



Durham Virtual School Annual Report 2018-19



This report contains early indication, **unvalidated data**. All national comparisons are against 2018 measures at this stage.

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;
- 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.

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Executive Summary Children in care 2018-19 (unvalidated data)

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, 2018 to March 31st, 2019 – 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 evidences broadly positive educational outcomes, strong progress from entry to care, good attendance, few exclusions, high aspirations, strong vocational and academic pathways and effective preparation for adulthood. This is all brought about by a virtual school team which advocates strongly and loudly for our young people and collaborative working. Over the last two 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. There have been structure and staffing changes over this time which have brought challenges. As caseworkers embraced their new roles, including statutory assessment for children with SEND, the time available for supporting the education of children in care was significantly reduced. Following changes to the team in 2018-19, we have refocused some roles to prioritise the education of children in care.

Headlines

Emerging, unvalidated data indicates that the overall performance shows improvement at all measures except reading at KS1, is very positive at KS2, with significant improvement across the board, including in reading which was our focus for 2018-19 with this cohort. At KS4 there was improvement at all English / Maths/ Basics measures at KS4, except at grade 9-4 English which sustained the rise from 2018. Once again there was an improvement at the higher grades, an ongoing focus for us.

Key Stage 1

Of the 29 pupils in the reporting cohort for 2018-19, 23 attended schools with an Ofsted judgement of good or outstanding. Those children in other schools had strong support, had their needs met, and made some progress. Once again, small numbers make year on year trends statistically unreliable, however there were almost twice as many in the 2019 reporting cohort than in 2018. 44.8% achieved expected standards or better (EXS+) in reading, a slight dip of 2%, but more children achieved EXS in writing and maths than in 2018. All outcomes except writing were above FFT (Fischer Family Trust) targets, except writing which was in line.

5 children were supported by an EHCP (Education, Health Care Plan) and 6 children had SEN support plans. 4 children were working at P scales, the measures used to record progress for children with special educational needs (SEND) and made some progress.

Durham Gap - all children 2019 values

34.5% of the reporting CLA cohort achieved the expected standard or better in reading, writing and maths (RWM), an improvement of 8%. For all children in Durham, this figure is 67.6%. The gap has remained static.

National Gap - looked after cohort 2018 values

For the reporting cohort, all indicators were below the 2018 national average for CLA, but above or in line with FFT targets. The gap against national averages for CLA narrowed substantially in maths and RWM but widened slightly in reading.

Key Stage 2

Of the reporting cohort of 41 pupils, 97.5%, attended schools with an Ofsted judgement of good or outstanding. 1 child remained in an RI school to maintain stability and received strong support. We are pleased that at all measures, the number of children meeting EXS exceeded FFT targets. All measures improved from 2018, with reading and maths (both 63%) showing significant improvement of just over 20%. We had targeted reading 2018-19, making this high priority with headteachers and other colleagues and developing a project around books. Equally we had shared our concerns about maths outcomes with schools. 5 children were working at P scales; they all made progress. 10 children are supported by an EHCP and were not expected to meet national standards.

Durham Gap - all children (2019 values)

54% of the reporting cohort achieved EXS+ in RWM with the gap between them and all Durham reducing to 13%, this was less than half the gap of 2018. The gaps at all measures have significantly reduced.

National Gap – Looked After Cohort (2018 values)

For the reporting cohort, reading, writing, maths, GPS are significantly above national averages for the looked after cohort for 2018.

Key Stage 1 -2 Progress

The 41 children included in the cohort for KS1-2 had a positive progress score in reading which means they made better progress than Durham children and this is better than the national average for 2018. Progress in writing and maths was not as strong, with a negative score, but above the national averages for 2018.

Key Stage 4

Of the 56 pupils in the reporting cohort, 12 attended special schools, 6 young people attended independent special schools to meet their individual needs or specialist provision appropriate to need. 63% attended schools with an Ofsted judgement of good or better. 5% attended schools with an Ofsted inadequate rating; remaining in school to provide stability for them when they entered care. These young people all achieved the basics measure at 4+ and some

achieved at this at 5+. English results indicate the improvement from 2018 was broadly sustained with 41.1% achieving grades 9-4 (a slight dip of less than 3% from 2018 equating to 1 pupil) and 26.79% achieving 9-5, a slight increase. Once again, more young people achieved grade 5 in both maths and English. Maths results improved, but remain a focus, especially for girls. All key indicators for English, Maths and Basics were better than the national 2018 outcomes for children in care. No young people in the reporting cohort achieved a standard pass or above at the EBACC suite of qualifications. This is an area for further

Durham Gap - all children (2018 values)

25% of the reporting cohort achieved grades 9-4 in the basics measure and 9% achieved 9-5. Whilst the gap is still too big against all Durham children, it has reduced by 10% (from 44% to 34%) at the 9-4 measure and by just under 2% at 9-5 bringing the gap to below 30% for the first time.

National Gap – Looked After Cohort (2018 values)

For the reporting cohort, English is significantly above the national and regional averages for 2018. Maths and the basics measure are broadly in line nationally but below the regional average for 2018. The 2019 averages are still emerging.

Achievement 8 increased from 23.2 in 2018 to 24.2 in 2019, this is above the 2018 national average.

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 setting and schools. Fixed term exclusions rose nationally and regionally in 2017, but we are concerned that this rose faster in Durham, so that we moved from quartile A to B. We have highlighted this with schools and analysed the data to inform future practice. The overall attendance for children in care has remained consistently high since 2014. In 2018 overall absence was 3.2%, significantly better than the national (4.5%) and regional (4.1%) averages. Persistent absence at 6.9% was well below the national average of 10.6% and the regional average of 9.5%¹ This is lowest in primary schools and highest in SEMH special schools.

School Stability

We appreciate the correlation between stability of placement and educational attainment and life chances and take cognisance of the Children's Commissioner's Report and Stability Index to avoid unnecessary or inappropriate school movement. 8% of children and young people experienced an in-year school move 2016-17 (the most recent published data) and 4% experienced a move in both 2015/16 and 2016/17². The 2019 report from Children's

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/outcomes-for-children-looked-after-by-las-31-march-2018>

² Children's Commissioner's Office Stability Index report for Durham 2018

Commissioner's Office³ shows that fewer Durham children had multiple placement and school moves than nationally.

Personal Education Plans and Pupil Premium Plus

Following a slight drop in the quality of the PEP in 2017-18, we planned for improvement for 2018-19. However, changes to the team structure resulted in some initial delays and inconsistency in the initial quality assurance process. This has been firmly addressed by a realignment of the roles of the caseworkers so that they have dedicated time for this and there is robust standardisation of judgements. The quality of PEPs improved slightly in 2018-19, but we know this needs greater focus and development. As a result, we have commissioned an electronic system from September 2019. We changed our guidance for schools on Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) in 2018-19, streamlining the allocation and suggesting that, where appropriate, schools could pool resources to meet the needs of the 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.

³ <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/>

1. Introduction

As Virtual School Head for Durham County Council, I am pleased to present the 2019 Annual Report for Durham Virtual School 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.

In drawing comparisons or looking for trends, the small numbers at some key stages makes data statistically insignificant when compared to the national picture. The nature of our young people means that year on year cohorts can be very different, so progress measures are sometimes more useful than absolute attainment. We measure ourselves against the looked after cohort nationally and regionally and against all children in Durham and, where appropriate, nationally.

For national data we draw on the DfE Statistical First Release. Since 2017 we have used a data tool from NCER NEXUS to provide a more forensic analysis through a range of indicators which could impact on progress, for example, length of time in care or primary special need. We have bought into SISRA and O Track to help us to track, monitor and analyse current progress.

2. Durham Virtual School

2.1 What is our role and how well are we doing?

The role of the Virtual School Head and the Durham team is to take the lead in promoting the educational achievement of looked after, and from September 2018, that of previously children in care. Both are included in the scope of this report. We set aspirational targets and then work closely with schools, the wider 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 and enjoy school so that they can achieve. We are working hard to ensure their voice is heard and has impact, but this is an area for further development.

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 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. Having analysed outcomes from 2018, we have also developed tailored projects and intervention to address our priorities for reading at KS2.

The restructure of the wider casework team to become a bigger team for SEND, Looked After Children and Vulnerable Groups in September 2018 provided challenge in terms of ensuring that the education of children in care continued to be high priority. The transition period was difficult and, having considered the impact, the decision has been taken to further realign the team. Despite the challenges, the team has been able to maintain the high level of support for our young people and challenge for schools.

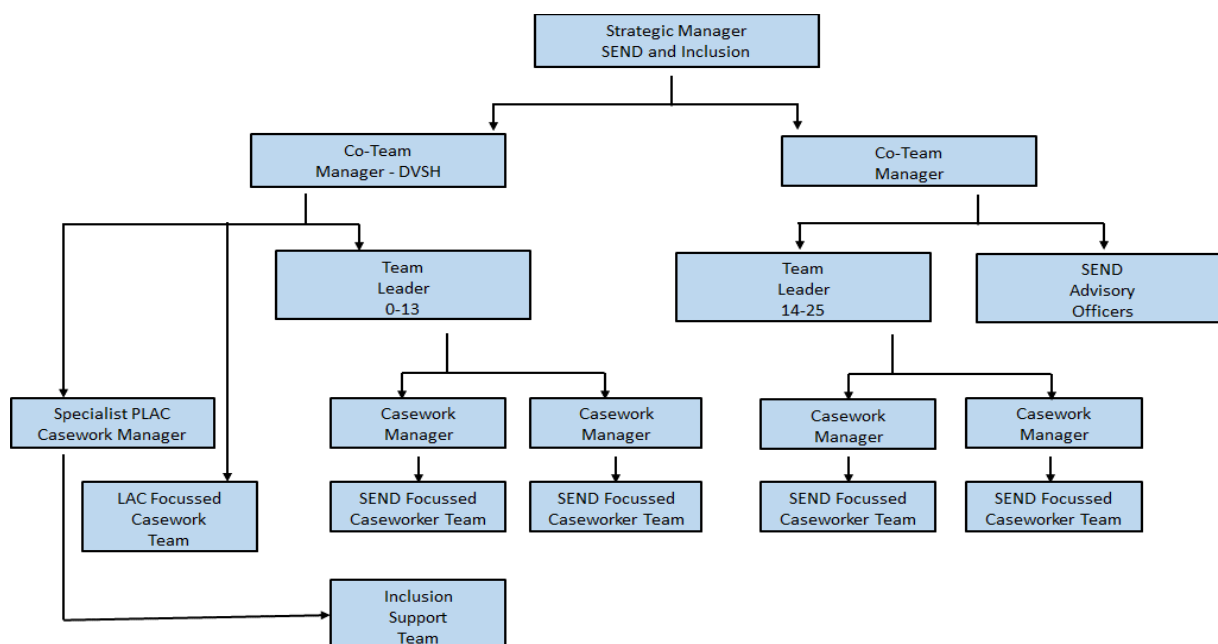
2.2 Who are we?

