

Corporate Parenting Panel

26 January 2024

Supporting Care Leavers into Education, Employment or Training



Report of Helen Radcliffe, 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 provided to Care Leavers to enable them to progress into sustained post-16 education, employment or training.

Executive summary

- 2 A number of programmes and schemes have supported Care Leavers to make a sustained progression into post-16 education, employment or training during 2023. These included transition support for Children Looked After through the DurhamWorks Programme for Schools and the Workplaces Project, support for Care Leavers through DurhamWorks Programmes, a Sessional Employment Programme, a Pupil Premium Plus Post-16 Programme, as well as support for Care Leavers who are in Higher Education.
- 3 This report contains the latest performance data in relation to the participation of Care Leavers in education, employment or training.

Recommendation

- 4 Members of Durham County Council's Corporate Parenting Panel are requested to:
 - (a) Note the information contained in this report and the presentation that will be given at the meeting.

Background

- 5 A number of programmes and schemes have supported Care Leavers to progress into sustained post-16 education, employment or training, during 2023. These have included:
- (a) Support for Children Looked After to enable them to make a successful progression from Year 11 into post-16 education, employment or training through the DurhamWorks Programme for Schools and the Workplaces Project.
 - (b) Support for Care Leavers to maintain their place in post-16 education, employment or training, as well as support for those who become NEET (not in education, employment or training) through DurhamWorks Programmes.
 - (c) A programme to provide employment-based opportunities for Care Leavers within Durham County Council.
 - (d) Continued delivery of the Government's Pupil Premium Plus Post-16 Programme, to support the sustained participation of Care Leavers in Further Education.
 - (e) Support for Care Leavers who are in Higher Education.
 - (f) Support for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.

Progression Support

- 6 Children Looked After received support during the 2022-23 academic year through the DurhamWorks Programme for Schools. This programme provided support to help them to progress into sustained post-16 education, employment or training. Children Looked After accessed individual careers guidance; participated in group based activities focused on themes such as transition support, motivation, and work related learning; and received one-to-one mentoring support. Attendance at PEP reviews was also a key feature to ensure there was a partnership approach to transition support.
- 7 From September 2020 (when the programme commenced) to December 2023, 3,799 young people were supported by DurhamWorks Programme for Schools, including 217 Children Looked After. Of these, 2,849 young people progressed into a positive education, employment or training destination, including 134 Children Looked After. During the 2022-23 academic year, 1,524 young people were supported by the programme, including 70 Children Looked After. Of these, 1,145 progressed into a positive education, employment or training destination, including 53 Children Looked After. The proportion of

Children Looked After (75%) who progressed into a positive education, employment or training destination was at the same level as the overall cohort of young people who were supported by the DurhamWorks Programme for Schools during the 2022-23 academic year. Those young people who did not make an initial positive progression were supported by DurhamWorks through one of its post-16 re-engagement programmes.

- 8 The Workplaces Project provided opportunities for identified young people in Years 10 and 12, including Children Looked After, to gain a valuable insight into the world of work and find out about the skills and aptitudes that employers value through bespoke visits to employer premises. Young people learned about specific employment sectors, different job roles within those sectors, as well as recruitment processes. They also spent time with employees to find out about their pathways into work, in order to show them that employment is an achievable goal. Since the Workplaces Project commenced in June 2023, 441 young people have participated, including 12 Children Looked After.

DurhamWorks Programmes

- 9 Care Leavers were supported by DurhamWorks post-16 re-engagement programmes to enable them to progress into and remain in education, employment or training. Programmes included: DurhamWorks, DurhamWorks3 and DurhamWorks Futures.
- 10 DurhamWorks supported young people aged 16-24 who were NEET. Young people engaged with DurhamWorks received progression support, the opportunity to obtain English and maths qualifications, as well as access to a range of provision to support their progression into education, employment or training.
- 11 From January 2022 (when the programme commenced) until December 2023, 1,922 young people were supported by the DurhamWorks re-engagement element, including 25 Care Leavers. Of these, 1,381 young people successfully progressed into education, employment or training, including 18 Care Leavers. The proportion of Care Leavers (72%) who successfully progressed into education, employment or training was at the same level as the overall cohort of young people who were supported by DurhamWorks re-engagement element.
- 12 DurhamWorks3 supported vulnerable young people, including: young people who have SEND, Care Leavers, young people who have previously received a social care intervention, young parents, young people who were excluded from education and/or accessed alternative

education, young people who are offenders/at risk of offending, young carers, as well as young people with mental health issues.

