Durham County Council to fulfil its responsibilities as Corporate Parent, including
- (a) Support for Looked After Children to enable them to make a successful transition from Year 11 into post-16 learning.
 - (b) Continued support for Care Leavers through the DurhamWorks Programme.
 - (c) Introduction of a new DurhamEnable (Supported Employment Service) for Care Leavers who have learning, physical and mental health barriers.
 - (d) Measures to support young people (including Care Leavers) whose employment prospects have been adversely affected by COVID-19.
 - (e) Processes to provide more employment-based opportunities for Care Leavers within the Local Authority through the Durham County Council Pathway for Young People.
 - (f) Delivery of a Pupil Premium Plus pilot scheme, to support the sustained participation of Care Leavers in Further Education.

Transition Support

- 6 In conjunction with support that Looked After Children receive in relation to their academic attainment, a range of other measures are in place to support their transition into post-16 Education, Employment and Training, through the DurhamWorks Programme for Schools. These include individual careers guidance with a Progression Adviser; access to group based activities to prepare them for leaving school; as well as intensive mentoring support. Progression Advisers also attend PEP reviews to ensure there is a partnership approach to transition support.
- 7 During the academic year 2020/21, a total of 800 young people in year 11 who were identified as being at risk of NEET (not in Education, Employment or Training) have been supported through the DurhamWorks Programme for Schools. This includes 34 Looked After Children. Initial information shows that of these, 28 (82.4%) have progressed into a positive Education, Employment or Training destination.

DurhamWorks Programme

- 8 DurhamWorks provides Care Leavers with support to enable them to progress into and remain in Education, Employment and Training. Through this Programme, Care Leavers receive wrap-a-round support from a Specialist Progression Advisor and have the opportunity to undertake bespoke activities to motivate and prepare them for employment. A DurhamWorks Grant has also been available to SME businesses to support the employment of young people – including Care Leavers.
- 9 Since its inception, 664 young people who have been supported by the DurhamWorks Programme have identified themselves as being Looked After or a Care Leaver. Of these, 478 young people have completed the Programme, with 354 (74.1%) of young people progressing into an Education, Employment or Training destination.
- 10 DurhamWorks and the Young People's Service hold monthly clinics to review and agree actions to support Care Leavers who are NEET into a positive destination.

DurhamEnable

- 11 DurhamEnable is a new Supported Employment Service for those aged 18 and above who have learning, physical and/or mental health barriers to employment. The Service has received ESF funding to support 900 County Durham residents between February 2021 and December 2023.
- 12 There are currently 69 participants being supported through the Programme, 5 of whom are Care Leavers. To date, 21 participants have been supported into employment, including one Care Leaver.

Durham County Council Pathway for Young People

- 13 Work is continuing to further embed the Pathway for Young People, which was developed to provide more opportunities for Care Leavers within Durham County Council.
- 14 A new Sessional Employment Programme offers Care Leavers the opportunity of paid work experience. Opportunities are identified which meet the talents, interests, and aspirations of each individual Care Leaver. A Sessional Employment Co-ordinator was appointed in July 2021 to facilitate the programme, an Implementation Plan has been developed and is currently being implemented. To date, 9 Care Leavers have been engaged onto the Programme and are being supported to find an appropriate placement.

- 15 The Kickstart Scheme was launched in Sept 2020 by the Department for Work and Pensions in response to the negative economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and aims to provide jobs for 6 months to young people aged 16-24 who are claiming Universal Credit. DurhamWorks has established a gateway to enable employers to recruit young people. Durham County Council has identified a number of opportunities across Services, with support being provided by a DurhamWorks Progression Worker. It was agreed that 6 of the opportunities within Durham County Council would be ringfenced specifically for Care Leavers. Two of these opportunities have been filled and a further 4 Care Leavers have successfully obtained non-ringfenced Kickstart opportunities.
- 16 Further action has been undertaken to enhance the existing measures that are in place to support more Care Leavers into Durham County Council Apprenticeships. This includes the ring-fencing of Apprenticeship opportunities specifically for Care Leavers, as well as delivery of bespoke training to support Care Leavers with their applications and to prepare them for the interview stage. There are currently 7 Care Leavers undertaking Apprenticeships within Durham County Council.
- 17 DurhamWorks is liaising with the Department for Work and Pensions to establish a number of 'Youth Hubs' across County Durham. These are spaces where unemployed young people can access a range of intensive support and provision to enable them to find a job. Youth Hubs are operating in Stanley and Peterlee, with plans to open a Youth Hub in Bishop Auckland in January / February 2022.
- 18 Increased awareness for Team Leaders / Managers – It was felt that Team Leaders / Managers may feel ill-equipped to employ care leavers and the need to increase their confidence was agreed. A number of briefing sessions to raise the profile of our role as "Corporate Parent" and to provide information on the range of support available have recently been delivered to Tier 4 and 5 Managers.
- 19 Support for individual Team Leaders / Managers – A further measure to enable individual Team Leaders/Managers to be more confident and comfortable in employing individual Care Leavers, was to ensure that a clear offer of support is established for each care leaver. This is currently available through their Social Worker, or Young Person's Advisor, or DurhamWorks member of staff. It has been communicated via the Tier 4 and 5 briefings but on appointment to any of the above programmes the key member of staff contacts the Team Leader/Manager to agree any support requirements and future contact levels.

- 20 Recruitment Policy - Durham County Council's Recruitment Policy outlines the Local Authority's responsibility as a Corporate Parent to young people who are leaving care and making the transition to adulthood. Care Leavers are guaranteed an interview, provided they meet the essential criteria for an advertised post.
- 21 The recruitment policy is currently in the process of being amended to include an Equal Opportunities statement to prompt managers to give further consideration to the appointment of Care Leavers.

Pupil Premium Plus Pilot

- 22 Durham County Council is taking part in a six month Pupil Premium Plus pilot scheme that is supporting Care Leavers in academic years 12 and 13 who are attending a Further Education College. As part of this programme, there is a dedicated Personal Adviser who is supporting a caseload of Care Leavers, to manage their sustained participation in Further Education. There is also a 'Keep In College' weekly incentive payment of £20 per week for Care Leavers who achieve over 80% authorised attendance. There are currently 58 Young People attending 14 different Further Education Colleges, who are accessing the Pupil Premium Plus offer.

Performance Data

- 23 The Local Authority, through the Progression and Learning Team, collects and reports the destinations of all young people aged 16-17 to the Department for Education on a monthly basis. This includes the number of those whose destination are 'NEET' and 'Not Known'.
- 24 The following table shows the performance data for young people aged 16-17, compared to the same period in 2020 and 2019 respectively.

	2021 (June)		2020 (June)		2019 (June)	
	All 16-17	LAC/CL	All 16-17	LAC/CL	All 16-17	LAC/CL
Total Cohort	10,691	118	10,204	146	10,012	115
Total EET	93.6%	76.3%	94.3%	83.6%	93.0%	68.7%
NEET	5.8%	22.0%	5.0%	16.4%	5.5%	31.3%
Not Known	0.6%	1.7%	0.7%	0.0%	1.4%	0.0%
Combined NEET and Not Known	6.4%	23.8%	5.7%	16.4%	7.0%	31.3%

- 25 The number and proportion of 16-17 year old Care Leavers who are NEET has been decreasing over the past few years as demonstrated from 2019 to 2020. However, 2021 has halted this trend owing to the reduction in numbers of young people accessing participation opportunities, linked in part to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 26 Those whose destination is Not Known has followed a similar trend. The inability to conduct face-face work during significant periods as a result of the COVID pandemic undoubtedly contributed to a slight increase in 2021 compared to 2020.
- 27 The Looked After and Permanence Service (Children and Young People’s Services) also tracks and reports on the destinations of Care Leavers aged 17-18 and 19-21 to the Department for Education and comparative data is published on an annual basis. This data captures the destinations of Care Leavers at the time of their birthdays.
- 28 The following table shows the latest performance data for 17-18 year old and 19-21 year old Care Leavers, compared to the previous two years.

	2020		2019		2018	
	CL 17-18	CL 19-21	CL 17-18	CL 19-21	CL 17-18	CL 19-21
Total Cohort	84	175	79	156	62	160
Participating in EET	65% (55)	54% (94)	61% (48)	51% (80)	82% (51)	59% (95)
NEET	27% (23)	35% (62)	34% (27)	38% (60)	15% (9)	32% (51)

Department for Education: Children Looked After in England (including Adoption), year ending 31st March.

Future Priorities to Support Care Leavers

- 29 To support more Care Leavers to make a successful transition into post-16 Education, Employment and Training, the following priorities have been identified:
- Continue to work with senior managers to maximise the Durham County Council Pathway for Young people, including increasing the number and variety of opportunities being offered.
 - Co-ordinate the new ESF programmes (being delivered via DurhamWorks) from January 2022 to ensure Care Leavers continue to be a priority and benefit from the increase in employment focused opportunities.

Conclusion

- 30 This report has highlighted the actions undertaken to support more Care Leavers into Education, Employment or Training, including measures to support Care Leavers through the Durham County Council Pathway for Young People. However, it is recognised that further work is required, and to this end, the report has also highlighted a number of future priorities that aim to build upon the progress that has already been made.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

None.

Finance

None.

Consultation

None.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

None.

Human Rights

None.

Crime and Disorder

None.

Staffing

1.0 FTE Progression Adviser post funded to support delivery of Pupil Premium Plus pilot programme. 0.5 Sessional Employment Co-ordinator post funded to support delivery of Sessional Employment programme.

Accommodation

None.

Risk

None.

Procurement

None.

Corporate Parenting Panel

28 January 2022

Performance update



**Report of Stephen Tracey, Corporate Equality and Strategy
Manager, Durham County Council**

Electoral division(s) affected:

None

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of the update is to provide the Corporate Parenting Panel with an overview of performance in relation to looked after children and care leavers.

Executive summary

- 2 The Corporate Equality and Strategy Manager, Stephen Tracey will provide an update at the meeting giving an overview of performance.

Recommendation(s)

- 3 Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are asked to note information contained within the presentation and comment accordingly.

Background

- 4 Until March 2020, members of the Corporate Parenting Panel received quarterly performance updates to ensure they were sighted on performance within County Durham, along with relevant comparisons to our statistical neighbours.
- 5 As a result of the pandemic, and subsequent cancelling of Corporate Parenting Panel meetings, members were receiving monthly briefing notes, however these have not contained the same level of performance information.
- 6 This is a return to the usual Corporate Parenting Panel Performance Scorecard.

Conclusion

- 7 Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel will be sighted on performance in relation to looked after children and care leavers.