The Virtual School Head (VSH) is an experienced school leader who sits within the Education Service, has a school improvement role alongside the VSH role, and works in partnership across teams. Durham is a member of NAVSH and the VSH attends the local and national networks. Since September 2018 the VSH has been the joint lead for the north east regional network of virtual school heads which also provides a place on the extended board of NAVSH.

We work in close partnership with teams in Social Care, Health, Early Years, Progression and Learning and the wider Inclusion Team as well the School Improvement Team. In 2018-19, the VSH has been a member of strategic planning through the Education Senior Management Team, Looked after Children Strategic Partnership Group and The Looked After Children Health Partnership Group. A recent development has been the establishment of the Virtual School Review and Development Operational group, chaired by the VSH.

Following the reorganisation of Children's and Young People's Services, the virtual school team (other than the VSH) alongside other SEND and Inclusion colleagues moved from the Education Service to become part of the Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children's Service. Within the new structure, we retained a dedicated deputy head of the virtual school to maintain the high profile of children in care within the wider team. Further review of the impact of the work has led to the identification of 4 caseworkers with dedicated roles for the education of children in care.

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 also meets with the heads of Social Care and EHIVC. 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 EHIVC through the Strategic Manager for Special Educational Needs. Operational governance is now through the Operational Group (VSOG). As a virtual school we report to a sub group of the CPP which is chaired by the vice-chair of the CPP and comprises elected members, local school leaders and representatives from care and fostering.

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

3.1 How many learners are on roll?

As of September 2019, there were 529 learners (R – yr 11) on the roll of the virtual school. There was a further 131 post 16. There are 231 unborn and early years. In total there was 848 children and young people in the care of Durham County Council. In addition, there are currently 148 non-Durham children in care in Durham schools.

Table 1: Number of CLA by year group July 2019 (please note this is a different date to the section above)

	Male	Female	Total	% Total	Male	Female
R	18	13	31	4.8%	58.1%	41.9%

1	14	16	30	4.6%	46.7%	53.3%
2	24	19	43	6.6%	55.8%	44.2%
3	20	12	32	4.9%	62.5%	37.5%
4	27	17	44	6.8%	61.4%	38.6%
5	34	17	51	7.9%	66.7%	33.3%
6	32	24	56	8.7%	57.1%	42.9%
7	31	24	55	8.5%	56.4%	43.6%
8	34	27	61	9.4%	55.7%	44.3%
9	24	25	49	7.6%	49.0%	51.0%
10	28	18	46	7.1%	60.9%	39.1%
11	38	29	67	10.4%	56.7%	43.3%
12	30	30	60	9.3%	50.0%	50.0%
13	17	5	22	3.4%	77.3%	22.7%
TOTAL	371	276	647		57.3%	42.7%

3.2 What is the profile of the cohort?

There is an equal primary / secondary split. The gender split is 42,7% girls and 57.3% boys. 15.6% of children and young people (R-yr 11) attend out of county schools which is a reduction of 1.4% from 2018. 84.4% are educated in Durham schools.

As of July 2019, 80.3% of the current total attend a school with an Ofsted judgement of good or better. During the academic year 2018-19, 2 secondary schools with 14 children in care went into Ofsted category 4. Both schools were very inclusive, were attachment and trauma aware and provided excellent emotional and social support for our young people. 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 academic support. As of July 2019, 15 (2.6%) children and young people attended a school with an inadequate judgement, 12 of these are in secondary education. 17 young people of secondary age attended Durham SEMH special schools, one of these is judged to be good the other 2 are RI.

In the primary phase, 90% attend a good or better school. The figure is significantly lower at secondary with 63% attending a good or better school. The LA is working closely with these schools to improve provision. As a virtual school we provide additional tuition 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 an additional plan and funding to meet their needs.

The 2019 report from Children’s Commissioner’s Office⁴ 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 2017, 34 in 2018, but increased to 55 in 2019. 79% of school moves were to support a permanent placement. 7 year 6 children moved mid-year, we would not normally sanction but they were all for permanence and to support transition. These moves were carefully planned to avoid an impact on SATS.

School Stability from 2019 CCO Stability Index Underlying Data

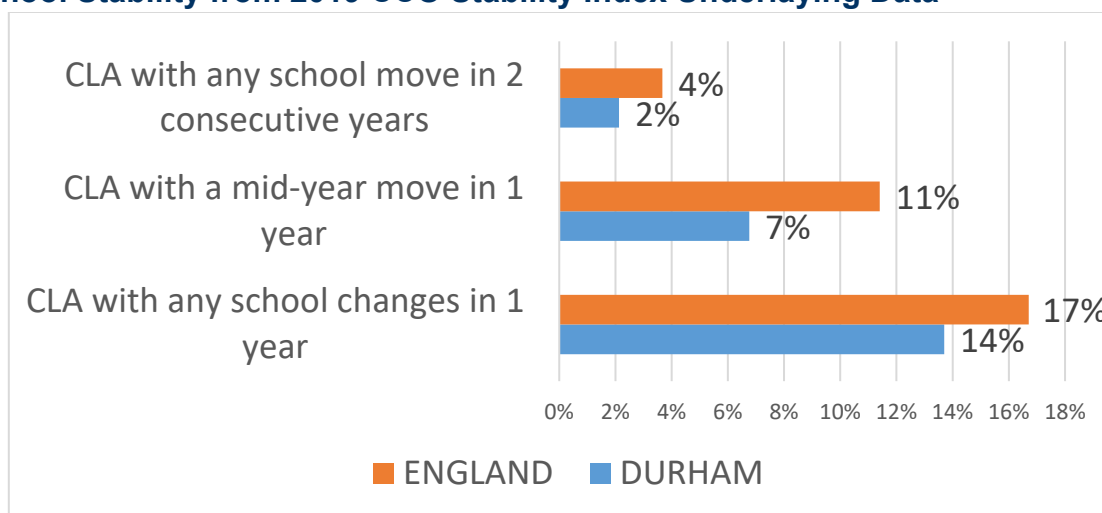


Table 2: School Moves 2018-19

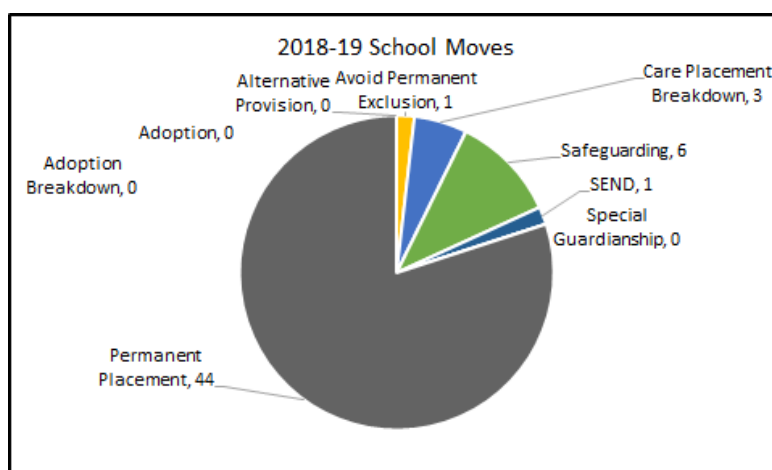
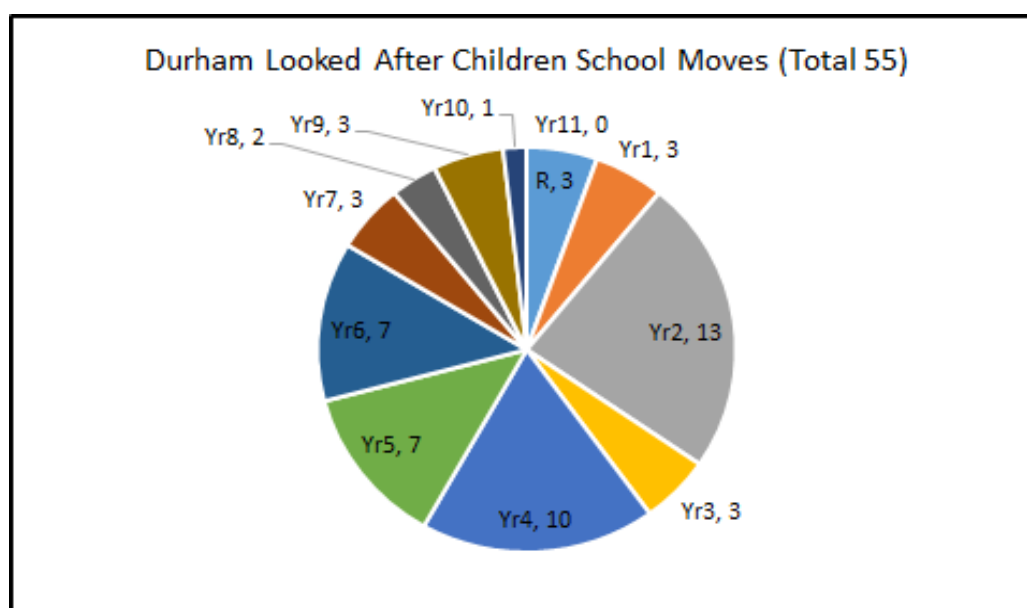


Table 3: School Moves 2018-19 by year group

⁴ <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/>



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

Children in care are four times more likely⁵ to have an identified SEN and nine times more likely to have an Educational Health and Care Plan (EHCP) than all children. Nationally in 2018, 55.5% of children in care had a special educational need compared to 14.4% of all children and 26.5% had an EHCP. In Durham 2018-19, 43.7% of children and young people (R-Y11) had identified special educational needs; 20.2% were supported by an EHCP whilst 23.5% had school SEN support plans (K code). This is a decrease of 5.3% since the previous year. This increases at post 16 with 50.6% of young people with identified SEN, 33.7% had an EHCP.