- 13 DurhamWorks3 focused on securing employment outcomes for young people within a defined timeframe. Therefore, employer engagement activity was a key feature of the programme, including a DurhamWorks Grant that was available to SME businesses to support the employment of young people engaged by the Programme.
- 14 From January 2022 (when the programme commenced) until December 2023, 1,096 young people were supported by DurhamWorks3, including 77 Care Leavers. Of these, 545 young people successfully progressed into education, employment or training, including 35 Care Leavers.
- 15 DurhamWorks Futures, funded through the Youth Futures Foundation, supported young people in identified vulnerable groups, including: those who had previously received a Social Care intervention, those identified as SEN Support in school, those who had previously been excluded from education, as well as those who had previously attended alternative education. As young people in these specific cohorts are more at risk of experiencing significant labour market disadvantage than their peers, intensive support was provided in order to develop motivation, confidence and work ready skills within a defined timeframe. Since January 2022, 312 young people were supported by DurhamWorks Futures, including 13 Care Leavers. Of these, 172 young people successfully progressed into education, employment or training, including 6 Care Leavers.
- 16 Overall, 332 Children Looked After/Care Leavers were supported by DurhamWorks Programme for Schools and DurhamWorks re-engagement programmes, of which 193 have progressed into education, employment or training.

Future Support

- 17 From 2016 to December 2023, support for young people in County Durham who were NEET/at risk of becoming NEET, including support for young people in priority groups such as Children Looked After/Care Leavers, was greatly enhanced by funding provided through the European Social Fund. From January 2024, the two main sources of funding to support young people are Durham County Council's core budget and the United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).
- 18 Although the overall amount of funding to support young people to progress into education, employment or training is at a reduced level compared to what was available through the European Social Fund, it does ensure that support continues to be provided to young people who

are NEET or are at risk of becoming NEET, including Children Looked After/Care Leavers, through DurhamWorks from January 2024 to March 2025. This includes the DurhamWorks Programme for Schools for young people aged 15-16, the Workplaces Project for young people in Years 10 and 12 (funded by County Durham's Poverty Action Steering Group), support for Care Leavers up to the age of 21 through DurhamWorks re-engagement programme, support for young people aged 18-24 who are NEET through DurhamWorks Futures (funded by the Youth Futures Foundation), as well as support for young people aged 16-24 who are economically inactive through DurhamWorks UKSPF funded delivery.

Sessional Employment Programme

- 19 A Sessional Employment Programme continued to offer Care Leavers the opportunity of paid work experience within Durham County Council. Work placements were identified which met the talents, interests, and aspirations of each individual Care Leaver. A Sessional Employment Co-ordinator collaborated with Young People's Advisors from the Children's Social Care Service, colleagues from Human Resources, as well as Durham County Council Service Managers to deliver the programme. Since commencement in October 2021, 26 Care Leavers have accessed paid work experience placements.
- 20 Care Leavers can be in education, employment, training, or NEET to access Sessional Employment and work placements are paid at the rate of the Durham Living Wage. Examples of placements undertaken included Durham County Council's HR Department, farming in protected landscapes, the Gala Theatre, Durham County Council's Children and Young People's Services, Peterlee Pavilion, Meadowfield Depot and Leisure Centres.

Durham County Council Apprenticeships

- 21 Further activities were undertaken during 2023 to enhance the measures in place to support Care Leavers to progress into apprenticeships. This included liaising with Durham County Council HR staff to identify more ringfenced apprenticeship posts, as well as preparing Care Leavers to apply for apprenticeship vacancies through individual tailored support from DurhamWorks. There are currently 7 Care Leavers who are undertaking an apprenticeship with Durham County Council. DurhamWorks also supports Care Leavers to progress into apprenticeships within the private sector. There are currently 6 Care Leavers who are in apprenticeships, employed by a variety of businesses / organisations.