Other useful documents

- Performance scorecard

Author

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

We have a duty to comply with all statutory duties in relation to the children and young people who are in the care of DCC

Finance

NA

Consultation

NA

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

NA

Climate Change

NA

Human Rights

NA

Crime and Disorder

NA

Staffing

Staffing within Children's Services will impact upon social worker caseloads

Accommodation

NA

Risk

Reputational risk to the Council and Corporate Parenting Panel if it is not judged to be performing effectively by Ofsted

Procurement

NA

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County Durham Corporate Parenting Panel: Performance Management Framework

NND - No New Data

What are the characteristics of our cohort of children in care and care leavers?

Measure	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21 [Provisional]	Q1 2021/22	Q2 2021/22	England	North East	Stat Neighbour
Rate of CLA per 10,000 u18 population [Number]	82.9 [833]	90 [914]	93.5 [949]	92.7 [937]	90 [912]	67 (2019/20)	108 (2019/20)	102 (2019/20)
Age and length of time in care			See chart 1			N/A	N/A	N/A
CLA Placement breakdown			See chart 2			N/A	N/A	N/A
Percentage of CLA placed over 20 miles (outside LA boundary)	7	10	8.7			16	10	10
Number of children placed for adoption	25	75	39	34	32	N/A	N/A	N/A
Percentage of CLA who are unaccompanied asylum seeking children [Number] u18	0.4% [3]	0.1% [1/914]	0.1% [1/949]	0.6% [5/900]	1% [9/917]	6	1	3
Social worker caseloads			See chart 3	See chart 3		N/A	N/A	N/A

Do our partner agencies understand their role in supporting us as corporate parents?

Measure	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21 [Provisional]	Q1 2021/22	Q2 2021/22	England	North East	Stat Neighbour
Percentage of CLA with a missing incident during the year	5.0%	5.5%	7.3%	Reported annually	Reported annually	11	10	11
Percentage of children on Child Exploitation and Vulnerability Tracker that were CLA				15.9% [24/151]	17.2% [29/169]			
Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire - Average score	NND	13.6	13.5	Reported annually	Reported annually	14.1	14.2	14

Measure	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21 [Provisional]	Q1 2021/22	Q2 2021/22	England	North East	Stat Neighbour
Percentage of CLA permanently excluded [number of children]	0%	NND		Reported annually	Reported annually	0.1% (2016/17)		
Percentage of CLA with at least one fixed exclusion from school [number of children]	6.2%	9.1%		Reported annually	Reported annually	11.4% (2019/20)	10.5% (2019/20)	11.1% (2019/20)
Percentage of CLA classed as persistent absentees (Maintained schools)	6.9%	7.9%		Reported annually	Reported annually	12.0% (2019/20)	11.2% (2019/20)	11.6% (2019/20)
Percentage of children looked after continuously for 12 months or more aged 10+ who received a conviction [number of children]	4.6% [17]	3% [11]	2.8% [11]	0.5% [2]	1.2% [5]	3.0%	4.0%	3.8%

*The Virtual School Head produces an annual report which provides a detailed overview of educational attainment and attendance of Durham's CLA
Permanent exclusions and suspensions data is collected two terms in arrears, which means the latest available data is for the 2018/19 academic year*

How are we giving children and young people the chance to express their views, wishes and feelings? How do we know those are being acted on?

Measure	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21 [Provisional]	Q1 2021/22	Q2 2021/22	England	North East	Stat Neighbour
Number of CLA accessing an independent visitor			16	21 matched 12 in progress	9 matched 2 in progress			

Work is ongoing to determine how the Voice of the Child is captured within County Durham

How do we show children in our care that we have high aspirations for them?

Not evidenced through performance measures

Are we providing stable environments for children in our care?

Measure	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21 [Provisional]	Q1 2021/22	Q2 2021/22	England	North East	Stat Neighbour
Percentage of CLA with 3 or more placements during the year	10.7% [90 of 840]	7.6% [70 / 922]	7.7% [73]	10.5% [98]	10% [91]	11	10	10
Percentage of CLA continuously for 2.5 years or more aged under 16 who were living in the same placement for at least 2 years	63.9% [195 of 305]	59.8 [201 / 336]	68.9% [233]	64.6% [265]	72% [302]	68	69	68
Average number of days between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted	430 [2015-18]	428 [2016-19]	443	442	413	376	N/A	N/A
Average number of days between an LA receiving court authority to place a child and the LA deciding on a match to an adoptive family, for children who have been adopted	NND	192 [2016-19]	179	163	304	178	N/A	N/A
Percentage of children adopted from care (as % of total children leaving care) [number of children adopted shown in brackets]	12.3 [39 of 316]	16% [55 / 352]	18.2% [54 / 296]	23.8% [24]	21% [41]	11.7	12	18.2
Number of Mainstream Foster Carers (Approved in period YTD)	26	12	21	5	11	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of Friends and Family Foster Carers (Approved in period YTD)	52	91	145	48	85	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of Adopters (Approved in period YTD)	22	25	47	10	16	N/A	N/A	N/A

What are we doing to look after the health and wellbeing of children in our care?

Measure	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21 [Provisional]	Q1 2021/22	Q2 2021/22	England	North East	Stat Neighbour
Initial Health Assessments completed within 20 working days of the child becoming looked after	63%	73%	73%	57%	57%	N/A	N/A	N/A
CLA with the required number of health assessments	91%	94%	92%	90%	92%	90	92	92
CLA who have had a dental check*	85.5%	87%	41%	53%	65%	86	86	87
CLA whose immunisations were up-to-date	99.3%	99.0%	89.9%	Reported annually	Reported annually	88	92	93.6
CLA whose development assessments were up to date	95.0%	97.0%	82.9%	Reported annually	Reported annually	88	86	95.7
% CLA identified as having a substance misuse problem in the year	1.9%	2.0%	TBC*	Reported annually	Reported annually	3	3	6
Percentage of new presentations to drug and alcohol treatment during period who were CLA [Number] YTD	10% [18 of 185]	10% [21 of 216]	9% [13/137]	20% [8/40]	17% [12/69]	11%	N/A	N/A
Care leavers aged 17-21 who are pregnant or mothers (as a % of female care leavers)		26.3% [25/95]		24.8% [29/117]	29.5% [33/112]	N/A	N/A	N/A
Care leavers aged 17-25 who are pregnant or mothers (as a % of female care leavers)				27.6% [37/134]	30.5% [39/128]	N/A	N/A	N/A

*Benchmarking data relates to 2019/20 (Direct COVID impact due to dentists being closed during pandemic)

What are outcomes like for our care leavers?

Measure	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Q1	Q2	England	North East	Stat
Percentage of care leavers age 18-21 who have stayed with their foster carer	N/A	N/A	N/A	7.1%	8.1%			
Percentage of care leavers aged 17-18 in education, employment or training (EET)	63.9% [53 of 83]	65% [55 / 84]	75.6% [59 / 78]	70.6%	70.0%	64	63	68
Percentage of care leavers aged 17-18 in suitable accommodation	96.4% [80 of 83]	90% [76 / 84]	94.9% [74 / 78]	95.0%	93.0%	90	94	100
Percentage of care leavers aged 17-18 in higher education	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0 / 78]	4.0%	12.0%	3	3	0
Percentage of care leavers aged 19-21 in education, employment or training (EET)	54.0% [87 of 161]	54% [94 / 175]	55.8% [110 / 197]	58.9%	60.0%	53	52	53
Percentage of care leavers aged 19-21 in suitable accommodation	94.4% [152 of 161]	83% [144 / 174]	90.3% [177 / 196]	93.0%	93.0%	85	91	91
Percentage of care leavers aged 19-21 in higher education	8.7% [14 of 161]	9% [16 / 175]	5.6% [11 / 197]	8.0%	7.0%	6	8	8

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Corporate Parenting Panel

CLA Update

CYPS Strategy Team
Q2 2021-22

Performance Management Framework: Key Questions

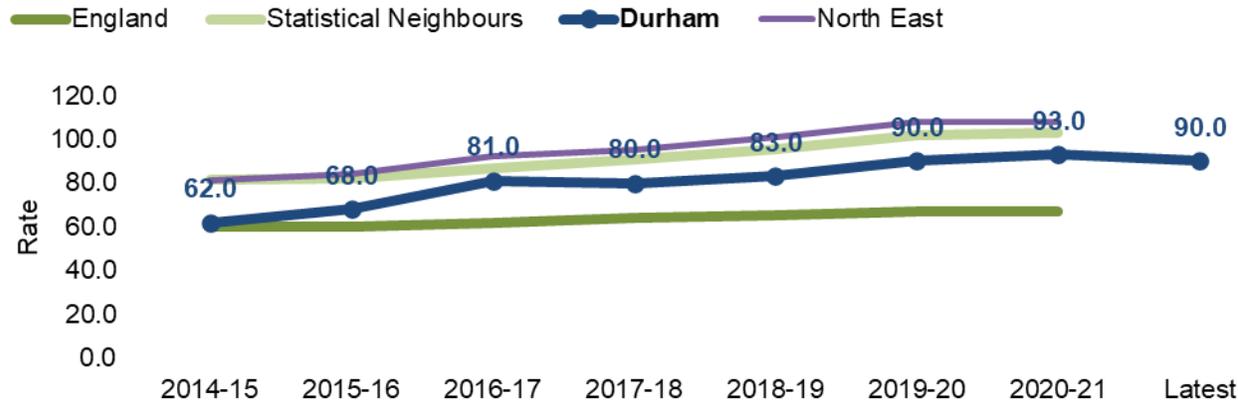
- What are the characteristics of our cohort of children in care and care leavers?
- Do our partner agencies understand their role in supporting us as corporate parents?
- How are we giving children and young people the chance to express their views, wishes and feelings? How do we know those are being acted on?
- How do we show children in our care that we have high aspirations for them?
- Are we providing stable environments for children in our care?
- What are we doing to look after the health and wellbeing of children in our care?
- What are outcomes like for our care leavers?