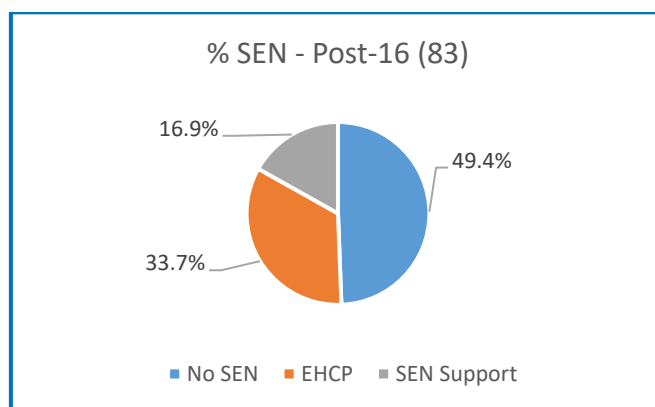
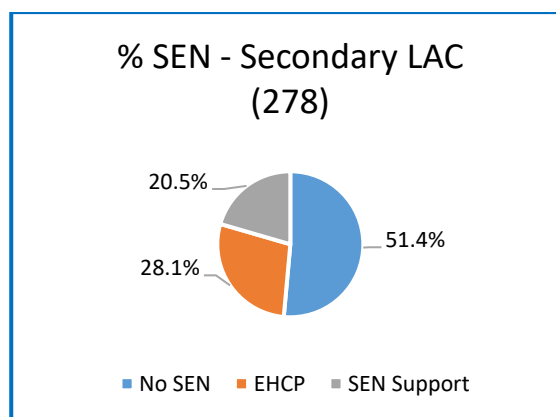
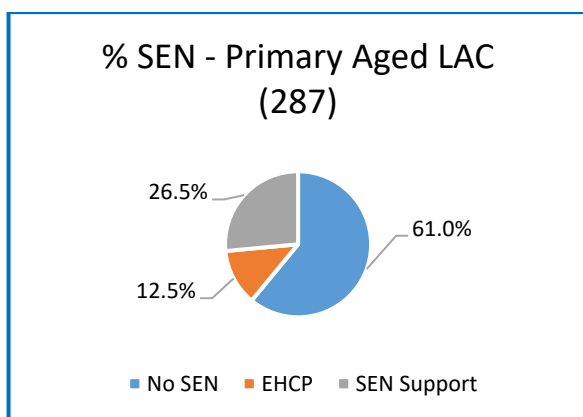
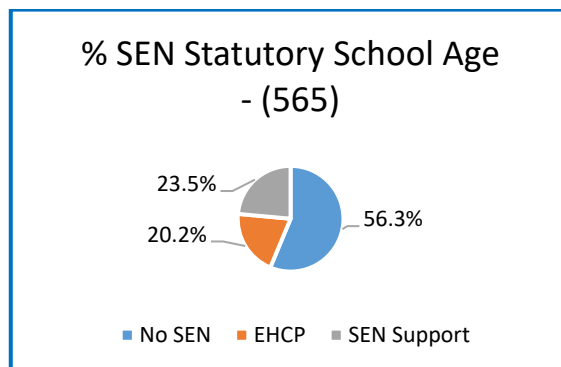
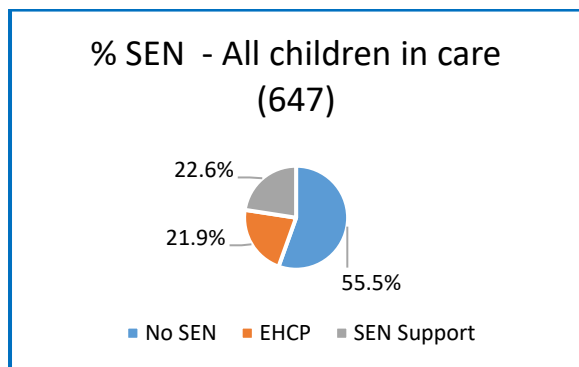
Table 4: Number of CLA with SEND by year group July 2019 (for academic year 2018-19)

Year	EHCP	K Code
0	2	1
1	2	8
2	5	10
3	4	11
4	7	16
5	10	16
6	6	14
7	14	13
8	15	14
9	12	10
10	16	7
11	22	12
Total	115	132

⁵ DfE March 2018 Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities in England, 31 March 2017

The trend over the last 3 years follows the pattern of the numbers of young people with an EHCP increasing through key stage 3 and 4. The percentage with an EG+HCP doubles from primary to secondary school and by post 16 almost triples.

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

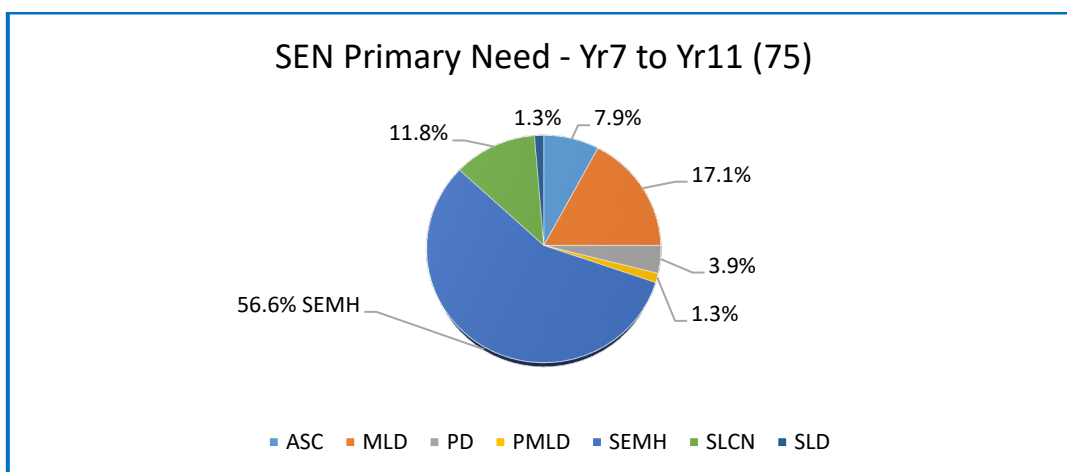
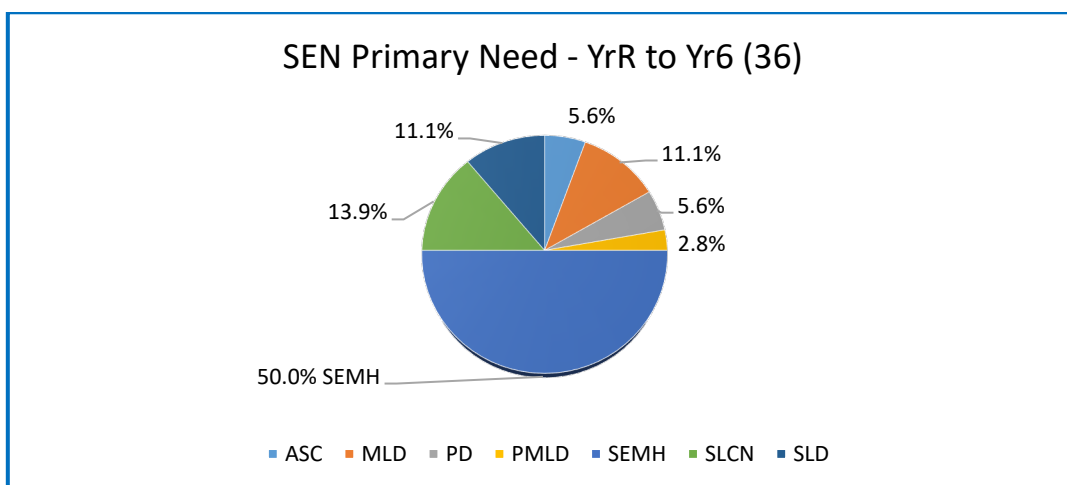


3.5 What are the primary needs of our cohort with an EHCP?

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 54.5% of

our young people (R-yr11) have SEMH identified as their primary need, an increase of 4.5% from 2018. This increases to 56.6% at secondary school age. We are addressing this through raising awareness with schools and supporting them to be more attachment and trauma informed, so that they can respond more effectively to social and emotional needs and challenging behaviour. We also provide additional therapeutic support and swifter access to counselling and an educational psychologist so that needs can be met. Our casework team has expertise in SEND and offers strong advice and support through the SEND process. To meet this need for 2019-20 we have used the PP+ grant to increase our counselling offer and we are hoping to secure a Full Circle Social Worker. We are also looking to buy into an SLA, using de-delegated funding, with the Emotional Wellbeing and Effective Learning Team for early intervention. We also provide dedicated Occupational Therapy and Speech and Language support to help to support our children in care with SEND.

Table 5: 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 work closely with schools to ensure 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;
- working with the school SENCO to put in place a SEN Support Plan;
- supporting the school in requesting additional top up funding through the High Needs Budget if required to meet need;
- facilitating the statutory assessment process;
- continuing to support if a child moves to specialist provision to meet their needs.

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

The virtual school caseworkers are situated within the SEND, Looked After Children and Vulnerable Groups Team (SLAVG) and are all experienced in SEND casework. The virtual school head and deputy attend panel meetings where statutory assessment, top up funding and complex cases are considered so that we can advocate for the children in our care. We work closely with social workers and increasingly closely with health teams within this process.

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 and provided some additional funding to identified schools to support awareness raising. From April 2019, we allocated the DfE additional funding⁶ 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. 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.

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

According to the January Census 2019, there are currently 542 previously looked after children on roll in Durham schools (maintained).

The breakdown is:

⁶ Sec 31 Extension of the Role of Virtual School Heads to Certain Previously Looked after Children Implementation Grant Determination Letter 2018-19 [GR1000509] [No. 31/3353]

	Ceased to be looked after through:
305	Adoption
178	Special Guardianship Order
59	Child arrangements / Residence Order

Not all adoptive parents want schools to record the status of their children, so these figures reflect those who have shared the information. The data is from the census for maintained schools. An additional 171 previously looked after children are on the roll of academies in Durham.

Whilst these children are not on the roll of Durham Virtual School and we do not monitor the progress of individual children, this extends the reach and remit of our support and advice for those of statutory school age to over 1000 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 and series 20 as a more aspirational one from 2020. As our cohorts are small and vary in terms of their profile from year to year it is difficult to measure trends. The following summaries consider national expectations at EY/KS1/2 and GCSE outcomes at KS4 against their peers nationally and regionally, against the whole Durham cohort and against their targets.

5.1 How well do our children achieve in Early Years?

There were 18 children in the reporting cohort for 2018/19. 10 of these were in Durham schools and settings.

Provisional EYFS Profile data for 2018 notes that 22.2% of Durham's children who were looked after achieved a Good Level of Development (GLD) compared to 47% regionally and 38% nationally. This is significantly lower than Durham's previous performance (60%). There were 18 Children in the reporting cohort for 2018/19, although only 16 children were entered. One child was not entered for their EYFSP and will repeat their reception year whilst the other child had delayed entry into reception remaining in nursery education. 4 children achieved GLD with 1 child exceeding across the prime areas. Of the remaining 12 children - 9 had SEND, including 2 children with EHCPs and the further 3 children's outcomes reflected their very low on entry data with all 3 children changing placement and moving out of county within their reception year.