Pupil Premium Plus Post-16 Programme

- 22 Durham County Council continued to deliver the Government's Pupil Premium Plus Post-16 Programme. Funding has been used to appoint a dedicated adviser whose role is to support Care Leavers who are enrolled in Further Education, as well as provide a 'Keep In College' weekly cash incentive of £20 per week to Care Leavers with over 80% authorised attendance.
- 23 During the 2022-2023 academic year, 81 Care Leavers were supported by the scheme, of whom 61 maintained their placement. During the current 2023-2024 academic year, 149 Care Leavers are being supported by the scheme, following the decision to expand it to include Care Leavers attending sixth form colleges and other education and training providers.

Higher Education

- 24 A Young People's Advisor from the Children's Social Care Service is supporting 32 Care Leavers who are studying at a range of Higher Education institutions across the United Kingdom, including Newcastle University, Manchester University, Edinburgh University, Leeds University, Bangor University, University of Bristol, Canterbury Christ Church University, Warwick University, and Sunderland University. Examples of courses being studied include Social Work, Nursing, Law, English Literature, Animal Physiotherapy and Radiography.
- 25 Meetings take place with Care Leavers at their university every 12 weeks. Contact is also made with Care Leaver teams and wellbeing teams at their university. Support is provided to help Care Leavers apply for student finance, secure suitable accommodation, including requests for 'staying put' arrangements during holiday periods, as well as support with their next steps, for Care Leavers who are going into their final year at university. If a Care Leaver is finding university challenging, then meetings may be arranged with their course leader or lecturer, in order to discuss options such as exam re-sits etc.
- 26 Positive links have been established with the five universities that are located in the North East. All have signed up to a Care Leaver Covenant through NERAP (North East Raising Aspirations Partnership), which ensures that Care Leavers studying at any of these universities can access the same level of help and support. NERAP also offers training and support about Higher Education to Children Looked After/Care Leavers and Foster Carers. This includes a Choices Together programme for Children Looked After/Care Leavers aged 11 to 18.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

- 27 DurhamWorks worked very closely with colleagues in the Children's Social Care Service to provide support to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children. During 2023, dedicated provision was procured through DurhamWorks to support the progression of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children into further learning opportunities. This was delivered by organisations within the VCS sector. 16 young people completed the course with 15 progressing into further learning.

Partnership Working

- 28 Activity to support the progression of Care Leavers into sustained post-16 education, employment or training is underpinned by a team which is co-funded by the Virtual School and the Progression and Learning Service. It consists of a Senior Progression Coordinator, a Post-16 PEP (Personal Education Plan) Caseworker and a Sessional Employment Coordinator. The team has established very close working relationships with the Children's Social Care Service, to ensure developments to support Care Leavers are well co-ordinated.
- 29 In terms of partnership working, one of the priorities of the Children Looked After Strategic Partnership's work programme is to 'continue to work with our children and young people to ensure they have opportunities to access good education, employment, and training to achieve their full potential.' In order to facilitate this, a Children Looked After/Care Leaver Strategic Post-16 EET (education, employment and training) Group has been established. This group brings together colleagues within Children and Young People's Services, as well as Health, in order to develop and implement a County Durham EET Strategic Action Plan.
- 30 Working in conjunction with the Children Looked After/Care Leaver Strategic Post-16 EET Group is an operational Post-16 EET group which brings together representatives from FE colleges, DWP Jobcentre Plus, Higher Education institutions, as well as colleagues from Children and Young People's Services on a quarterly basis in order to discuss post-16 and post-18 learning provision and support that is available for Care Leavers.
- 31 In January 2023, a protocol was launched which sets out the process to be followed for Care Leavers who disengage from post-16 education, employment or training and become NEET. This includes a requirement for a PEP review meeting to be held (within ten working days) with a Care Leaver who becomes NEET and dedicated professionals, including a DurhamWorks adviser, in order to review and plan next

steps. This ensures that access to employability support and career decision making are a key part of the process.

Care Leavers Destination Data

32 The Progression and Learning Service collects and reports the destinations of all young people aged 16-17 in County Durham to the Department for Education on a monthly basis. This information includes Care Leavers who reside in County Durham and whose Corporate Parent is Durham County Council, as well as Care Leavers who reside in County Durham and whose Corporate Parent is a different Local Authority.