[Adapted from LGA Corporate Parenting Resource](#)

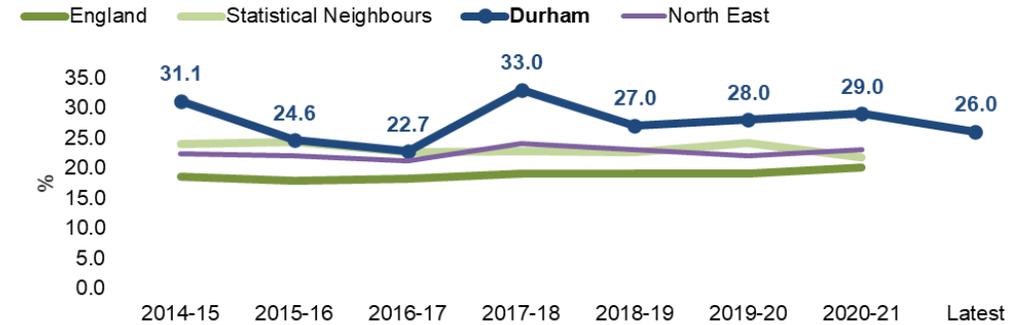
Children Looked After: 912

13 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

Rate of children looked after at 31 March per 10,000 children aged under 18 years



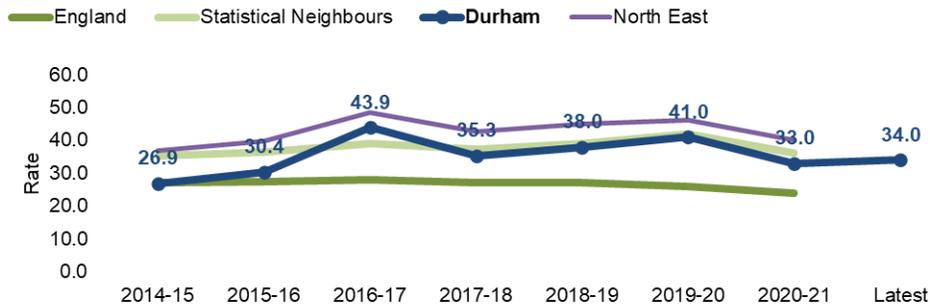
CLA started in the year by age: % Age: Under 1



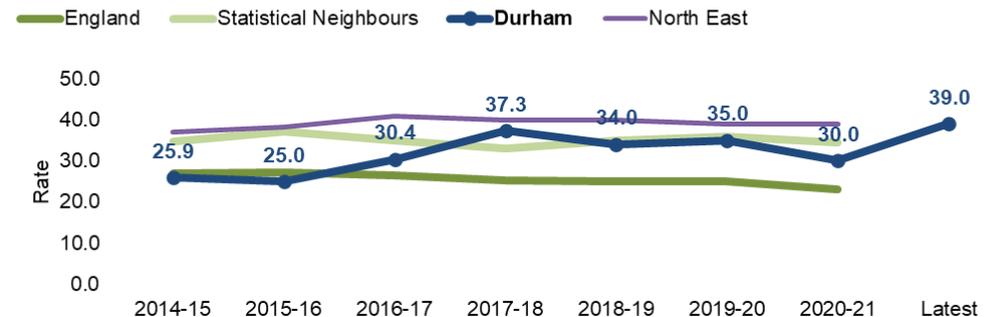
Reducing u1 CLA starts as % of all CLA starts

Our CLA rate remains 3rd lowest in North East

Rate of children who started to be looked after during the year per 10,000 children



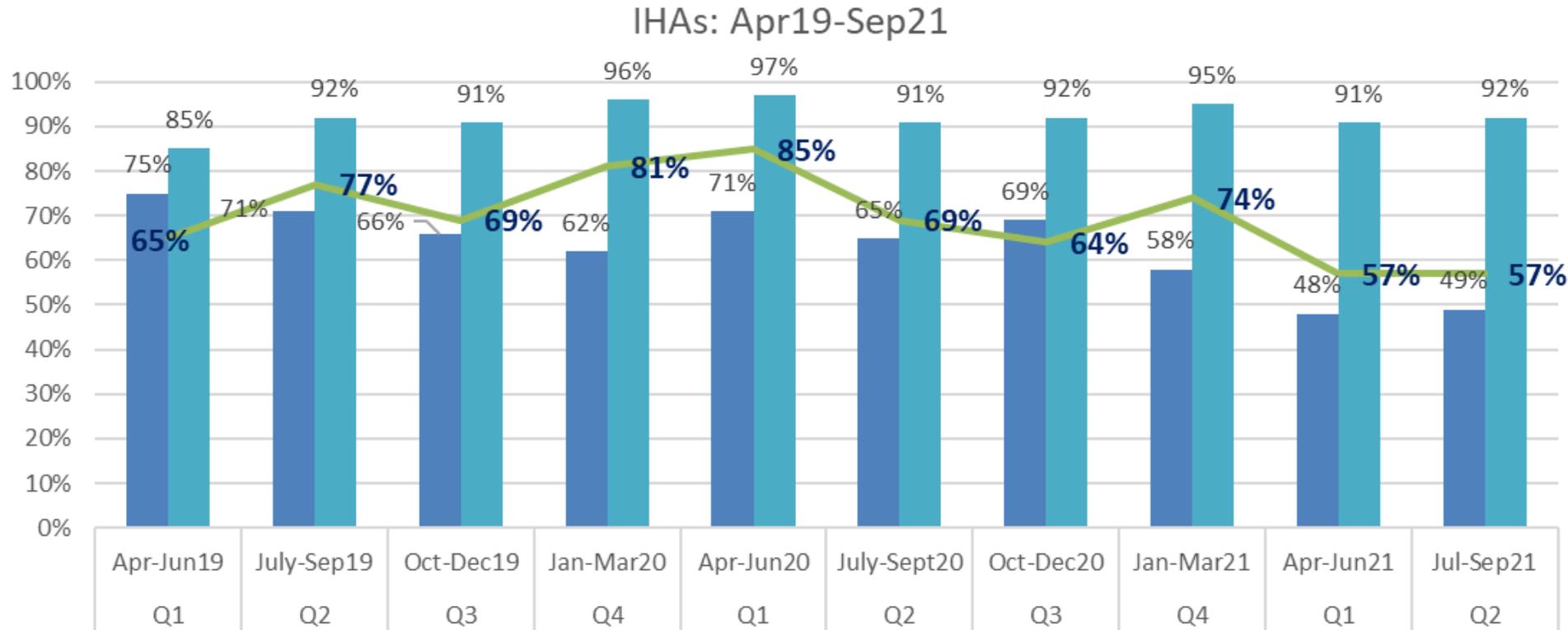
Rate of children who ceased to be looked after during the year per 10,000 children



177 children became looked after in last 6 months

198 CLA ended in last 6 months

Initial Health Assessments



LA Indicator: Coram BAAF paperwork and consent received from LA within 0-7 working days of child coming into care (AMENDED to 0-5 Days from 2021)

CDDFT Indicator: Number of children offered an IHA appointment by CDDFT within 15 working days of health receiving correctly completed paperwork and consent from Local Authority

Statutory Indicator: Of the number of children coming into care in the quarter; number of children seen by a Paediatrician within 20 working days of coming into care

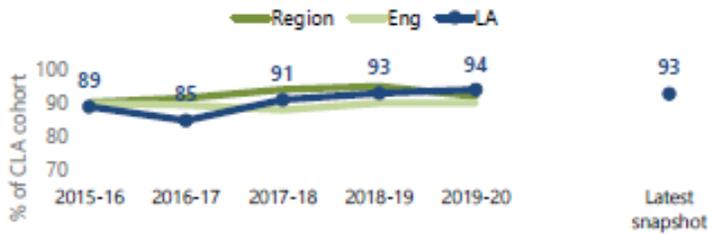
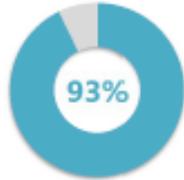
Placement Type	04-Jun-19		11-Mar-20		27-Sep-21		No. change on Jun19	% change on Jun19	No. change pre-lockdown	% change pre-lockdown
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%				
External Residential	31	3%	38	4%	55	6%	24	77%	17	45%
Friends and Family	134	14%	126	14%	129	14%	-5	-4%	3	2%
Unapproved Carers	5	1%	10	1%	4	0%	-1	-20%	-6	-60%
IFA	126	14%	159	18%	166	18%	40	32%	7	4%
In House Foster Care	422	45%	430	48%	388	43%	-34	-8%	-42	-10%
In House Residential	31	3%	26	3%	32	4%	1	3%	6	23%
Independent Living	9	1%	8	1%	4	0%	-5	-56%	-4	-50%
NHS/Health Trust	2	0%	1	0%	2	0%	0	0%	1	100%
Placed For Adoption	24	3%	23	3%	32	4%	8	33%	9	39%
Placed With Parents	66	7%	62	7%	65	7%	-1	-2%	3	5%
<i>Full Care Order</i>	57	6%	47	5%	49	5%	-8	-14%	2	4%
<i>Interim Care Order</i>	9	1%	15	2%	16	2%	7	78%	1	7%
Residential School	2	0%	2	0%	0	3%	-2	-100%	-2	-100%
Secure	1	0%	1	0%	3	0%	2	200%	2	200%
Supported Lodgings	12	1%	15	2%	31	3%	19	158%	16	107%
YOI/Prison	1	0%	1	0%	0	0%	-1	-100%	-1	-100%
Grand Total	932	100%	902	100%	911	1	-21	-2%	9	1%

Health

656 current open CLA looked after for at least 12 months

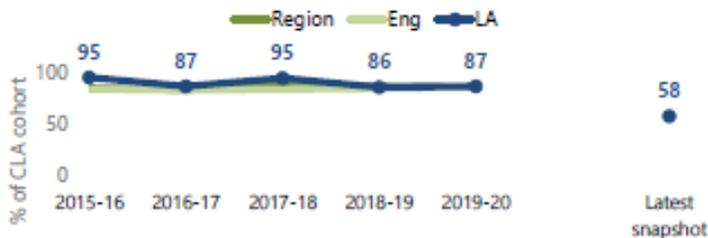
Health assessments

Current open CLA who have been looked after for at least 12 months with an up to date health assessment (in the last 6 months for CLA aged under 5, and in the last 12 months for CLA aged 5-plus)



Dental checks

Current open CLA who have been looked after for at least 12 months who have had a dental check in the last 12 months.