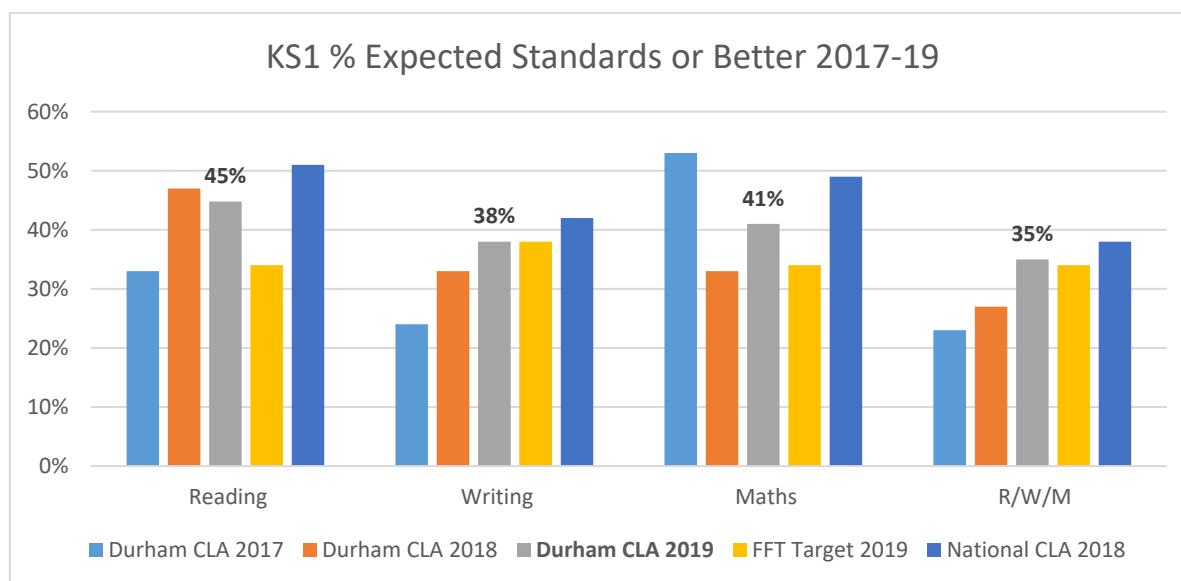
5.2 How well do our children achieve at Key Stage 1?

With 29 children in the reporting cohort, this is almost double the number in 2018. There were 41 children in care at the time of the tests:

- 5 children were supported by an EHCP and 4 of these attended special schools, 8 more had identified SEN support plans. 5 of the 13 children with identified needs were working at P scales 1 and 2. Overall 38% had an identified need.

- 26 of the 29 children attended a good or outstanding school (89.6% of the cohort). Those not in these schools were well supported to make progress.
- 13 girls and 16 boys in the reporting cohort.
- 5 children continue to work at P scales
- 10 children, 6 girls and 4 boys achieved EXS+ across the board
- 5 children (17.2%) achieved greater depth at each measure, with 3 boys and 1 girl achieving this across RWM.

Table 5: Reporting cohort KS1 29 children



15 children (51.2%) also achieved EXS in Science compared to 40% in 2018. The gap with all Durham children continues to be too wide with a 31% gap in reading. In writing and maths, it is still too wide but is now reducing.

We are working very closely with Durham Learning Resources to explore ways of supporting reading more effectively with foster carers and schools to promote both a love of reading and comprehension. We launched our Curious Kids book packs in February and have had good feedback. A training session for carers was very well attended and very well received but is not yet making a difference at KS1. We are developing this further with the expertise of our EYFS colleagues in 2019-20.

5.3 What does the phonics data tell us?

Proportion of CLA meeting the standard by end of Y1 in 2019:

In 2019 the proportion of Durham CLA meeting the standard was 50%: this is below the provisional 2019 NCER national average (64%) and the DFE region for the north east (68%). The size and needs / circumstances of the cohort means it is difficult to identify trends.

Proportion of CLA meeting the standard by end of Y2 in 2019:

In 2019 the proportion of CLA meeting the phonics standard increased by 3.7%age points to 71.4% The proportion of CLA meeting the standard increased from below in 2018 (-3.3%) to

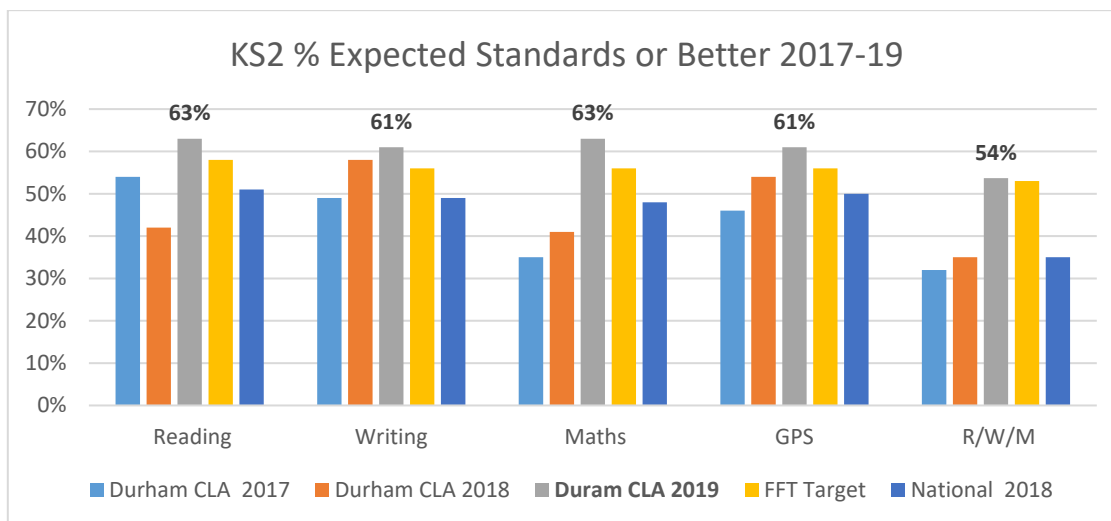
o.4, expected to be above the national average for 2019. This is a positive picture, but with a small cohort.

5.4 How well do our children achieve at Key Stage 2?

The reporting cohort at KS2 was 41; there were 55 children in care at the time of the tests.

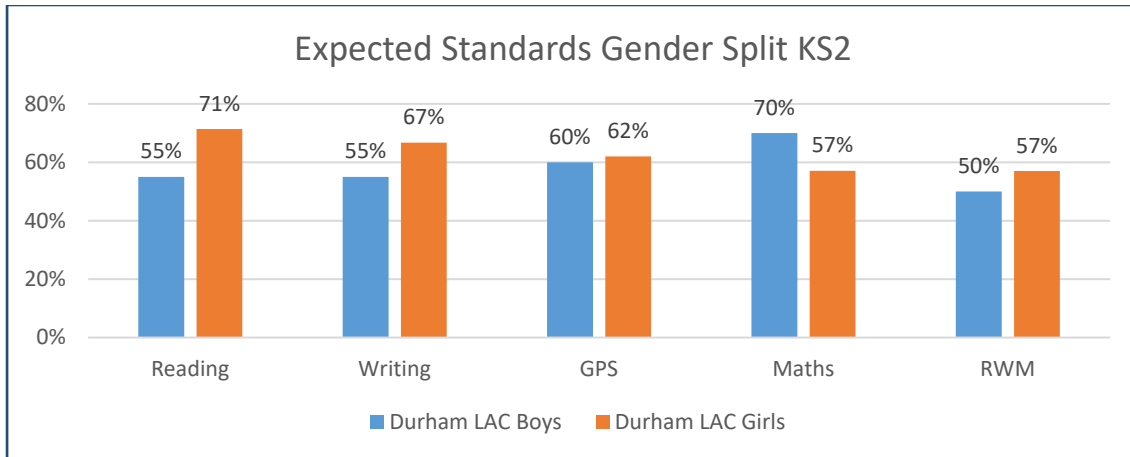
- 21 boys and 20 girls in the reporting cohort.
- 6 children supported by EHCPs and a further 10 have SEND support plans. Overall 39% have an identified need.

Table 5: Reporting Cohort KS2



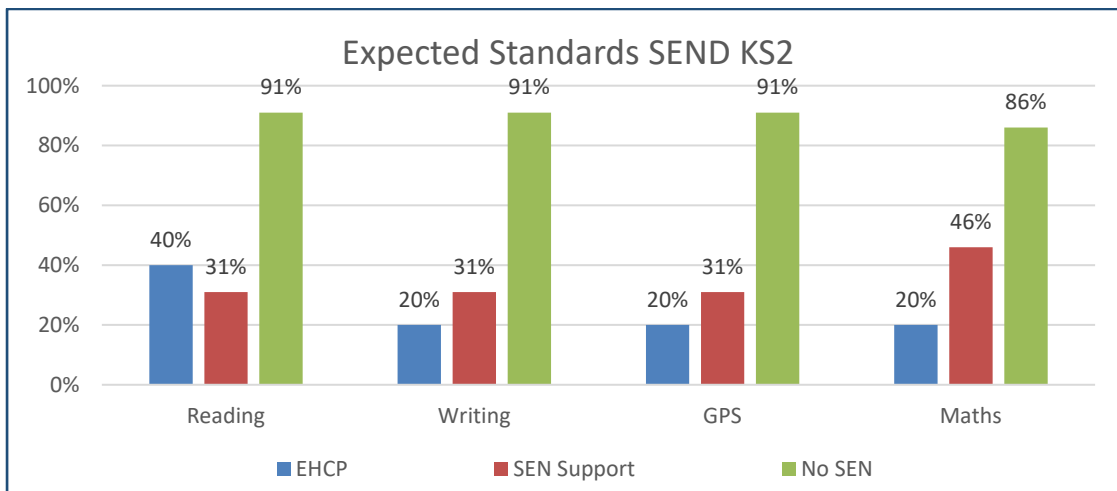
Having identified reading as a focus following the 2018 outcomes, we are delighted to report a 21% increase this year and with a positive progress score. Whilst this cannot be attributed to one strategy, we believe the combination of making this high profile with carers, schools and education development partners, launching the Curious Kids project with both fiction and non-fiction books, and delivering training have all contributed. This outcome bucks the emerging national trend of a dip in reading for all children which was also seen across Durham schools. Maths has also increased significantly (+22%). 22 children achieved EXS+ across RWM. 3 children achieved higher/ greater depth standard at RWM which is 7.3% against a Durham average for all children of 10% and is likely to be above the national average for the cohort of children in care. This cohort was consistently above FFT series 50 targets and therefore we will look at adding FFT 20 for future analysis.

Table 6: Reporting Cohort Gender Gap at KS2



The gender gap in reading in favour of girls is mirrored in maths but in favour of boys. Both boys and girls have improved significantly across the board and emerging data suggests both will be above the national averages for the cohort. For girls in reading there is just 6% between the whole Durham cohort and the CLA cohort and for boys there is just 9% difference in maths. We will explore the reasons for the gender gaps.

Table 7: Reporting Cohort SEND



Our children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) achieve better than the same cohort nationally. Those without SEND achieve significantly better, but those on SEND support plans are below their peers nationally at all measures. This will be an area to highlight with headteachers and LA leadership advisers for 2019-20

5.5 How much progress did our children make between KS1 and KS2?

Durham children in care started from a higher KS1 average point score than their peers nationally and regionally.