33 The following table shows the average destination data for young people aged 16-17 during December to February 2022-2023, compared to the same period in 2021-2022 and 2019-2020 respectively. The average for these months has been chosen because it is the period within the academic year when the 16-17 year old cohort is relatively stable. This period is also used by the Department for Education for annual comparative purposes. The data shows that the proportion of all 16-17 year olds in County Durham who are NEET (not in education, employment or training) is higher than the period before the Covid-19 pandemic, 4.8% in 2022/23 compared to 4.0% in 2019/20. The proportion of 16-17 year old Care Leavers who are NEET is marginally higher than the period before the Covid-19 pandemic, 16.9% in 2022/2023 compared to 16.7% in 2019/2020. One of the factors that accounts for this increase is the number of Care Leavers who are NEET as a result of ill health. An increasing number of young people are presenting with mental health and anxiety issues, which is acting as a barrier to their progression into sustained education, employment or training.

	2022/23		2021/22		2019/20	
	16-17 All	16-17 CL	16-17 All	16-17 CL	16-17 All	16-17 CL
Average Cohort Size	11,239	170	11,172	138	10,245	152
Total EET	94.7%	83.1%	94.4%	75.2%	95.2%	82.9%
NEET	4.8%	16.9%	4.9%	24.6%	4.0%	16.7%
Not Known	0.5%	0.0%	0.7%	0.2%	0.9%	0.4%
Combined NEET and Not Known	5.3%	16.9%	5.6%	24.8%	4.9%	17.1%

Department for Education: Local Authority CCIS, December to February average. This data is collected and reported to the Department for Education by the Progression and Learning Service.

34 The Department for Education publishes comparative data annually on the destinations of Care Leavers aged 17-18 and 19-21. This data

captures the destinations of Care Leavers at the time of their birthday and is collected and reported to the Department for Education by the Children's Social Care Service.

- 35 The following table shows the destinations of Care Leavers aged 17-18 and 19-21 for whom Durham County Council is the Corporate Parent in 2023, compared to regional and national averages. The data shows that the proportion of Care Leavers aged 17-18 and 19-21 for whom Durham County Council is the Corporate Parent who are NEET is lower compared to the average rates for the North East and the rest of England. However, it is important to note that the proportion of Care Leavers, for whom Durham County Council is Corporate Parent, whose destination is not known is greater compared to the average rates in both the North East and the rest of England.

	County Durham		North East		England	
	CL 17-18	CL 19-21	CL 17-18	CL 19-21	CL 17-18	CL 19-21
Total Cohort	104	228	680	1,540	13,400	34,650
Participating in EET	65% (68)	56% (21)	63% (430)	52% (810)	66% (8,790)	56% (19,380)
NEET	24% (25)	29% (66)	32% (220)	40% (620)	28% (3,800)	38% (13,060)
Information Not Known	11% (11)	15% (35)	5% (30)	8% (120)	6% (66)	6% (2,210)

Department for Education: Children Looked After in England (including Adoption), year ending 31st March 2023. This data is collected and reported to the Department for Education by the Children's Social Care Service.

- 36 The following table shows the destinations of Care Leavers aged 17-18 and 19-21, for whom Durham County Council is the Corporate Parent, in 2023, compared to 2022 and 2019 respectively.

	2023		2022		2019	
	CL 17-18	CL 19-21	CL 17-18	CL 19-21	CL 17-18	CL 19-21
Total Cohort	104	228	84	218	79	156
Participating in EET	65% (68)	56% (21)	67% (56)	61% (134)	61% (48)	51% (80)
NEET	24% (25)	29% (66)	26% (22)	29% (64)	34% (27)	38% (60)
Information Not Known	11% (11)	15% (35)	7% (6)	9% (20)	5% (4)	10% (16)

Department for Education: Children Looked After in England (including Adoption), year ending 31st March. This data is collected and reported to the Department for Education by the Children's Social Care Service.

Conclusion

37 This report has provided information about the current support that is available to enable more Care Leavers to participate in sustained education, employment or training.

Background papers

- None

Other useful documents

- None

Author Stephen Crass Tel: 07500 128 432

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

None.

Finance

ESF funding for the DurhamWorks Programme for Schools, DurhamWorks (re-engagement) and the DurhamWorks 3 Programme, as highlighted in this report, ended in December 2023. From January 2024 to March 2025, support for Care Leavers through DurhamWorks will be funded by Durham County Council's core budget and UKSPF.

Consultation

None.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

None.

Human Rights

None.

Crime and Disorder

None.

Staffing

None.

Accommodation

None.

Risk

None.

Procurement

None.