Missing Episodes:

382

Missing Children:

81

Return to Home Interviews

372 Offered

313 Accepted

313 Completed

Missing by month / week commencing

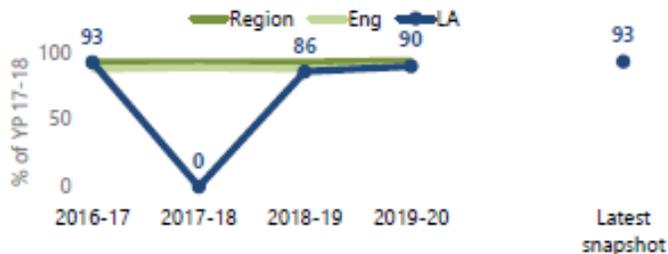


In Q2 four in ten missing episodes were less than 8 hours and 80% less than 24 hours

Actively working with 280 Care Leavers

Accommodation suitability of 17-18 year olds

ChAT	Aged 17	Aged 18	Total
Numbers in cohort	7	69	76
In suitable accommodation	100%	93%	93%

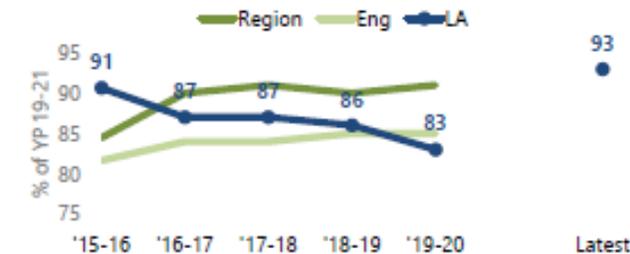
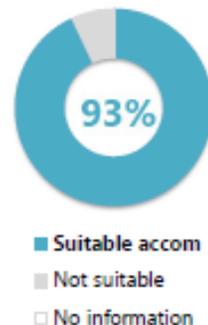


Accommodation types of 17-18 year olds

■ Latest snapshot ■ LA 19-20 ■ Region 19-20 ■ Eng 19-20

Accommodation suitability of 19-21 year olds

ChAT	Aged 19	Aged 20	Aged 21	Total
Numbers in cohort	69	66	36	171
In suitable accommodation	93%	91%	97%	93%

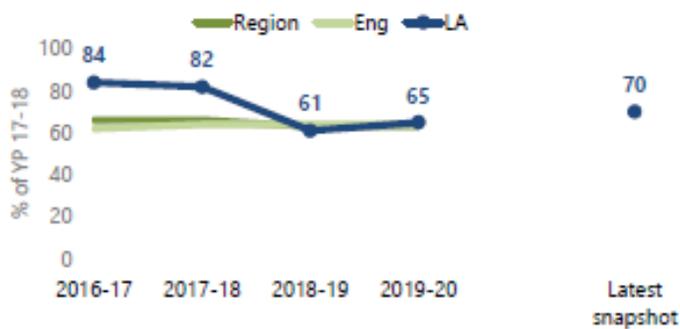


Accommodation types of 19-21 year olds

■ Latest snapshot ■ LA 19-20 ■ Region 19-20 ■ Eng 19-20

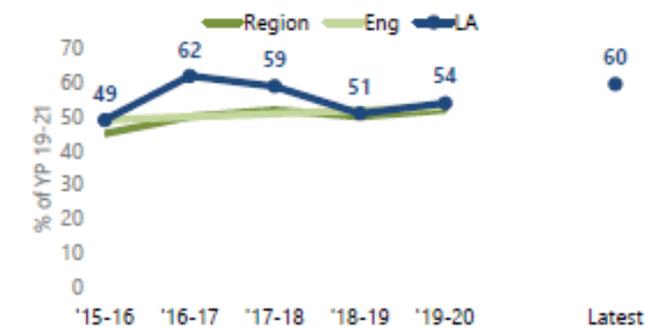
Education, Employment, or Training (EET) of 17-18 year olds

ChAT	Aged 17	Aged 18	Total
Numbers in cohort	8	69	77
In EET	38%	74%	70%



Education, Employment, or Training (EET) of 19-21 year olds

ChAT	Aged 19	Aged 20	Aged 21	Total
Numbers in cohort	69	66	36	171
In EET	65%	56%	56%	60%



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Corporate Parenting Panel

28 January 2022

Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2020/21



Report of David Pickard Independent Chair & Scrutineer - Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP)

Electoral division(s) affected:

None.

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to present the Corporate Parenting Panel with the Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2020/21. The full annual report is available via the DSCP website at <https://durham-scp.org.uk/professionals/key-reports/> and is attached as Appendix 2.

Executive summary

2. The Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership is required in law to produce a report at least every 12 months into the effectiveness of its arrangements to safeguard children in the area.
3. This report details our Vision and Values and the work undertaken against set priorities for 2020-21 and outlines our focus for 2021-22.

Recommendations

4. Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are recommended to:
 - a) Note the content of this report.
 - b) Accept the DSCP Annual Report for information as an overview of the work undertaken in 2020/21 and our priorities for action in 2021/22.

Background

5. The Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership is a statutory body established under the Children Act 2004. It has an independent chair and scrutineer and consists of three statutory partners, namely Durham Constabulary, Durham County Council and the Clinical Commissioning

Group. Other relevant agencies form part of the broader partnership across Education, Health, Criminal Justice and the Voluntary & Community Sector.

6. The DSCP's primary responsibility is to provide a way for local organisations that have a responsibility in respect of child welfare, to agree how they will work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in County Durham and to ensure that they do so effectively.
7. Statutory Guidance from Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) requires each local Safeguarding Children Partnership to produce and publish an Annual Report every 12 months, evaluating the effectiveness of safeguarding in the local area.
8. This annual Report provides an overview of the DSCP's 'Practice Improvement and Impact' on our areas of focus in line with our Vision and Values for keeping children safe.

DSCP Annual Report

9. The DSCP Annual Report 2020/21 sets out the work of multi-agency partners to ensure effective arrangements are in place to safeguard and protect vulnerable children and young people from abuse and neglect.
10. The report describes the work undertaken against the 2020/21 priorities and sets out the future priorities for 2021/22.
11. The report also provides an overview of our Vision and Values; the demographic of children and schools in County Durham; the effect of Covid on our services; our achievements against priorities; the work of the Partnership sub-groups; Serious Case Reviews, training and other areas of key activity including Looked After Children (LAC) and Elective Home Education.

Vision and Values

12. Our Vision is simple, it's about 'Keeping Children Safe' on the premise that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. It acts as an umbrella covering all that we do and underpinned through our three Core Values – Tenacity; Curiosity; Openness.
 - **Prevention through early intervention** – work together to prevent harm at the earliest opportunity
 - **Joined-up response** - We will respond promptly drawing on appropriate expertise of others
 - **Listening** - We will listen to and observe children to ensure their voice is heard even when they don't or can't speak out.

- **Identifying** - We will identify those most likely to be harmed by sharing information and data effectively.

DSCP Priorities for 2020/21

13. The priorities for the year 2020/21 were determined through multi-agency discussions including at DSCP development sessions:
 - Domestic Abuse – Coercive Controlling Behaviour
 - Cumulative Harm and Risk Assessment.

Achievements Against Priorities

- **Domestic Abuse**

14. This has been one of the key Practice Improvement themes over the last year in raising awareness and understanding, to ensure children are considered as a part of domestic abuse situations and appropriate action taken to protect them.
15. Partner agencies have come together to develop a range of tools, interventions, and workforce development opportunities to support practitioners in identifying and responding to families where coercion and control is a feature.
16. Looking at coercion and control as a part of domestic abuse, the Partnership has worked closely with the Open Clasp theatre company to further develop their production of Rattlesnake and accompanying workshops. The sessions explore how coercion and control can manifest in relationships and the impact this has on families, particularly children.
17. DASH(domestic abuse, stalking, honour based violence) Risk Assessment training linked with the Signs of Safety Harm Matrix has been developed, and managers' report seeing an increase in the use of these tools to better understand risk and potential harm within families.

- **Cumulative Harm and Risk Assessment**

18. The DSCP had earlier recognised that more work was required around the assessment of risk in line with our Signs of Safety Practice framework, and most notably in our judgement on the effect of cumulative harm on children and families. Initial focus was around improving the usage across the Partnership of the Harm Matrix as a tool when developing the risk assessment, in effect asking key questions to illicit quality information to best inform the assessment.
19. A launch event around the Harm Matrix took place across the Partnership in September 2020 and was followed up with a further awareness raising

session during Safeguarding Week in November. Feedback and scrutiny would show a greater understanding of the Harm Matrix and improved use as part of the main risk assessment.

20. It was however recognised that this tool was only one part of the broader need to fully understand and assess risk based on the cumulative harm being experienced by children and its significant effect. With a clear need identified this area is one of our Practice Improvement Themes for 2021/22.

Summary of Key Achievements

21. Below are some examples of achievements and progress made by the DSCP in 2020/21:

- A more rigorous multi-agency risk assessment process dealing with return to home interviews after children have gone missing.
- Significant work within the Embedding Learning sub-group examining actions and recommendations from Serious Case Reviews and other inspection criteria resulted in the development of 4 Practice Improvement Themes (see 2021/22 Priorities).
- A notable achievement around child exploitation is the way in which the use of the Child Exploitation Vulnerability Tracker (CEVT) has been embedded into multi-agency practice influencing decision making on a day-to-day basis around our most vulnerable children. There is clear connectivity and information sharing between the multi-agency processes that feed the CEVT and operational risk/vulnerability areas such as County Lines and radicalisation.
- A key achievement over the last 12 months has been the design of a new Neglect Practice Guidance section as part of the Children and Families Practice Toolkit to assist practitioners in better recognising the signs of neglect to support effective intervention at the earliest opportunity.
- The County Durham Stronger Families Programme has been committed to implement a Place Based Approach (PBA) and associated Locality Early Help Conversations to all seven localities across County Durham with there being a major shift with this approach. The requirement has been that areas embed better ways of collaborative working to mainstream the 'whole family' approach and embed the Family Outcome Framework (FOF) across the Partnership.
- Enhanced focus on Elective Home Education. information is shared openly between partners including Education, Housing, Health, Gypsy Roma and Traveller Education services, Children's Services and the Police to establish when children were last seen. This informs a wider risk assessment process which considers suitable education and safeguarding. The numbers of those EHE remains

low at 472 (0.6%) with over 70 having returned to school in the reporting period.

- By focusing on the successes of our young people it is seen that Care Experienced Young People aged 17-18 in Durham are engaged in education, employment and training at a rate of 74%; this rate has been sustained throughout the COVID-19 pandemic with young people being supported to access digital and other remote solutions where required. These successes are built upon the actions and interventions with children at a younger age where through our multi-agency care planning we retain an ambitious focus on each child's future, supporting them to feel able to stretch themselves to try new things and to feel hopeful for their futures.

Serious Case Reviews and LAC

22. The DSCP have published a number of Serious Case Reviews within the past year that were agreed pre 2019 launch of the new partnership. It must be recognised that as some of these were some time ago, individual agencies and the partnership have progressed the learning and a number of key actions.
23. None of the cases published were in relation to Looked After Children but a number have been in relation to babies and or very young children and this is a theme that the National Panel have also highlighted and published.
24. In June 2020 the DSCP commissioned a report to disseminate the learning and recommendations from 4 Serious Case Reviews. There were 7 identified themes:
 - a) Cumulative harm/ wider risk assessment
 - b) Information sharing including handovers between agencies
 - c) Professional curiosity and professional challenge
 - d) Missed opportunities
 - e) Professional Optimism
 - f) Compliance with statutory duties and decision making
 - g) Voice of the Child
25. The partnership have consolidated the learning from these reviews and other sources into the 4 Practice Improvement Areas for 2021/22 (see below). We have shared the learning with practitioners through the following:
 - Safeguarding weeks in October 2020 and July 2021
 - Monthly bulletins
 - Learning tools published on the DSCP website.
 - Specific targeted awareness raising and review of training.