- Reading was positive at plus 0.25 against a negative score for all Durham children.
- Writing was negative at minus 0.69.
- Maths was negative at minus 0.51

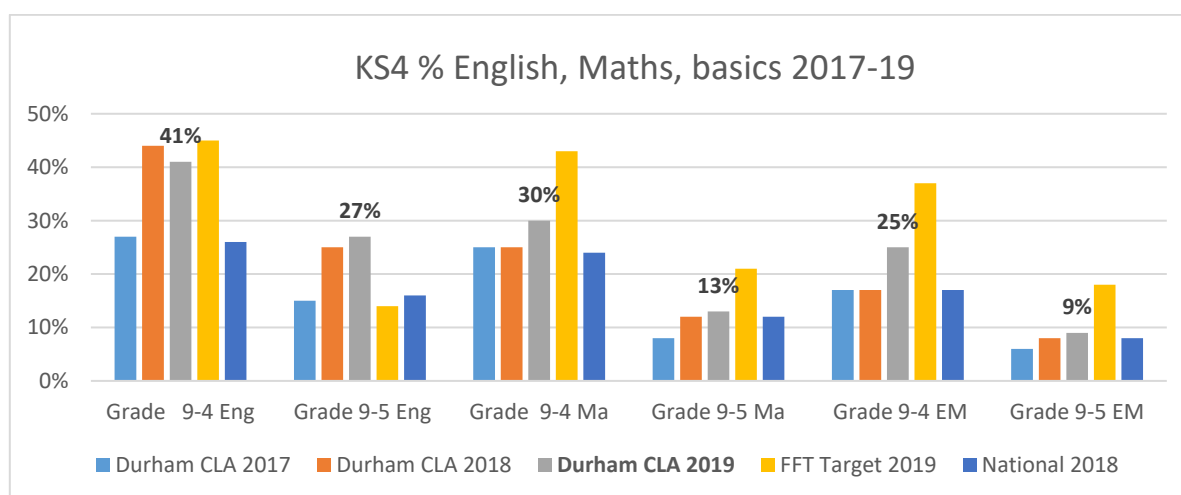
Whilst writing and maths are disappointing, we believe they may be better than the national average based on emerging data. Given the size of the cohort, confidence intervals need to be considered.

5.6 How well do our young people achieve in English and Maths KS4

There were 56 young people in the reporting cohort with a full cohort of 64.

- 54% boys and 46% girls
- 26 pupils with identified need, 46% of year group.
- 14 of these with an EHCP, 25% of year group, a reduction of 14% from 2018.
- 42 were on the roll of a mainstream school and 14 (25%) of the year group attended a specialist school or setting or secure provision. A small minority attended alternative provision in year 11.
- A small number of our young people who had targets of 4+ were not able to take GCSE exams due to their circumstances.

Table 8: KS4 English, Maths and Basics Outcomes

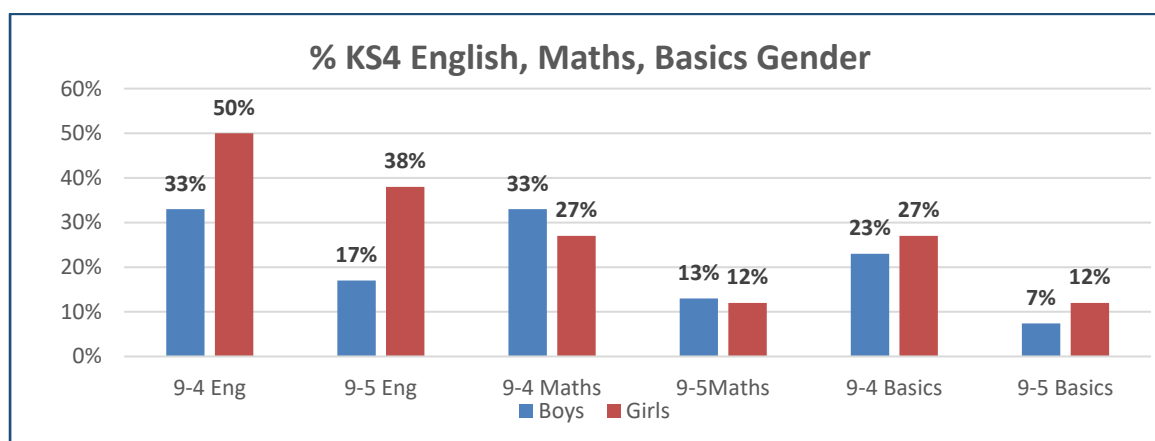


We are delighted to report further improvement from 2018, with a positive 3-year trend at most measures. At English 9-4 results showed a slight dip (3%, equivalent to 2 pupils). This followed a 17% increase the previous year. The 3-year increase at 9-5 is a result of targeting higher

grades and instilling higher expectations. This year our young people deserve congratulations for achieving 4 grade 7s and 1 grade 9 between them in English and Maths.

Outcomes continue to be below FFT targets (50 series), but this is a national trend. We shared our concerns about 2018 maths outcomes with schools and provided maths tutors for many of the cohort and we are pleased that this subject shows signs of improvement. We were able to offer tutoring in a range of subjects this year, held revision session and worked with therapeutic services for those young people who were very anxious about exams. 4 young people with identified needs achieved grade 4+ in English, 5 achieved this in maths, 3 achieved both, a real achievement. There are still gaps with all Durham children, but we expect these results to be above the national averages for children in care.

Table 9: Gender Breakdown at KS4



The gender gap noted in KS2 (girls outperform boys in reading and writing, boys outperform in maths) followed through into KS4. However more girls matched both maths and English. We continue to try to support schools to ensure more young people can achieve at least a level 4 in both English and maths.

5.7 How well do our young people achieve across all subjects (A8 and P8)?

The A8 score for the reporting cohort increased again in 2019, rising from 23.2 in 2018 to 24.2 in 2019. We are very aware that our looked after young people are more likely to achieve GCSE grades at mainstream school. However, special or alternative provision was the appropriate provision to meet the needs of these students during KS4 who made some progress from their starting points but did not achieve in line with FFT expectations.

The gap with all Durham young people is reducing for the basics measure, particularly at grades 9-4. However, we are concerned that some of our looked after young people did not achieve L2 qualifications, despite strong KS2 results and this is an area for development.

The 2019 progress 8 (P8) score for Durham children in care is expected to be slightly lower than last year.

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

In the last academic year 2 young people in year 13 successfully completed A level or equivalent courses. Both got strong results with one going on to study aerospace engineering

at university. The other YP wants to resit one A level to improve her grade to secure the university course she wants

In 2017, there were 4,272 Year 11 school leavers. 5 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 out 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. We have also seen an increase in works experience opportunities available within our own council 4 care leavers were successful in securing apprenticeships in the launch 1 ring fenced traineeships with Clean and Green

5.9 What were the destinations for our young people?

Table 11: 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

Table 12: Destinations post 16 2017

Destination	No of 2017 Year 11 School Leavers	% of 2017 Year 11 School Leavers	No of 2017 Year 11 School Leavers CLA/CL	% of 2017 Year 11 School Leavers CLA/CL
Total Participation in Learning (including custodial sentence)	4513	94.2	42	82.4
Re-engagement	32	0.7	0	0.0
Temporary Break in Learning	21	0.4	<5	2.0
Employment without training	45	0.9	0	0.0
NEET Total	140	2.9	7	13.7
Other including destination not known	41	0.9	<5	2.0

Table 13 Destinations post 16 2016

Destination	No of 2016 Year 11 School Leavers	% of 2016 Year 11 School Leavers	No of 2016 Year 11 School Leavers CLA/CL	% of 2016 Year 11 School Leavers CLA/CL

Total Participation in Learning (including custodial sentence)	4930	95.7	56	88.9
Re-engagement	20	0.4	0	0.0
Temporary Break in Learning	16	0.3	<5	1.6
Employment without training	37	0.7	<5	1.6
NEET Total	126	2.4	<5	6.3
Other including destination not known	24	0.5	<5	1.6

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

The following table shows the proportion of Children in care and Care Leavers aged 16-18 who are: Participating in Learning, Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), and whose current destination is Not Known – compared to the rest of the 16-18 cohort. This data relates to the period between December and February, when the cohort of young people is considered to be at its most stable. It is worth noting that the cohort size for certain groups of identified young people e.g. Children in care, Care Leavers etc. are small, which can have a disproportionate impact on percentages.

Table 13: 2015 –18 Participation in EET of Children Looked After / Care Leavers aged 16 +

	December 2015 %	December 2016 %	December 2017 %	December 2018 %
Education	39.9	43.4	46.1	49.8
Employment	7.4	13.1	11.6	15.2
Training	5.5	5.6	5.0	5.7
Re-engagement Activities	0.7	4.4	2.5	0.9
Total EET	53.5	66.5	65.1	71.6
NEET	36.2	28.7	27.4	25.6
Not Known	9.9	1.2	5.8	1.9
Combined NEET and Not Known	46.1	29.9	33.2	27.5

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 programme specially designed to meet the needs of Care Leavers. The Service is also developing a Supported Internship programme for young people, including Care Leavers, who have Special Educational Needs.

Since the commencement of DurhamWorks, 520 young people who have been supported by the programme have identified themselves as Looked After or a Care Leaver. Of these 181 have completed the programme, with 154 progressing into education, employment and training destination – a progression rate of 85.1%. have engaged with the programme.

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

Encouraging and supporting more Care Leavers to progress into higher education is a key ambition of Durham County Council, to enable them to fulfil their potential and to have the opportunity to access graduate level career opportunities. There are currently 17 Care Leavers within higher education and 3 Care Leavers due to commence university from September 2019. 4 Care Leavers have recently graduated. Whilst at university, Care Leavers receive ongoing support from a designated Young People's Service support worker. Durham County Council also has links with the North East Raising Aspirations Partnership to raise awareness of higher education and support available to Care Leavers, through its 'Choices Together' Programme. Regional Higher Education Institutions are also represented on the multi-partnership group referred to above.

5.12 How did we make a difference for care leavers?

B is 20 years old and initially engaged in DurhamWorks in October 2016. At the time B was referred by her Social Worker as she had previously been attending college to study Health and Social Care but had left after 6 months due to her unstable home life.

B lacked confidence in her own abilities and often felt anxious about meeting new people and in new situations. Despite her difficult home life, B achieved good GCSE's and the initial focus for support was developing a CV, ordering a birth certificate and collecting certificates from school. B often didn't attend arranged appointments which made progress problematic.

In March 2017, B began to commit to fully with DurhamWork and B was supported to gain an Apprenticeship in Customer Service in a local cake shop. B kept in touch with her DurhamWorks Advisor during this period who was delighted when, in March 2018, B successfully completed her Apprenticeship and obtained a permanent position in the cake shop.

In October 2018, B achieved an award for the great progress she had made. However, when B met up with her Advisor again in 2019 it was clear B wasn't happy in her role and had started to look for an alternative.