- Six monthly updates to the Child Protection Procedures which highlight changes
 - Promotion of support through stronger families and resolving parental conflict forums.
 - Continue to work with the Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse Executive Group (DASVEG) and support identified training across the partnership.
26. The DSCP have not commissioned any Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews since the launch of the partnership but have shared learning through the Rapid Review process.

What's Next for 2021/22 – this is correct covers financial year, Apr-March

Focus on Practice Improvement Themes

- Management Understanding and Decision Making
- Voice and Lived Experience of the Child
- Risk Assessment and Cumulative Harm
- Child Sexual Abuse

Other Key Work

- Introduction of new DSCP website.
- Continue to embed the Signs of Safety Practice Framework across partner agencies.
- Improve effectiveness of Partnership scrutiny and the assessment of impact.
- Continue to embed new Training Strategy with hybrid offer.

Conclusion

27. The Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2020/21 was agreed by the DSCP in October 2021
28. The report is available on the Durham SCP website at <https://durham-scp.org.uk/professionals/key-reports/>, and has been disseminated across partners and their own organisational governance structures.

Authors: Jacqui Doherty, DSCP Business Manager, Tel 03000 263989
Stephen Winship, Policy & Strategy Officer Tel 03000267051

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance

Yearly financial contributions to Durham SCP are received from partner agencies and are detailed in the DSCP Annual Report.

Staffing

The priorities identified in the DSCP Annual Report will be delivered using existing resources. Durham County Council will contribute to the delivery of the priorities in partnership with other statutory authorities.

Risk

No adverse implications.

Equality and Diversity/ Public Sector Equality Duty

The DSCP Annual Report identifies the actions to safeguard the needs of vulnerable children and young people.

Accommodation

No adverse implications.

Crime and disorder

The DSCP Annual Report reflects priorities and action that impact positively on crime and disorder in County Durham. The report shows effective partnership working with the Safe Durham Partnership.

Human rights

No adverse implications.

Consultation

Consultation with partner agencies and stakeholders has been undertaken as part of the development of the DSCP Annual Report.

Procurement

No adverse implications.

Disability Issues

No adverse implications.

Legal Implications

Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP) is a statutory body established under the Children Act 2004. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 requires each area Safeguarding Children Partnership to produce and publish an Annual Report evaluating the effectiveness of safeguarding in the local area.

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Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2020/2021



Contents

Page

Introduction.....	2
About Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership.....	3
Our Vision and Values	4
Our Partners	4
DSCP Budget 2020-21	4
Children and Young People in County Durham.....	5
Schools in County Durham.....	6
The effect of COVID-19	
Achievements against Priorities.....	8
Safeguarding Children Sub-Groups	10
Other areas of Key Activity	15
Use of Restraint.....	17
Training.....	18
What's Next for 2021/22	19
Appendices - Overview by Independent Chair/Scrutineer..	20

Introduction

As the three statutory partners of the Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership, we present our report covering the period 2020/21. In it we aim to demonstrate how we function and provide assurance that our safeguarding arrangements are effective in keeping children safe.

We are now two years into the new partnership arrangements and although at times challenging, there is clear evidence this new way of working enables leaders at service delivery and quality assurance levels to maintain ownership of the safeguarding agenda.

Throughout this entire reporting period we have all lived with the COVID-19 Coronavirus and the significant impact it has had both personally and professionally in terms of how we all deliver our services. All partner agencies responded with a positive 'can do' attitude to the challenges faced and were determined to keep vulnerable children at the forefront of their thinking. We embraced new ways of working which we continue to embed into practice.

We detail in this report some key areas of success where we have made a real difference for children and families, but also highlight areas where we need added focus to continually improve services across the DSCP and our individual agencies.

In consideration of this, key work carried out has led us to rationalise a large number of actions from different inspections, audit and learning to theme them into four broad Practice Improvement Areas (detailed in report), that are the basis of our Strategic Plan and focus for activity over the coming year.

John Pearce
Director of Children and Young People's Services, Durham County Council

David Ashton
Detective Superintendent Safeguarding Lead, Durham Constabulary

Anne Greenley
Interim Director of Nursing and Quality, NHS County Durham Clinical Commissioning Group



About Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership

The Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP) has a statutory duty to prepare and publish an Annual Report every 12 months which describes how our partners safeguard vulnerable children and young people. Our primary responsibility is to provide a way for the local agencies that have a responsibility for child welfare, to agree how they will work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and to ensure that they do so effectively. We changed from the old Board structure into a Partnership in April 2019 and are governed by our Partnership Arrangements.

The Annual Report 2020/21 aims to demonstrate the extent to which the functions of the Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership, as set out in the national statutory guidance, 'Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)', have been fulfilled and to provide assurance that the multi-agency safeguarding system is effective.

The work of the partners throughout the entire reporting period has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic with changes in working practices and activity necessary, but this seems if anything to have strengthened connectivity across the Partnership.

The Vision and Values of the DSCP remain consistent being the driver over the last year with continued emphasis on Child Exploitation and Neglect as well as our focus on the following Practice Improvement themes:

- Domestic Abuse – Coercive Controlling Behaviour
- Cumulative Harm and Risk Assessment

The Partnership is supported by three strategic sub-groups; Embedding Learning; Performance, Challenge and Impact; and the Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP). Assurance reporting also feeds into these groups, notably from the Child Exploitation Group, Neglect Group, and other task and finish groups.





Our Vision and Values

Our Vision is simple, it's about 'Keeping Children Safe' on the premise that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. It acts as an umbrella covering all that we do and underpinned through our three Core Values – Tenacity; Curiosity; Openness.



Prevention through early intervention

We will work together to prevent harm at the earliest opportunity.



Joined-up response

We will respond promptly drawing on appropriate expertise of others.



Listening

We will listen to and observe children to ensure their voice is heard even when they don't or can't speak out.



Identifying

We will identify those most likely to be harmed by sharing information and data effectively.



Challenging

We will challenge, learn and continuously improve.

Our Partners

Each local area is required by law to have a Safeguarding Children Partnership. The DSCP is a statutory body established in legislation (Children Act 2017) and works according to national guidance, 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018', and in accordance with the local Partnership Arrangements. The statutory guidance provides children's safeguarding with a legal framework, setting out the responsibilities of local authorities and their partners.

The statutory bodies are supported by a number of other Relevant Agencies coming from the areas of Criminal Justice; Health; Education and the Voluntary sector.



DSCP Budget 2020-21

The financial contributions from the strategic partners are as follows, with monies from the 4 NHS Trusts being part of the CCG overall total:

Partner	Contribution 2020/21 (£)
Durham County Council	181,604
Clinical Commissioning Groups	113,135
Durham Constabulary	39,285
CDDFT – Admin costs for CDOP	6,036
Training fees	5,000
Total	345,524

Children and Young People in County Durham

19% total population are children and young people

4% of pupils in the January 2021 school census are Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME)

101,468 children and young people under 18 living in County Durham (Aug 2020/00)

Age 0-4	26,347	Age 15	5,318
Age 5-9	30,272	Age 16	5,291
Age 10-14	29,209	Age 17	5,031

20,316 (20%) pupils are eligible for free school meals

82 children are missing from education

667 children and young people are electively home educated

1,494 pupils attend special schools in County Durham

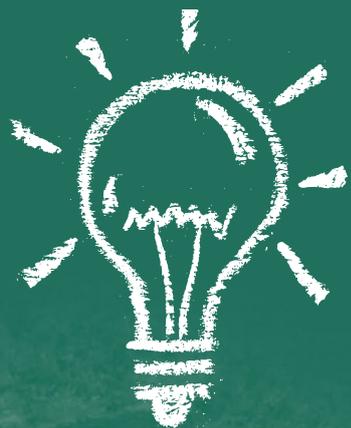
3% of pupils in the January 2021 school census have a first language other than English.

9,782 with Special Educational Needs (SEN) support in Durham schools

73,802 pupils attend state-funded schools (Jan 2021)

2,383 children and young people have Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) including those maintained by other Local Authorities

Schools in County Durham



196 primary schools
including
8 infant only schools
8 junior only schools

31 secondary
schools

1 Pupil
referral
unit

10 special
schools
(1 academy)

11 nursery
schools

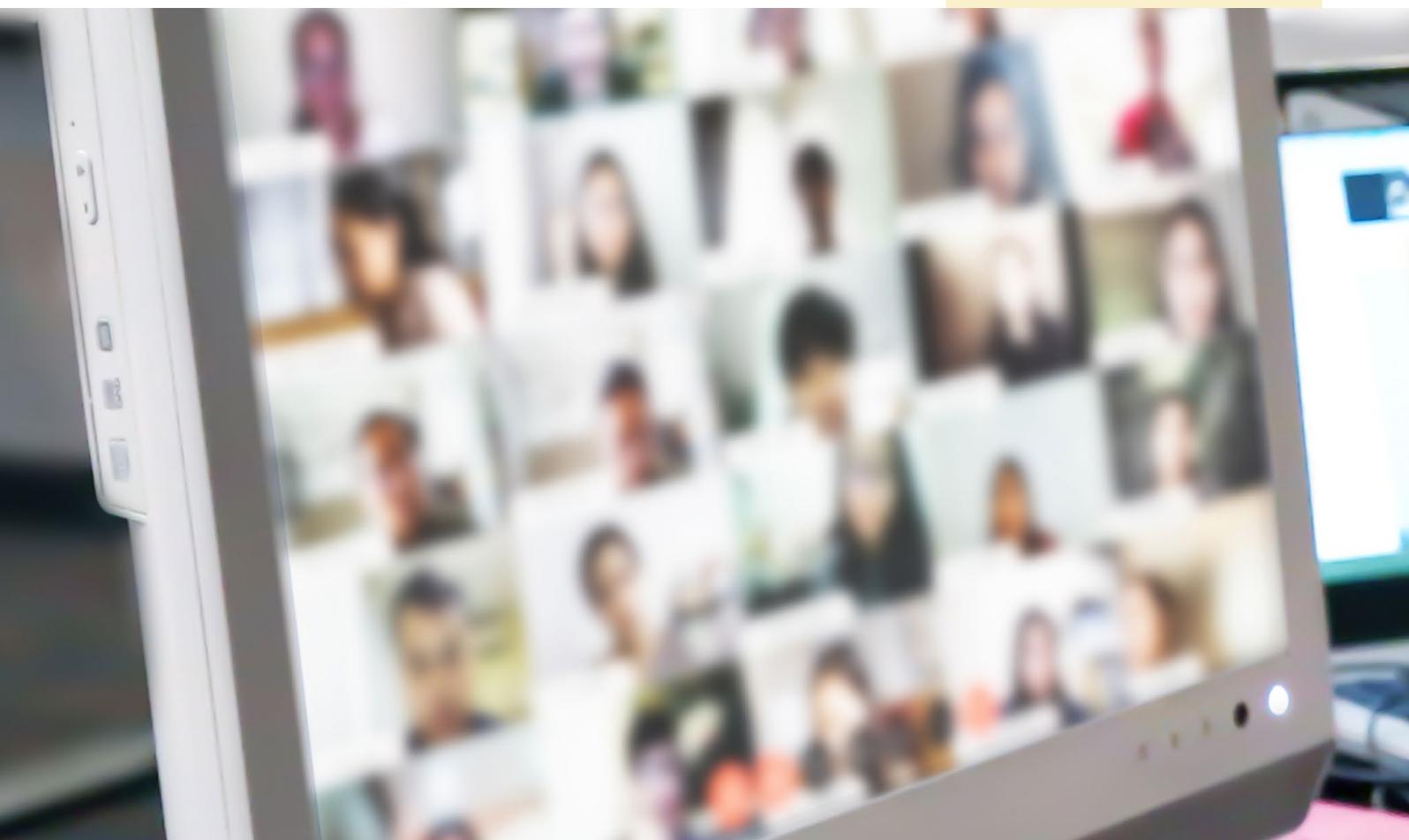


The effect of COVID-19

As soon as lockdown commenced a decision was made to suspend all multi-agency DSCP meetings and face to face training. A Safeguarding Assurance Group was formed which initially met every week. Their primary responsibility was to establish what the core functions were of the partner agencies and working together to address any potential gaps in service delivery in terms of both restriction and capacity, in order to maintain an effective Partnership service during the pandemic. The group was able to coordinate and maximise the capacity of frontline practitioners across the Partnership to ensure that the most vulnerable children were seen.

Business Continuity Plans developed by individual agencies were considered to understand their effect, with Partnership activity altering to ensure essential service delivery for children and families remained in place. This has enabled those with the ability to make decisions to problem solve issues as they arise in a coordinated way. We were able to compare data and discuss emerging risks to understand the impact of lockdown and its relaxation on our children and families.

The group also took responsibility for the communication of key Partnership messages that needed promulgating out during various points during lockdown. Two main social media campaigns were implemented aimed at awareness raising in communities, so families were well informed that services remained in place despite lockdown and signposting them to relevant services. Over time the sub-groups of the DSCP returned, albeit over a digital platform.





Achievements against Priorities

Domestic Abuse – Coercive Controlling Behaviour

This has been one of the key Practice Improvement themes over the last year in raising awareness and understanding, to ensure children are considered as a part of domestic abuse situations and appropriate action taken to protect them.

Partner agencies have come together to develop a range of tools, interventions, and workforce development opportunities to support practitioners in identifying and responding to families where coercion and control is a feature.

Available on the DSCP website is the enhanced Children and Families Practice Toolkit at: <https://durham-scp.org.uk/professionals/early-help-and-neglect/toolkits-and-guidance-for-practitioners-single-assessments-and-early-help/> which was launched during September 2020 through virtual events. These events were attended by representatives across the multi-agency Partnership; feedback from the event and from those using the toolkit has been positive. The toolkit was developed in line with Signs of Safety and includes practical guidance and resources for practitioners to support victims, children and young people and perpetrators. From an impact perspective, managers' report they can see the difference it is making in improving practice across their teams.

Looking at coercion and control as a part of domestic abuse, the Partnership has worked closely with the Open Clasp theatre company to further develop their production of Rattlesnake and accompanying workshops. The sessions explore how coercion and control can manifest in relationships and the impact this has on families, particularly children. The response from staff across all agencies has been overwhelmingly positive with staff describing this as “the most thought provoking session I have ever taken part in” and “this is so hard hitting and emotional, its really made me think about the families I work with”. Further work is ongoing on how we can build on the success of Rattlesnake moving forward.

Impact - DASH Risk Assessment training linked with the Signs of Safety Harm Matrix has been developed, and managers' report seeing an increase in the use of these tools to better understand risk and potential harm within families.

Case Study - Impact On Practice

“I would say that the training has brought the issues of coercion and control to the forefront of my mind. It is an issue that is not always visible or obvious and one that is often hard to evidence. Since the training I am more conscious of the issue, am able to identify ‘tell-tale’ signs at a much earlier stage, and support my team to start and ask the ‘right questions’. Since the training we have been able to evidence and step up a family to the most appropriate services. This family had been in and out of Early Help and the focus had always been on neglect issues. Looking at it from a coercion and control perspective, we were able to see a pattern of subtleties that suggested coercion and control leading to more empathetic but direct questions. This enabled us to unpick and identify years of abuse and although the individual in this instance did not initially fully accept or even understand the abuse they are living with, the dialogue is now open which means that the coercive behaviour can be challenged and positive changes made going forward”.

Cumulative Harm

The DSCP had earlier recognised that more work was required around the assessment of risk in line with our Signs of Safety Practice framework, and most notably in our judgement on the effect of cumulative harm on children and families. Initial focus was around improving the usage across the Partnership of the Harm Matrix as a tool when developing the risk assessment, in effect asking key questions to illicit quality information to best inform the assessment.

A launch event around the Harm Matrix took place across the Partnership in September 2020 and was followed up with a further awareness raising session during Safeguarding Week in November. An additional briefing session in December 2020 was recorded and is available through the Me Learning platform as well as a narrated Powerpoint presentation on the DSCP website. Feedback and scrutiny would show a greater understanding of the Harm Matrix and improved use as part of the main risk assessment.

It was however recognised that this tool was only one part of the broader need to fully understand and assess risk based on the cumulative harm being experienced by children and its significant effect. With a clear need identified this area is one of our Practice Improvement Themes for 2021/22.





Safeguarding Children Sub-Groups

The DSCP has three principal sub-groups – Embedding Learning; Performance, Challenge & Impact; and the Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP). Two other groups worthy of note that feed into the partnership are the Child Exploitation and Neglect groups.

● Performance, Challenge and Impact Group

The purpose of the Performance, Challenge & Impact group is to monitor the impact and outcomes of partner activity on behalf of the DSCP, as required by Chapter 3 of Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018.

The group considers the performance of all agencies involved in safeguarding children using the Vision of the DSCP as a basis from which to assess good practice and concerns, reporting such to the Safeguarding Executive Group, by using data and intelligence.

Key work for the group has been the improvement in the analysis and understanding of the data so key questions can assist the partners in problem solving and developing options for tackling the issues.

Impact - Return To Home Interviews

Following on from a multi-agency audit in early 2020, improvements were necessary in the way in which we dealt with Return to Home Interviews after children had gone missing. The attrition rate for completion was too high with inconsistent quality.

Two Missing Coordinators were appointed who complete all Return to Home Interviews, and administration sits across both Police and Children's Services in a collaborative multi-agency setting. Assessment is made whether the risk matrix needs completing and feeding into the Vulnerability Tracker. Completion rates on Return to Home Interviews are now high, quality is good, with robust assessment now in place around vulnerability, and fed into the multi-agency processes for intervention.

● Embedding Learning Group

The purpose of the Embedding Learning Group is to improve the quality of multi-agency safeguarding frontline practice through the implementation of a joint, co-ordinated approach which will ensure good outcomes for children which will be evidenced through multi-agency audit; peer review and inspection.

Their work will respond to the recommendations and actions from inspection; audit; serious case reviews/child safeguarding practice reviews; local learning lessons reviews; complaints; performance information; and feedback from children and families. This is to ensure multi-agency safeguarding practice is high quality; makes a difference to children; and enhances learning about what works for children and families.

Work of significance progressed through this group over the last 12 months has been a change in ethos and decision making with the development of Practice Improvement Themes to provide in-depth analysis and work in key areas where we need to improve. Extensive work examining the actions and recommendations from Serious Case Reviews and other inspection, and audit activity has led to their rationalisation into the four themed areas the DSCP are focused on for 2021/22. The introduction of a Workforce Learning and Development Group ensures there is a continuous cycle of improvement, so learning from all sources influences training and impacts on professional practice.

● Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP)

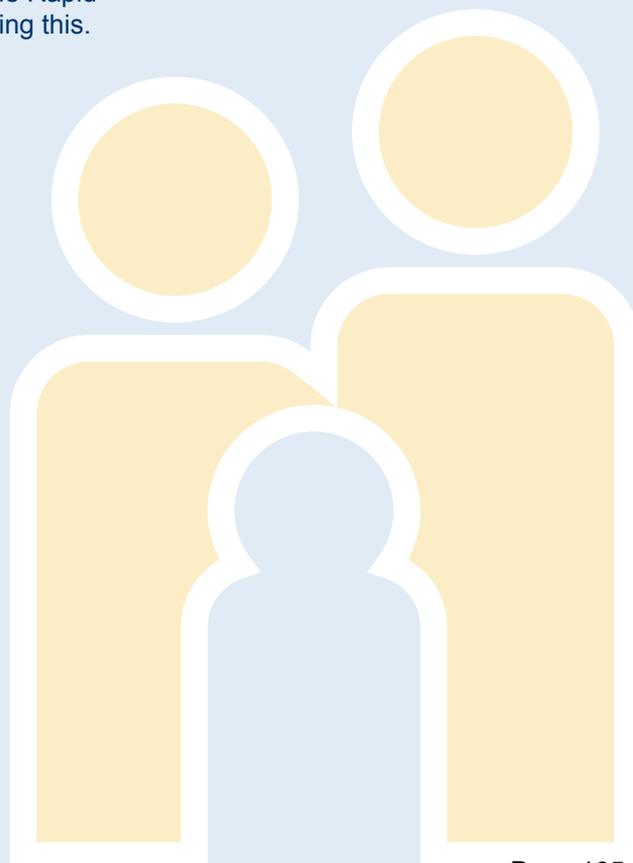
Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 specifies, *'When a child dies, in any circumstances, it is important for parents and families to understand what has happened and whether there are any lessons to be learned'*.

The CDOP oversees all deaths of children under 18 regardless of cause, of which there have been 28 in the reporting period. All of these are subject to a Child Death Review (CDR). The CDOP works closely with the Safeguarding Executive Group to highlight any emerging themes, issues and learning from child death reviews that require further consideration. The CDOP also completes its own Annual Report which is available on <https://durham-scp.org.uk/professionals/serious-case-reviewchild-death-reviews/>

Significant work has taken place to harness the recommendations and learning from all reviews and other areas of both internal and external scrutiny. The Partnership, in an evolving way now determines Practice Improvement Themes which require sustained multi-agency focus going forward, with the governance for progression sitting both with the Embedding Learning Group and CDOP which has its own Thematic Review process. It is within these themed areas that the learning from both Child Death Reviews (CDR) and CSCR's sit. For the coming year there are four themes which are detailed later in this report.

● Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (formerly Serious Case Review Panel)

Over the last 2-3 years the DSCP had an unusually high caseload of Serious Case Reviews (SCR) and through the transition across to Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSCR) had these to finalise. During the reporting period six serious case reviews were concluded and published. (link to website). Cases have been referred under the CSCR process, but none have progressed to full review. There have been 3 Local Rapid Reviews and one case which was progressed to a Learning Review. With one other case it was agreed that the criteria for a local CSCR had been met, however all the learning had already been identified at the Rapid Review stage meaning there was no added value in undertaking this.





● Child Exploitation Group

Multi-agency work around all forms of child exploitation is coordinated by this group which is a joint group between the two local authorities of Durham and Darlington, thus covering the entire Police Force area. It has both a strategic and connected delivery plan framed around the DSCP Vision.

The primary purpose of the Child Exploitation Group is to monitor, improve and evaluate the strategic response of partner agencies in tackling children missing from home, care and education and the reduction of all forms of child exploitation.

A notable achievement around child exploitation is the way in which the use of the Child Exploitation Vulnerability Tracker (CEVT) has been embedded into multi-agency practice influencing decision making on a day-to-day basis around our most vulnerable children. It feeds into the strategic CEG and offers a richer data picture on which to base analysis and has vastly improved the focus of both Partnerships around our most vulnerable children and young people. There is clear connectivity and information sharing between the multi-agency processes that feed the CEVT and operational risk/vulnerability areas such as County Lines and radicalisation.

Impact - Child Exploitation Team (CET)

The Child Exploitation Team (CET) is a specialist multi-agency team identifying, engaging and working with young people who have been identified as the most vulnerable to exploitation. Police and Children's Services staff are co-located and work together linking in with representatives from, for example, Health and Education, to ensure those most at risk have a joined-up service. The Child Exploitation Vulnerability Tracker (CEVT) is a multi-agency process with relevant partners coming together to complete a holistic assessment of the young person and their needs. The CEVT has become a highly effective tool in the assessment of risk/vulnerability and the prioritisation of the necessary interventions which are subsequently agreed through a multi-agency operational meeting. There is tangible evidence this work is making a real difference in identifying and acting to protect our most vulnerable young people at an early stage.

Case Study

A thirteen-year-old female after triage through the multi-agency CEVT process was graded as high risk of child sexual exploitation. She was deemed to be at risk of being incited to engage in sexual activity by older persons whilst missing and under the influence of drugs or alcohol. The child was frequently missing from home. She was living within a single parent household and the child's relationship with her mother was difficult.

She was allocated an exploitation worker in order to complete a piece of work with her to improve her knowledge around exploitation. The CET conducted disruption work around her associates, including the issuing of child abduction warning notices. One male received a prison sentence for child abduction following this intervention. Also during this period she was made subject of a Child Protection Plan which was de-escalated as the perceived level of risk reduced.

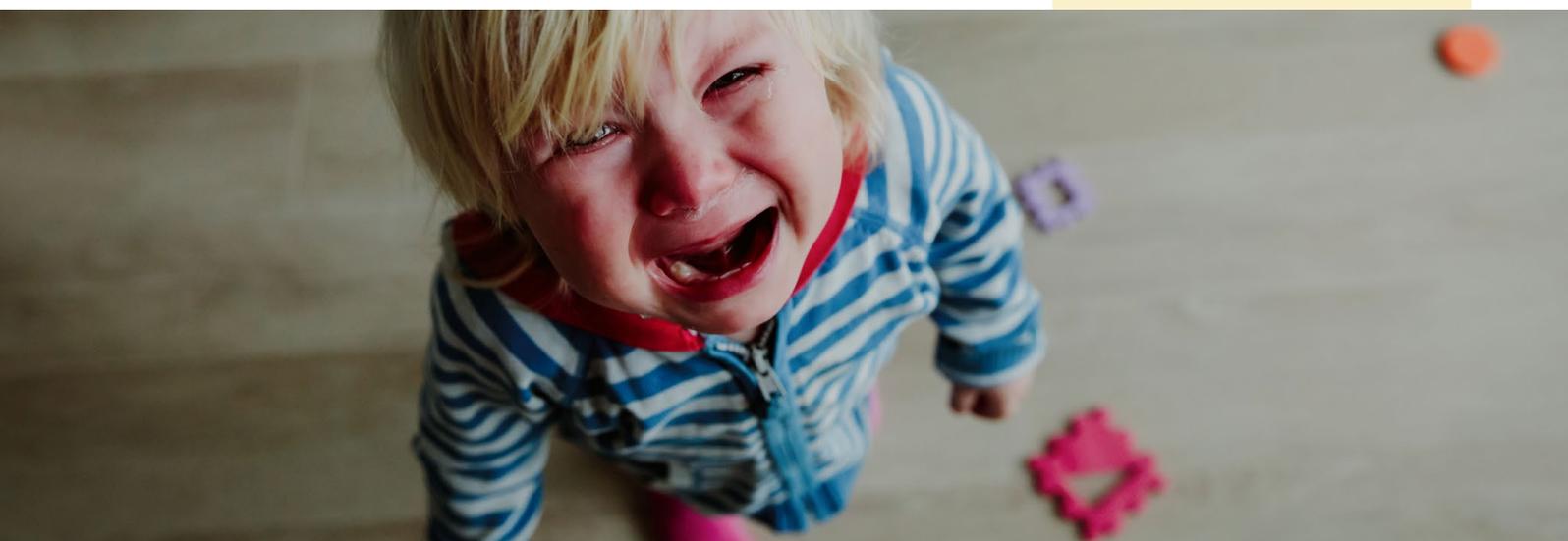
Her missing episodes reduced markedly as the multi-agency work continued, she became more settled and engaged with professionals. Her case was closed to the CET in February 2021 due to there being no ongoing exploitation risks identified.

● Neglect Group

The plan for the group sets out the vision and key priorities for identifying and tackling neglect, through promoting early help and delivering effective interventions. Our agreed vision is 'to reduce neglect, by providing effective help and support at the earliest opportunity' through three key objectives: -

- (a) Understand Neglect: to understand the prevalence of neglect across County Durham in order to effectively target resources in order to help prevent and mitigate the negative impact this has on children and young people;
- (b) Early Identification: to improve the recognition and assessment of neglect
- (c) Effective Interventions: practitioners across County Durham deliver effective evidence-based interventions that reduce neglect before the need for statutory interventions.

A key achievement over the last 12 months has been the design of a new Neglect Practice Guidance section as part of the Children and Families Practice Toolkit to assist practitioners in better recognising the signs of neglect to support effective intervention at the earliest opportunity.



Impact - Accessing Early Help

The County Durham Stronger Families Programme has been committed to implement a Place Based Approach (PBA) and associated Locality Early Help Conversations to all seven localities across County Durham with there being a major shift with this approach.

The requirement has been that areas embed better ways of collaborative working to mainstream the 'whole family' approach and embed the Family Outcome Framework (FOF) across the Partnership. Partners must demonstrate the difference they are making in supporting families to achieve positive, significant and sustained outcomes.

Feedback shows that through the Locality Early Help Conversations, key professionals come together to provide a broad range of expertise and offers of support that are agreed in a timely manner. This prevents delay in families receiving early help and avoids duplication as all professionals agree the support package being offered to families and is better coordinated.

Durham has far exceeded expectation and to date has 'turned around' 1,054 families against a target of 761. Since 2015, 5,245 families have achieved significant and sustained outcomes with 638 achieving continuous employment, the best in the country.

Case Study

A family were referred into the One Point Service via an anonymous referral into First Contact. The anonymous refer reported concerns in relation to having different men in the home every evening and that she was using drugs and alcohol. The referrer reported the child looked under nourished and sad and the home conditions were described as 'appalling'. The child was reportedly always late for school.

A Whole Family assessment was undertaken with a coordinated multi-agency response being required. The mother had suffered for many years with a physical health condition. It was however established the family had a good network of support in place, including grandparents and other friends. The Key Worker convened a Family Network meeting with the mother and her support network and they developed a support plan for her and the child. The plan brought simple things into play including school transport for the 6 year old and other household requirements. Housing needs were addressed as was support on managing finances. A Safety Plan was introduced that reduced the burden on the family providing support in a number of key areas.

A Housing Association also supported the mother to apply for a debt relief order, therefore, reducing the need to continually borrow from family members to cover the monthly deficit. This extra income enabled her to buy a greater range of healthy food for the family and left some for some monthly "treats", such as a takeaways and movies, thus developing quality time for mother and daughter. Another Housing Association assessed the family home and authorised adaptations to the home to enable mum to be more independent. The impact of her having greater freedom to get about the home reduced the caring role the young girl had carried out previously and gave her more freedom to be a child.

Feedback from the head teacher has been extremely positive as previous offers of support had not been accepted. *"I now have a different child, who skips into school each day with a smile that lights up the room. Worries such as 'will I be late?' and 'what work have I missed?' along with 'will Mum be on time to pick me up tonight?' have completely disappeared.*



Other areas of Key Activity

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

The MASH is a co-located multi-agency team of social workers, police and safeguarding nurses and other professionals. They triage referrals to determine the appropriate course of action. In December 2020 a structured multi-agency assurance visit took place at the MASH.

Good evidence was found that the voice of the child and lived experience were being sought from children; robust multi-agency discussions and decisions around risk were taking place and were well recorded; all partners have a voice in the process; and strong evidence a Signs of Safety (SOS) approach was being used. There was highly effective Partnership working at all levels with effective communication and clear evidence of effective learning processes that feed into the relevant agencies and the wider Partnership.

Looked After Children And Care Leavers

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic children and young people in Durham have been supported with both virtual, and where required, face to face visits by their allocated social workers and young people's advisors with all statutory meetings having taken place.

As Corporate Parents in Durham, we want to focus on the successes of our young people. Our children and young people continue to play an active lead role in our Corporate Parenting arrangements and we benefit from the support and challenge they present to us. We are aware of the skills and talents of our children and young people and are mindful that in measuring this we celebrate not only the successes of their childhoods but that we measure the success of our parenting on the young people that we support.

Care Experienced Young People aged 17-18 in Durham are engaged in education, employment and training at a rate of 74%; this rate has been sustained throughout the COVID-19 pandemic with young people being supported to access digital and other remote solutions where required. The same cohort are managing to retain suitable accommodation at a rate of almost 90%. These indicators of engagement in planning for adult life with productivity and community engagement are hopeful indicators of successful parenting we will continue to progress. Clearly these successes are built upon the actions and interventions with children at a younger age where through our multi-agency care planning we retain an ambitious focus on each child's future, supporting them to feel able to stretch themselves to try new things and to feel hopeful for their futures.