B continue to engage with her DurhamWorks Advisor and was informed of Apprenticeship opportunities that came available in Durham County Council. B was supported to complete her application form and with interview preparation. B was successful in gaining the Apprenticeship and will commence in September 2019.

6. Attendance and Exclusion

6.1 How well do our young people attend school?

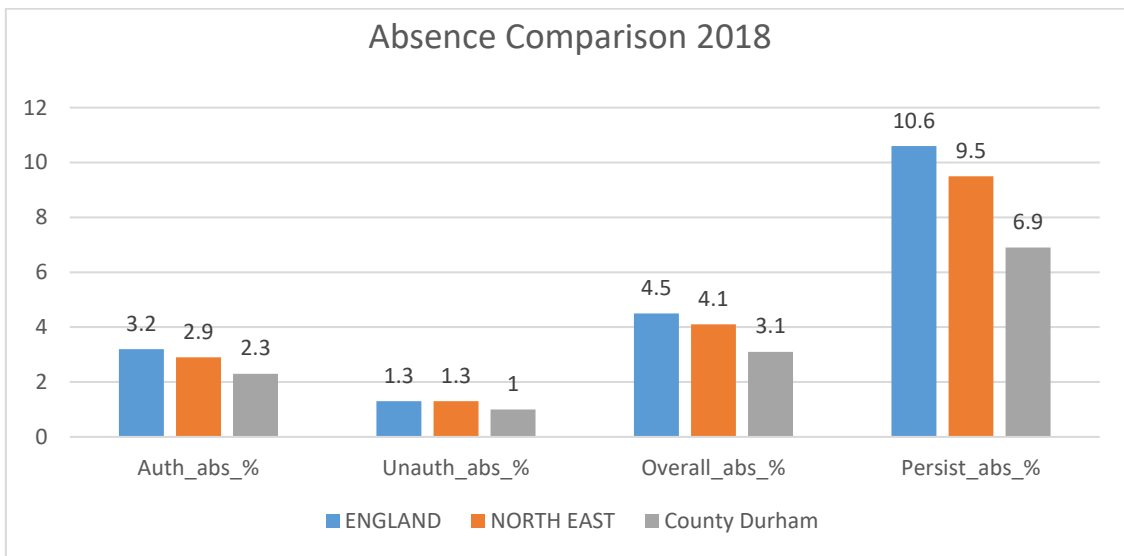
Attendance continues to be a strength of the virtual school. The slight increase in absence and persistent absence is in line with the national and local trend. However, we are monitoring this closely to ensure it does not increase further. The LAIT⁷ 2019 indicates that overall absence is lower than the national average placing us in the top quartile. We are in the second quartile for persistent absence.

Our own data for 2 terms 2019 shows that overall absence will be static at approximately 3%.

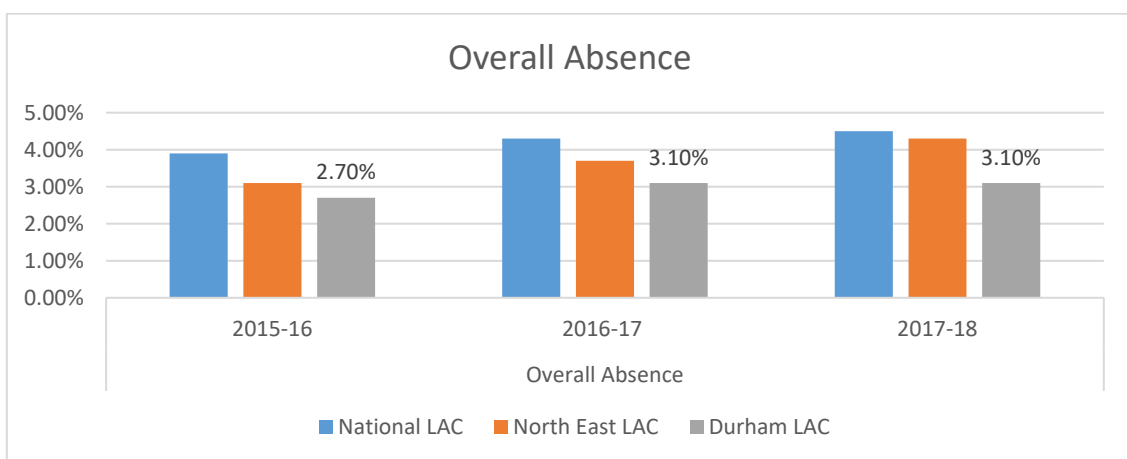
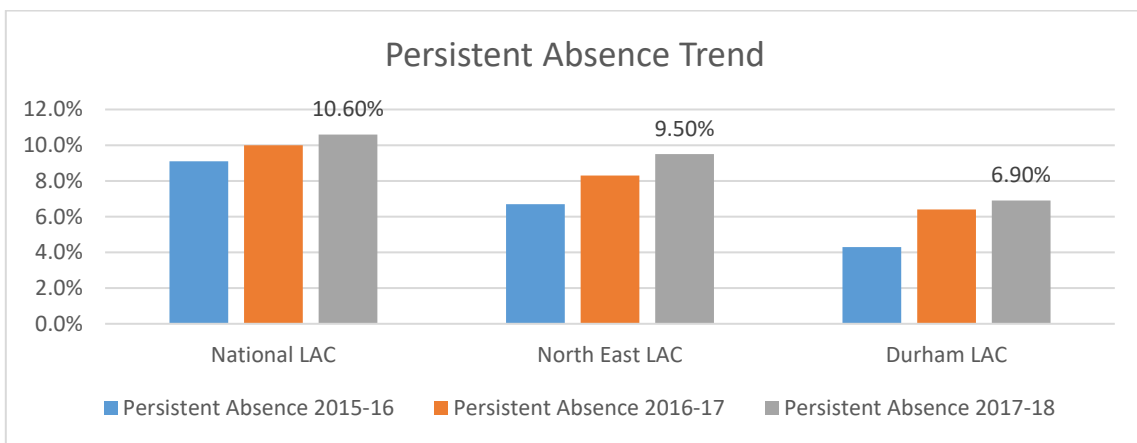
The strong attendance of our young people is testament to the work of the DVS casework team who maintain regular contact with both schools and carers and also to our schools who recognise the importance of attendance for children in care and young people and seek to engage them and meet their needs.

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-interactive-tool-lait>

Table 14: Absence rates for children in care 2018 (most recent whole year data)



Tables 15/16 Absence Trends for children in care 2016-18

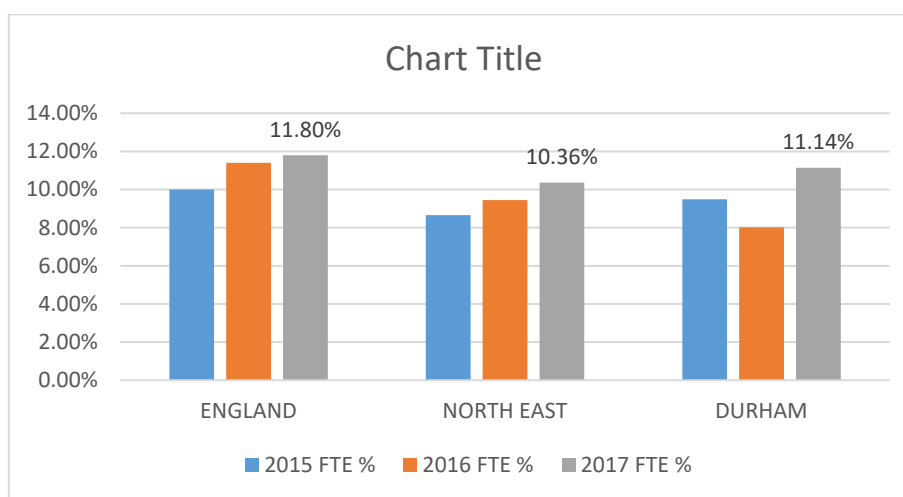


6.2 How many of our young people have been excluded?

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 increased in 2017⁸, the last year for which we have validated data. Whilst this is reflected in a national increase, we are concerned that the rate has risen faster in Durham. However, we remain in the second quartile nationally⁹. 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 an FTE to discuss alternative approaches.

Table 17: Fixed term Exclusions



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.

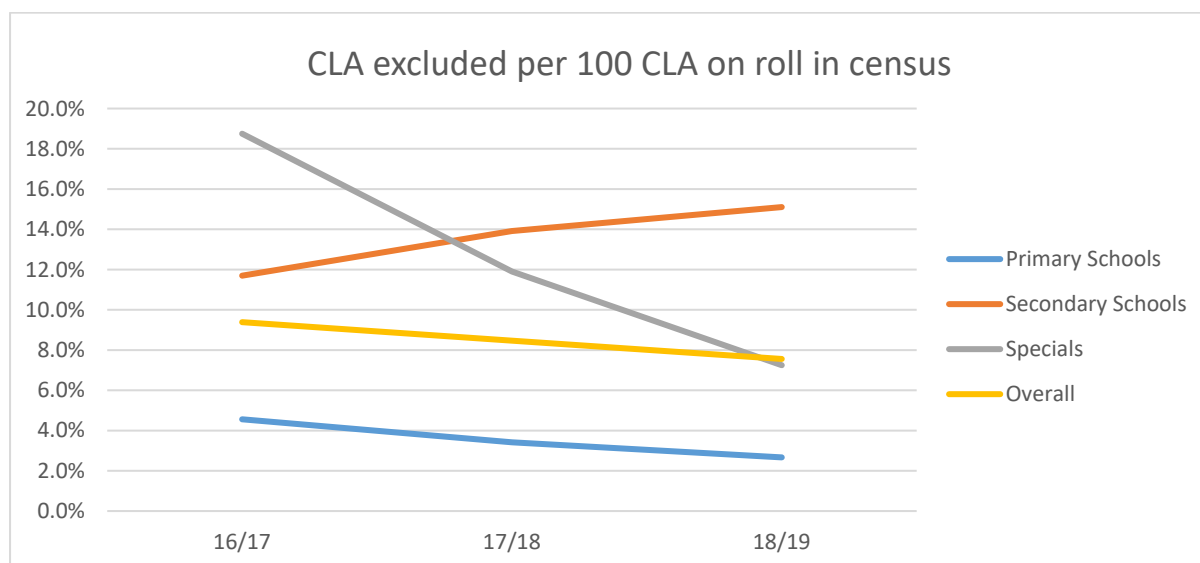
Updated analysis of Durham schools suggests that this is having an impact overall. This refers to the cohort of children in care on roll at the spring census in 2018¹⁹ and compares like for like over 3 years. There is a very significant drop in fixed term exclusion from special schools following our collaborative approach over the last 2 years. The increase at secondary has been a priority for us over the last term.