Elective Home Education

Elective Home Education (EHE) is the term used to describe parents' decision to deregister their child from school and provide education for them at home. Local authorities have no formal powers or duty to monitor the provision of education at home. However, they do have duties to make arrangements to identify children not receiving a suitable education, and to intervene if it appears that they are not. Although the trend for EHE is upwards, the numbers remain relatively low at 0.6% of the total in education (472). Over 70 young people have returned to school from this cohort during the reporting period.

In Durham, information is shared openly between partners including Education, Housing, Health, Gypsy Roma and Traveller Education services, Children's Services and the Police to establish when children were last seen. This informs a wider risk assessment process which considers suitable education and safeguarding.

The profile of EHE work has been raised, resulting in increased liaison with families and consequently a notable numbers of pupils returning to school, where this is agreed to be in their best interests. Proportionate support is offered to those pupils and families identified as potentially most vulnerable to promote their welfare. A recent review of local arrangements by the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee provided assurance that clear policies and procedures are in place to ensure children are receiving a suitable, efficient and full-time education, and that safeguarding arrangements are as robust as they can be and ensure that children are seen by Durham County Council officers or partner agencies.



Use of Restraint

In conjunction with Durham County Council, the DSCP monitors the use of restraint at Aycliffe Secure Services Centre. The Centre houses a changing population of young people (aged 11-17) with complex needs. The home regularly reports information regarding the use of restraint to the Youth Justice Board and Ofsted, who has judged it as being outstanding in all areas (April 2021).

Injuries due to restraint are graded 1-3, with 3 being the most serious involving serious cuts, fractures or loss of consciousness. Of the 134 incidents of restraint recorded for the year, 23 resulted in injury, but only 1 in the highest level 3 category.

Scrutiny involves a regular review of the home's CCTV where randomly selected incidents are reviewed with a manager from the home about the use of restraint, the circumstances leading up to the incident, and what happened afterwards. This scrutiny provides assurance to the Partnership that the use of restraint is being monitored in terms of legality and proportionality in cooperation with the centre. The Aycliffe Centre has been judged as outstanding across all areas in its most recent Ofsted inspection.



OUTSTANDING





Training

With all face-to-face training suspended in March 2020, the Partnership took the opportunity to review its entire training provision and developed a new offer based around e-learning and the online delivery of essential training courses as determined by the Safeguarding Assurance Group. This style of training has been delivered throughout the reporting period and has been effective and well received.

One of the challenges for the DSCP has been the ability to measure the impact of training on service delivery across all partners, something that has proved difficult in any meaningful way. A Workforce Learning & Development Group (WLD) has been established that reports directly into the Embedding Learning Group (ELG). The purpose of WLD is to ensure that safeguarding children training needs are identified, training is delivered to a consistently high standard, and that there is a process in place for the DSCP to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of training.

Primary Aims:

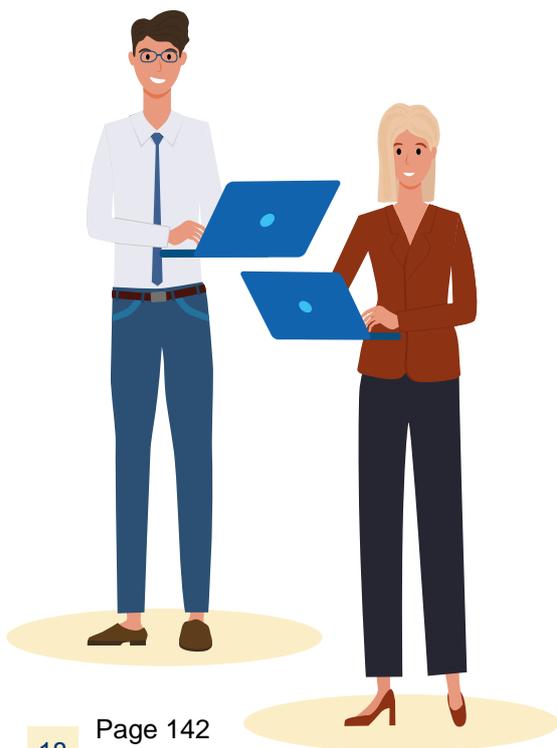
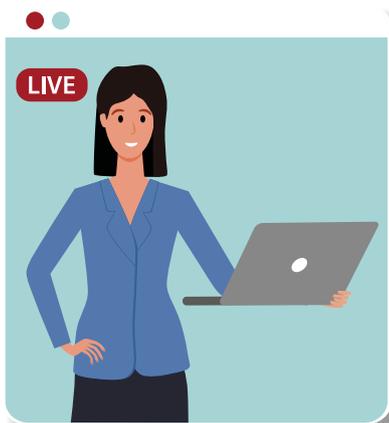
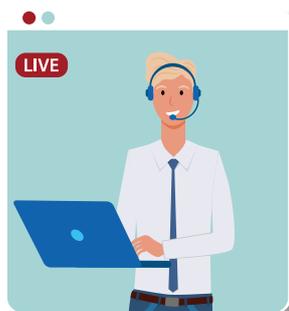
- Develop and coordinate the DSCP programme of safeguarding children training through the formulation of a training strategy.
- To integrate the learning from local and national serious case reviews into the training programme.
- To ensure that all DSCP training reflects the rights of children and encourages participants to consider the experiences of children as central to their work.

Method of Evaluation:

- Measure the impact of multi-agency agency training and ensure single agencies have a process to measure the effectiveness of their training.
- Evaluate all training and incorporate feedback into future training.
- Ensure that training is delivered to a consistently high standard by quality assuring all courses.

A core pillar of the newly developed Training Strategy and Workplan is that we ensure that DSCP training is making a real contribution to improving outcomes for children and families.

In October 2020 we ran a live webinar event focusing on trauma informed practice and led by an eminent expert in this area, Zoe Lodrick. The event was attended by over 700 practitioners and managers from across the Partnership. It was followed up with an additional focused developmental workshop around a specific case. Key learning and areas for improvement were taken from this work and is what is now weaved into the Practice Improvement Themes being progressed by the DSCP for 2021/22.



What's Next for 2021/22

Focus on Practice Improvement Themes:

- Management Understanding and Decision Making
- Voice and Lived Experience of the Child
- Risk Assessment and Cumulative Harm
- Child Sexual Abuse



Introduction of a new website for the DSCP



Continue to embed the Signs of Safety Practice Framework across partner agencies



Improve effectiveness of Partnership scrutiny and the assessment of impact



Continue to embed new Training Strategy with hybrid offer.



Dave Pickard
Independent Chair & Scrutineer.

Overview by the Independent Chair/Scrutineer of the progress made by the DSCP 2020/21

I was appointed by the DSCP Executive in September 2020 with the remit to not only chair certain meetings, but to act as a critical friend to the DSCP in scrutinising their effectiveness.

The annual report indicates what has been achieved by the partnership in 2020/21 against the significant impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The partnership, agencies and particularly staff are to be congratulated as to how they responded to the pandemic by working together to maintain effective safeguarding arrangements for children and young people throughout the year, despite these challenges.

My first task on appointment was to undertake an independent review of how the partnership was operating and the outcomes and associated impact that it was achieving.

The review made seven recommendations for further improvement. These recommendations and subsequent action by the partnership are detailed below.

Reasonable time is committed by the statutory safeguarding partners to lead the DSCP including clarity on priorities and expectations of the subgroups and Business Unit.

The DSCP Executive have committed the required time to drive this area forward. They have agreed a consistent membership and meet monthly alternating between a 'business' meeting and a 'developmental' meeting. This appears to be working well and as progress is made the frequency of the meetings will be reviewed.

Four improvement areas for focus have been identified, utilising learning from local and national reviews, for delivery by the Partnership:

1. Risk assessment and Cumulative Harm,
2. Voice and Lived Experience of the Child,
3. Management Understanding and Decision Making,
4. Child Sexual Abuse.

This has given the DCSP a clearer focus, and work is ongoing to examine the required structures and method of delivery including a greater focus on impact.

The DSCP is moving towards an assurance model in ensuring all agencies are effectively safeguarding children and understanding how they can add value to this process. This will include assurance from other partnerships, for example managing the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people.

Single agency statutory inspections will add to this assurance, such as ones recently completed in Durham Constabulary and Durham County Council Children and Young People's Service but are limited in informing across the whole Partnership.

Understand and agree how best the Independent Chair/Scrutineer can be utilised in achieving the above.

This relationship is evolving whilst maintaining the distinct boundary that the Partnership is led by the statutory partners and not the Chair. An example of this is that the bi-monthly Executive development meeting is chaired by a partner allowing the Independent chair/scrutineer to act more effectively as a critical friend.

Review the functioning of the Performance, Challenge and Impact group to allow a greater focus on outcome and impact.

The group is moving towards a thematic approach to data analysis. This needs improved alignment to the agreed priorities and a more co-ordinated approach in complimenting the work of the Embedding Learning Group. The chairs of both groups are meeting to address this, and the outcomes will be monitored by the Executive group.

Review the functioning of the Embedding Learning Group to allow a greater focus on outcome and impact.

Substantial progress has been made on this recommendation in that the over 300 actions from various SCR's and other reviews/inspections have been rationalised into the four priorities. The ELG has created four task and finish groups, one for each priority, to deliver against the associated action plans. This will be further informed once the Executive have agreed the wider scope of structure for delivery discussed in the first recommendation.

Whatever the outcome of the review into where the Business Unit sit the Executive to take greater ownership in directing and managing the unit as a DSCP resource.

There is a far greater understanding by the Executive of the work, pressure and demands on the Business Unit and improving understanding from the unit on what the Executive would like them to deliver. There is a two weekly catch-up meeting with members of the Executive and the Business Manager, who is also now line managed by one member of the Executive.

The DSCP revisit the purpose and operation of the four sector groups to ensure they are meeting the needs of all parties.

This is the one recommendation, where to date, the least progress has been made. There are four sector groups incorporating:

- Health
- Criminal Justice
- Education
- Voluntary Sector

There is a need to improve the dialogue, expectations, and relationship between these groups and the DSCP. This has been discussed at the Executive Group and work is to commence to align to existing structures to fulfil the intended purpose of the groups.

The DSCP Executive identify a suitable key line of enquiry for the Scrutiny Panel to complete and also consider closer alignment for the Panel with the Business Unit.

The Scrutiny Panel recently completed their first piece of work looking at how the Voice of the Child/Child lived experience was delivered in three agencies:

- Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust
- Durham Constabulary
- Durham County Council Children and Young People's Service

They found excellent commitment in each agency and some innovative practice. It was less clear how this was shared across the Partnership or indeed the impact of this. A report was produced for the Executive which will inform the work of the Child Lived Experience Priority task and finish group but it also stimulated good debate about the role of the DSCP in engaging with children and young people.

In conclusion, I am of the opinion that the DSCP is meeting its statutory obligations and is continuing to improve how it achieves this.

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