The VSH is working is part of the group commissioning ISOS to carry out a review of exclusion and alternative provision within the county. The final workshop takes place with schools in September 2019, and will inform both strategy and commissioning

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/outcomes-for-children-looked-after-by-las-31-march-2018>

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-interactive-tool-lait>

going forward, underpinned by the findings of the Timpson Review. The VSH has shared the key messages from The Timpson report with the casework team.



7. Admissions, transitions, managed moves and OOC placements

We work hard to meet our statutory duty to avoid any 'drift and delay'¹⁰ 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 0-25.

7.1 How many children moved school mid-year?

In 2018-19, 55 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 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

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-the-education-of-looked-after-children>

- 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 Virtual School made available additional Pupil Premium Plus to enable gaps in learning to be addressed.

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

70 (14%) of the school age cohort (512 children and young people) were educated out of county in 2018-19.

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 have monitored this over the last 2 years and 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, we have worked with the Head of Service to refocus the remit of some caseworkers. With each cluster now having a dedicated virtual school worker advocating for the education of children in care, the implementation of an e-pep system through Welfare Call and the introduction of logging the completion of PEPs on Liquid Logic, we have been able to tighten procedure. We are confident this will enable swifter QA and, consequently, faster and more robust challenge to schools and settings where needed. We will embed this for statutory school age and then roll out to EYFS and Post 16.

We have identified early years and post 16 PEPs as an area for improvement and we are working closely with these teams to streamline practice and embed quality assurance. Our Early Years team has 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.

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. We have recently reviewed the effectiveness of the document for this and asked for the views of young people through the Children in Care Council (CiCC) who contributed their ideas to the new e-pep. We stress with schools that the PEP document is a snapshot, it is the implementation of the actions which make a difference.

8.3 What is the quality of the PEPs?

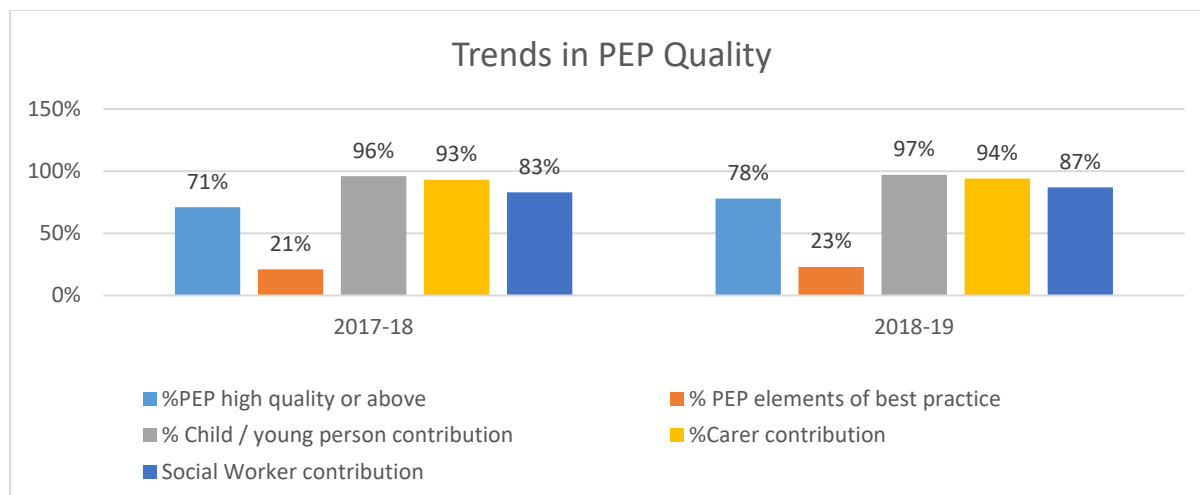
The PEP completion rate, (for young people of statutory school age, initial and new to care) for 2018-19 was 87%. Following chasing by the VS this increased to over 95%. As of May 2019 the quality of initial (Autumn Term) and new to care PEPs showed an improvement as a result some robust follow up by the virtual school head and team.

However, we know the quality is still not high enough or of sufficient consistency. We believe the introduction of an e-pep along with new and more robust QA procedures with standardisation carried out by smaller and more focused team, will make a difference. Our caseworkers will continue to challenge schools and share best practice to help them to improve the quality.

Training on the e-pep has taken place early September for designated teachers and we will provide bespoke training for social workers and carers as a follow up.

Whilst the numbers suggest this is an area for further improvement, the outcomes for children in care and young people indicate that the quality of educational provision for our children and young people is strong.

Table 18: Quality of PEPs Statutory School Age 2018-19



During the autumn term 2018-19 we challenged schools which 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. The impact was an increase in social workers attendance or contribution.

We have 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 post 16 PEPs had not previously been recorded by the virtual school. Baseline data for 2018-19 shows this must be a priority and we are working closely with the Young People's team to improve systems, processes, completion and quality assurance. In 2018 67% of those quality assured were considered to be of high quality. 94% of young people and social workers contributed, but only 66% of parent / carers.

8.4 How do we distribute pupil premium plus funding?

Durham Virtual School (DVS) publishes guidance for schools on the distribution of PP+. We adjusted our distribution for 2018-19 so that the funding is available without undue bureaucracy when a child enters care and to aid forward planning for schools. We now allocate £600 for the spring and autumn terms and £500 for the summer term. In line with the DfE guidance of Feb 2018¹¹, we have encouraged schools to look at evidenced practice and to consider how the funding can support the cohort of looked after and previously children in care as well provide individual intervention. Schools account for this on the yearly funding resource plan and identify where PP+ will support intervention on the PEP.

School leaders across the county were consulted through the Durham Association of both Primary and Secondary Headteachers (DAPH and DASH) support the retention of some of the PP+ to fund additional centrally managed support. For the financial year 2017-18 DVS retained £300 per child centrally. For 2018-19 we retained £600 from the increased funding and this will continue for 2019-20.

8.5 What is the centrally held budget spent on?

In 2018-19 Durham Virtual School retained approx. £ 392,000

This funding was used to provide the following centrally managed provision for Durham children in care:

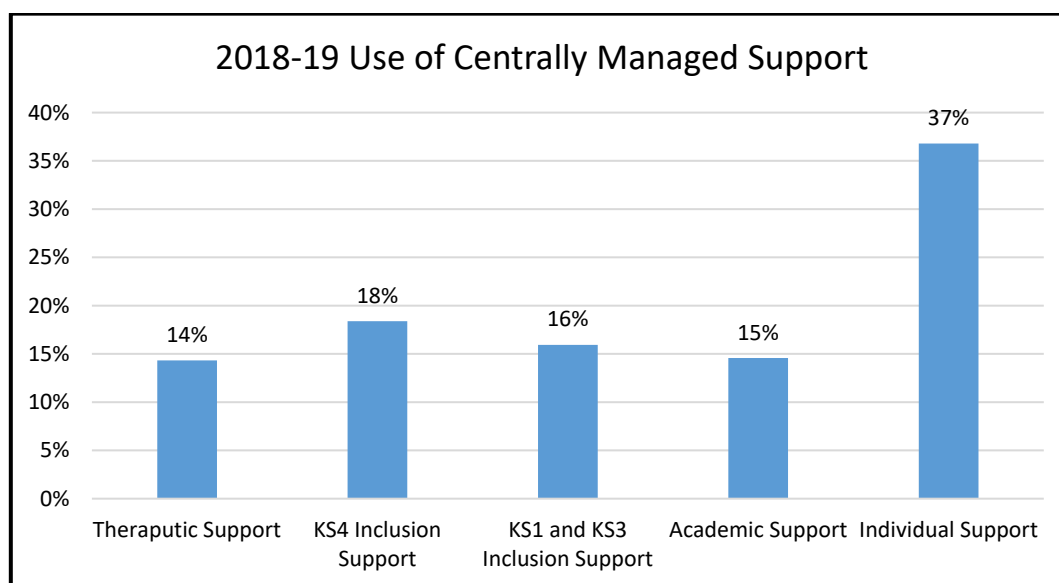
- Additional senior EP capacity for children in care
- Speech and Language therapeutic support
- Occupational Health support
- School Counsellor support for children in care – additional capacity to full time equivalent
- Supporting the development of the designated teacher role
- Curious Kids launch – reading packages for year 2 – 6 and training for carers
- Storytime magazine subscription to promote a love of stories for reception and year one children

¹¹

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

- 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) This was very new in the spring term 2019 and will be reviewed for impact at Christmas 2019. Initial anecdotal feedback is positive.
- Recruitment of a Full Circle Therapeutic Social Worker attached to the virtual school for one year – this is in process for the autumn term 2019 and is in response to requests from schools for additional support for emotional wellbeing and readiness to learn.
- Targeted resources / materials for identified children
- 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 during a period of crisis at school.
- Off-site inclusion support for KS3 and KS4 children at risk from exclusion is supported by maintained schools de-delegated funding.

Table 19: How we spent the retained PP+



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 documented¹². 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 2019-20 as we increase the allocation of retained funding to inclusion and

¹² Amongst other: Attachment in the Classroom Heather Geddes 2006; The Attachment Aware School Series Louise Bomber 2016;

therapeutic support. We are trialling an app for teachers to help them quickly assess behaviours through a trauma and attachment lens and access strategies to help them manage this and we have provided The Attachment Aware Series for all secondary schools.

We also provided additional resources to schools for books, reading materials, programmes and we allocated funding to each inclusion panel (4 secondary, 1 primary) to promote inclusion and support appropriate pathways within the geographical location.

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

We offer twilight and holiday sessions for young people to support them to fill gaps in knowledge or build confidence. In addition, we provided 1061 hours of direct support. Every child in year 6 and 11 is entitled to five sessions of tutoring at no cost to the school. Last academic year we supported 103 young people individually and provided 8 small group interventions. The impact is evident in the outcomes. In addition, 26 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. 65% of them made a successful reintegration to their schools. 588 half days of inclusion support was provided ranging from just 2 or 3 days to longer term provision three days a week which included preparation for GCSE examinations. We also provided this for four out of county children in care. We also commission three places at The Bridge turnaround base which is part of The Woodlands, nine pupils accessed this in 2018-19.

8.7 What therapeutic support do we provide from central funding?

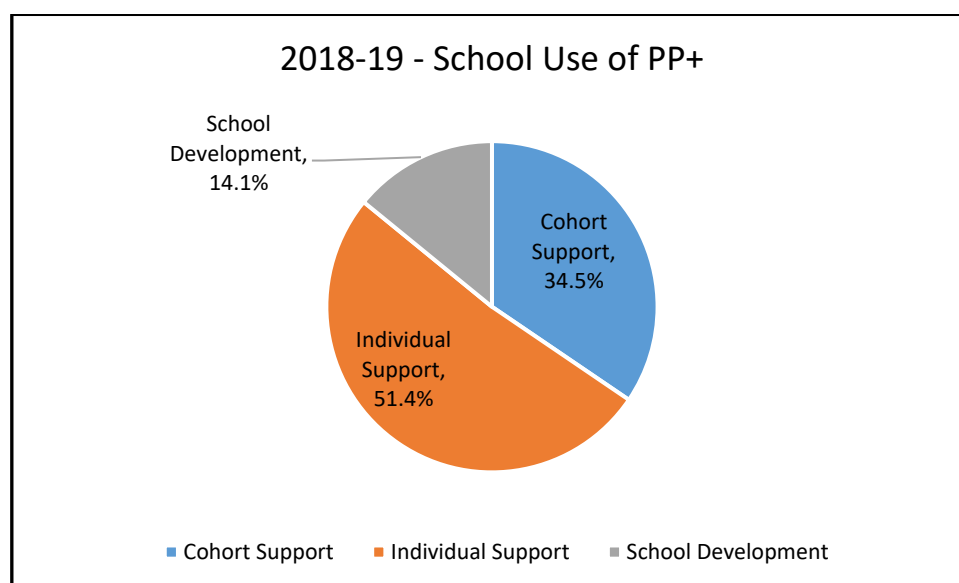
We offer access to SALT, Occupational Therapy, Counselling and additional Educational Psychology Time. The EP has been involved with approximately 50 young people in the last academic year, some directly and some through advice and support. She has provided consultation, training, individual assessment and follow up, input to PEP reviews and LAR. This work has also supported children living out of county and children in the care of other authorities but living in Durham. This work is highly valued by schools and carers as it provides expert input more quickly and effectively.

Our counselling provision has supported 30 children in 2018-19, mostly at primary level. This has been particularly effective for children and young people at times of transition. The team receive very positive feedback from children and carers.

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.

8.8 How do schools spend their allocation?

In 2018-19 our total PP+ budget was £1,419,648. Schools were allocated £1,700 of the government allocation of £2,300 in 3 instalments. In total, approximately £1,028, 503 was provided to schools 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.

Table 20: How schools spent their PP+ budget

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 Director'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. The best attended session and best received session of 2018-19 was led by Maria Catterick from FASD Network UK.¹³ This drew in representatives from early years settings, schools, academies and post 16 providers and demonstrated the desire of our educational setting to know more and respond better.

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.

From September 2018 we have started to develop attachment awareness in secondary school so that they can review policies and develop an ethos which understands and includes some of the most vulnerable and challenging young people. To support this, we distributed The Attachment Aware School Series by Louise Bomber to every secondary school attending a training session in the Autumn Term. We are linking with the Educational Psychology Team

¹³ <http://www.fasdnetwork.org/>

as they work with Kate Cairns Associates to encourage attachment aware schools. From 2019 we will develop a more cohesive plan led by two of the team managers.

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 VSH has been involved in a task and finish group to review the SDQ practice in Durham and develop new practice guidance to improve participation and return and to implement triangulation of the scores. This came into practice in July 2019 and it is too early to measure the impact within schools. Schools have been informed and this will be reviewed on a regular basis. There is a clear process for referral to Full Circle for those with high scores and improved processes for sharing this information schools to help them plan.

10.2 How does our Educational Psychologist make a difference?

The EP for the Virtual School (0.5 full time equivalent) was involved with just short of 50 young people between September 2018 and July 2019. Consultation has also been provided to the Virtual School and SEND Caseworkers regarding un-named individual children, not formally referred. The work typically involved:

Individual assessment with the child (incorporating observation and discussion with key adults) to establish or clarify the nature of their SEND, ensuring appropriate understanding and provision. Following assessment, appropriate further referrals or review of existing input have been made, ensuring that the provision 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) involved 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. School staff are a great resource for our young people and much of the work of the EP involves supporting them professionally and personally.

Training staff and other colleagues in the LA. Such training has had attachment and emotional wellbeing as its focus. This is increasingly pertinent as the Mental Health in Schools agenda develops with significant challenges for school staff in terms of curriculum and intervention.

Attending PEPs, CTMs, LAR reviews and statutory annual reviews to support good decision making for children in care.

Most of the work undertaken was for Durham children in care, educated in Durham. Work has also been completed for non-Durham CLA attending Durham schools and Durham CLA educated outside Durham. Work has been across all Key Stages and in nursery and across mainstream and specialist provision. The EP has also provided some support for adopted children.

Impact includes:

- 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;
- Children who might otherwise be excluded or moved into alternative provision remaining in mainstream school;
- Learning difficulties identified (where 'behaviour' is to the fore) to enable the child's needs to be better understood and met;
- Facilitating access to other services where there is a gap in provision identified;
- Continuity of service where repeated changes of carer and school can lead to children missing out on services/'falling through the gaps'.

Examples of impact include:

- The extent of a child's profound communication difficulties being fully recognised, services remobilised, assessments undertaken, and appropriate provision being made through the EHCP annual review process such that the child is now talking.
- A secondary age pupil's reported difficulty with processing and memory being more helpfully explained by reference to difficulties in understanding language including non-literal language with implications for how she is supported.
- A very challenging reception age child's extreme behaviours being reframed in terms of his severe trauma and marked learning difficulties with implications for his curriculum and the approaches used allowing his continued inclusion in his local mainstream school where a change of placement had looked likely
- Primary school staff reporting feeling more able to understand and meet the needs of their children in care after attachment aware training.

10.3 How do our counsellors make a difference?

30 children and young people accessed counselling this year with most referrals from primary schools. There was an almost even gender split.

Many of the young people referred have experienced trauma and neglect and were going through transitions or waiting to find out about their future living arrangements, so prevalent themes in the work have been in supporting these transitions and managing the feelings that surface in times of uncertainty. Other presenting issues that have been around anxiety, exploring identity, self-esteem, anger, bereavement and loss, separation from siblings and peer relationships. Many of the referrals have also included difficulties in school including challenging behaviour and building relationships with staff.

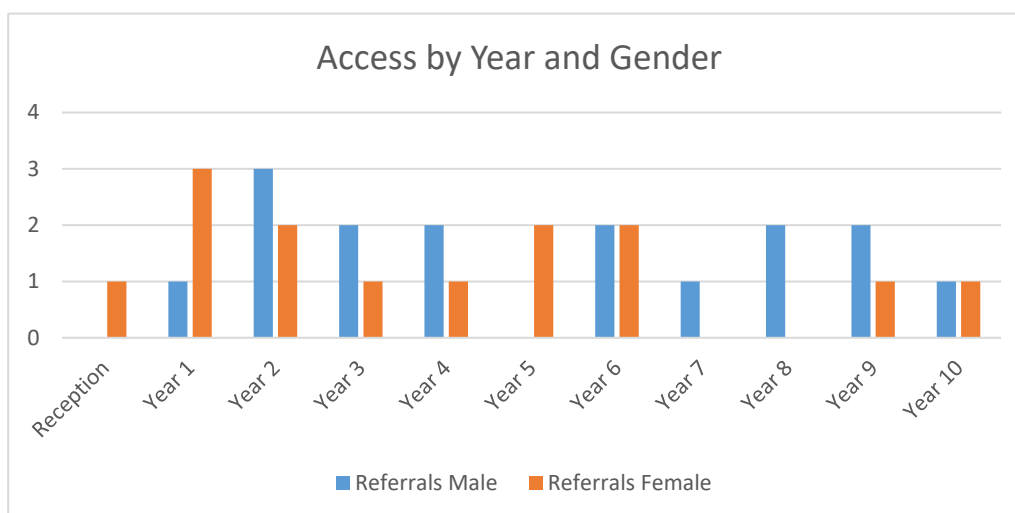
Attendance has been excellent 2018-19.

Feedback from children and young people:

What was the best thing about counselling?

- “Having someone who would listen to what I have to say”
- “It helps me with my worries”
- “Talking to someone neutral”
- “Helps me relax”

Feedback from staff and carers:



- “Xs confidence has grown so much – she has a circle of friends who really like her, whereas before, she would mainly play on her own”
- “X isn’t seeking my attention anymore in class like he was before, he just seems happy to be part of the class”
- “X has been working extra hard and has recently got a lot of star points. She is accepting praise now for her careful work”
- “X seems much more happy in herself and is spending more time with us downstairs as a family”

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 do not wish to attend so we have adjusted our recording to enable them to complete their sections at a different time. We are consulted with the Children in Care Council (CiCC) about the new e-pep.

We want to extend the opportunities to hear young people and enable them to inform practice so in 2019-20 we will be:

- looking to bring members of the CiCC to designated teacher training
- working closely with newly appointed engagement officer
- offering drop-ins for children and young people to discuss their education provision and experience
- encouraging schools to listen to the children and young people and let us know what they like and what they want to change.

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.
- Reward trips
- University experiences

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 2019-20 to support enrichment?

This is a focus for us for 2019-20 as the restructured team embeds.

- Music event, working with Durham Service
- Developing links with museums including a training session for carers at Beamish
- Exploring visits to theatres / attending local events / visiting new places / university experiences
- Celebration of reading event

12.3 How do we celebrate success?

Care leavers' achievements are recognised at the annual Epic Awards. There is also a celebration event for younger children. We have a reading celebration event planned for the autumn term 2019. This is an area we are developing.

13. Summary

In terms of educational achievement, most of our young people have made significant progress and achieved strong outcomes amid an improving picture. Attainment at KS1 remains below the national average and therefore a concern, but there is a positive trend. There were very strong outcomes at KS2 and KS4. Our aim continues to be to close the gap. 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 a small dedicated 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. With the readjustment within the recent restructure to create a small dedicated virtual school team to work in partnership across education, health, social care and early help, we are looking forward to building partnerships which will enable a seamless journey from 0-25.

14. Outline Priorities for 2019-20

- Improve KS1 outcomes towards national averages
- Encourage more children to achieve high scores / greater depth at KS2
- Improved progress scores for all young people
- Improve reading / English for boys and maths for girls
- Appropriate curriculum access / bespoke offers
- Work in partnership to develop clear academic and vocational pathways in preparation for adulthood
- Further raise awareness in secondary schools 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.

- Develop, with schools, enrichment and enhancement opportunities
- Celebrate success more effectively
- Listen more closely to the voice of the young person and respond more flexibly
- 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
- Ensure the readjustment to the casework team enhances our offer for children in care through support and challenge for schools - no negative impact as it embeds
- Develop and deliver on our offer for previously children in care

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

Education Durham Team Primary, Secondary and Special SLAs, EDAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Liaison with VSH and VS team for advice, challenge and support to schools and settings to improve outcomes
Wider SEND and Inclusion Team EPS, Equalities, EWEL teams	<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 ○ 0.5 of EP time support for schools, social workers, carers re SEMH and educational advice ○ FTE counselling support
Social Care, Health, Youth Offending Teams, Adoption, Full Circle	<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/ PCLA and carers / parents ○ Full Circle Social Worker attached to VS from Autumn 2019
Attendance, Admissions and Casework Teams	<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
Progression and Learning team / YPS	<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.
Schools, Colleges and Educational Settings Designated Teacher	<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