

# Virtual School



**Headteacher's** Annual Report

**2022 | 23**



**Northumberland**  
County Council



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# Profile of pupils age 5 – 16

in Northumberland's Virtual School at 31.08.23



# Foreword

The Annual Report for 2022-2023 evaluates a year when there were no surprises. Cared for children and care leavers who were in stable school placements where they felt safe to learn engaged well in education and achieved their best outcomes.

It was a year when amidst the busy-ness of Virtual School and school life we tried to introduce new ideas so that we could intervene early and prevent already complex needs from escalating further. This report will demonstrate our success in achieving that, and how we still have so much to shout loudly about to show our pride as corporate parents in all of our cared for pupils.

Despite considerable challenges faced by the children, our schools and the local authority we have continued to make progress towards fulfilling our vision for our cared for children and care leavers:

We want the very best for our care experienced children and young people. We want our children to tell us we are doing a good job and that they are doing their very best at school. We want them all to have clear academic or vocational pathways when they leave school so that their lives continue to improve, and they feel a sense of belonging in their communities. We want schools and support services to see themselves as corporate parents and do a good job for their cared for children.

2022-2023 was very much a continuation from the previous year with the challenges we all faced compounded by the legacy of the pandemic. We resisted the idea that this was our new status quo and worked relentlessly with professionals and partners to prevent decline and make improvements wherever we could. Our priorities for improvement were identified in last year's Annual Report and set out in the Virtual School Improvement Plan 2022-2023.

**They were to:** .....

1. improve attendance
2. get progress back on track so that more pupils are following their age-related curriculum
3. provide leadership for promoting the education of children with a social worker
4. participate in the Pupil Premium Plus Post 16 Pilot (national)
5. deliver the Virtual School's contribution to the corporate parenting strategy

The profound impact of disrupted and missed learning is still with us, and our priorities for 2023-2024 that are identified in this self-evaluation report will focus on similar themes.

Earlier this year the government published a new vision to transform children’s social care: Stable Homes, Built on Love: Implementation strategy and The SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan 2023. Both emphasise expanding early help to better support children at the edge of care and improving mainstream education so it can better meet the needs of children with SEND. This dovetails with our relatively new duty to promote the education of children with a social worker, and we are preparing for a further new duty to support the engagement of care leavers in education, employment and training from the ages of 18 to 25. There will be extended responsibilities for Virtual School Headteachers announced in the government’s new Kinship Care Strategy.

The first report of the newly formed County Councils Network (CCN) was published in 2023 and celebrates Virtual Schools as education’s ‘hidden asset’. As Virtual Schools approach their 10th anniversary – in Northumberland our 12th - the report reflects on the growth of these services and highlights our considerable positive achievements, describing us as one of the most successful initiatives introduced into children’s services over the past decade. Aspects of our arrangements are alluded to as strengths in the report. Virtual Schools:

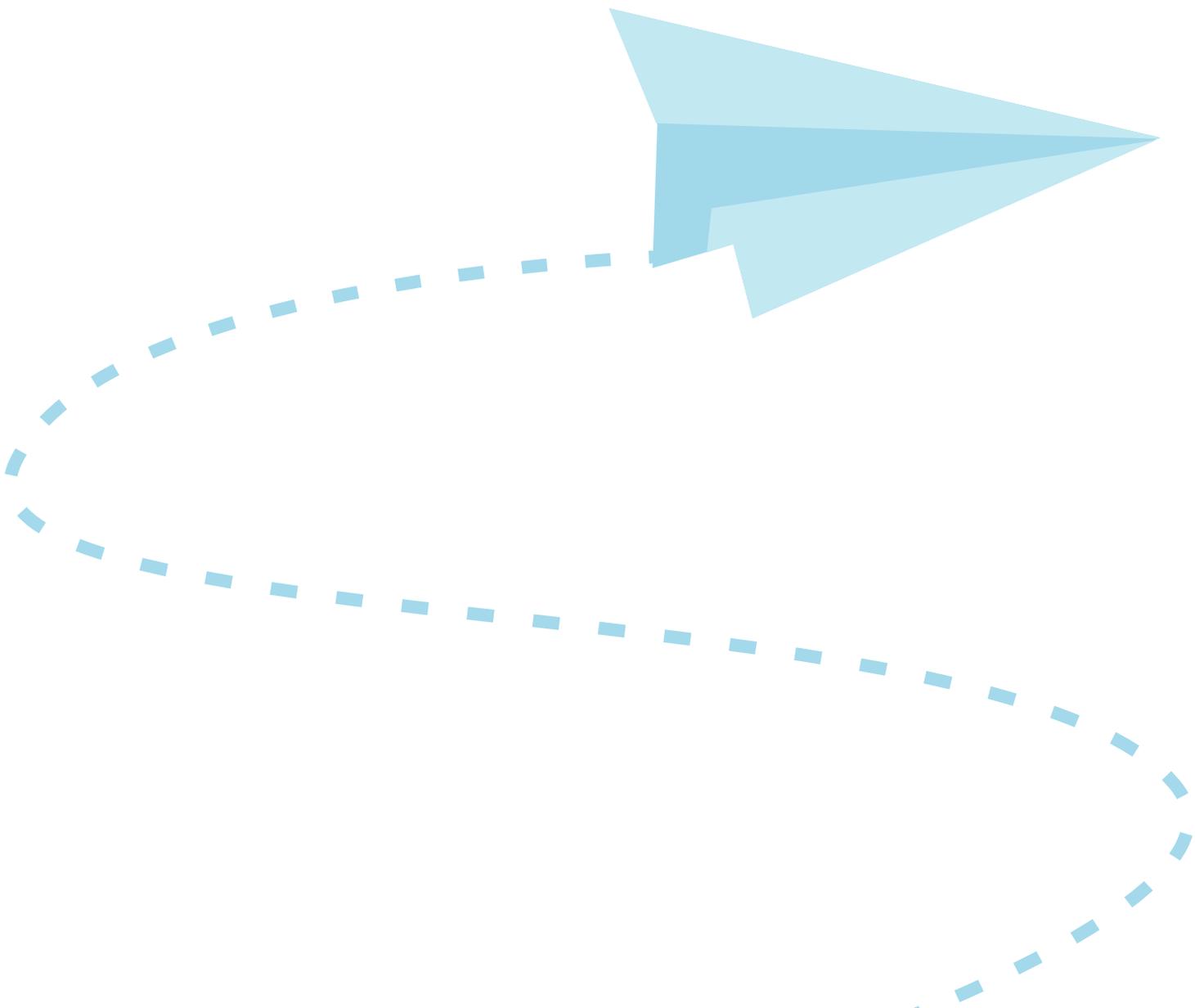
- have quietly built up a reputation as a valuable asset for both schools and councils, strategically and operationally
- play a strong role in championing the education of children in care as formidable corporate parents
- have had a transformative impact on the lives of many of the most disadvantaged children across England
- the status of our Virtual School, with a Virtual School Headteacher who is a Head of Service and able to influence decision making and policy development
- a combination of support services that promote education as a protective factor and therefore support learners most in need of additional help
- useful support to existing SEND services given our understanding of the needs of cared for children, particularly those with emotional and behavioural needs due to disorders related to attachment and trauma
- effective use of Pupil Premium Plus to resource the support service to schools, that is highly regarded and has measurable impact
- a well-respected primary point of contact with schools, and well developed relationships built on trust, including with academies.

We have a lot of achievements to shout about from 2023 and can show that in Northumberland being in care improves the experience of education of our cared for children and care leavers.

**Jane Walker,**  
Virtual School Headteacher



**WE'RE  
SHOUTING  
OUT ABOUT....**





# Achievement

The education achievement of Northumberland's cared for children improves when they enter care, despite more teenage pupils entering care during Key Stage 4 with increasingly complex needs.

Education outcomes in 2023 showed improvement in some measures since last year, notably in the Early Years, at Key Stage 2 and in English GCSE at Key Stage 4.

## Successes

Our pupils achieved above the national average for all cared for children in:

- Early Years Good Level of Development
- the Basics grade 5+ at GCSE
- GCSE English grade 5+

School readiness improved for pupils entering Year 1.

Key Stage 2 achievement is back on track and in-line with 2019 pre-pandemic achievement.

A higher proportion of pupils in Key Stage 4 are achieving the Basics at GCSE than before the pandemic.

The increased proportion of pupils working in their age-related curriculum from Years 1 to 9 has been sustained (with the exceptions of Years 8, 6 and 3).

More pupils are making better progress after they enter care.

Achievement of unaccompanied asylum seeking children in Year 11 is good.

Earlier intervention from monitoring pupil progress more closely has supported more pupils to get back on track.

PEP quality is better with re-focus on academic outcomes.

Extra support and intervention for Year 11 pupils.

Good Level of Development in Early Years

Trebled to **66.7%**

Better than last year  
Better than the national average

KS2 SATs reading/writing/maths combined

More than doubled to **30%**

Better than last year  
Below the national average

The increase is the impact of our focus on maths and the proportion of pupils meeting age related expectations improving from **18.2% to 45%**.



GCSE English Grade 5+ **41.7%**

Better than the national average



**2 care leavers were successful at A Level**, with one progressing to an apprenticeship and the other securing a place at Cambridge University to read Human, Social and Political Sciences.

**5 care leavers completed Level 3 accredited courses** and have progressed successfully to foundation degrees, apprenticeships and employment.

No care leavers were due to graduate from Higher Education this year.



## Making a positive impact on achievement

### ESLAC Engagement

ESLAC devised a unique programme with local alternative provider Engage to target pupils who were not attending education provision at all, with the aim of re-engaging them with alternative education as an interim plan en route to new school rolls in out of county placements. The programme was funded by PP+ and had a positive impact. The 3 pupils who worked with Engage in their home on relationships building started to attend Engage. 1 pupil attended 57 sessions in the first term which is attendance improvement from 0% to 42%.

**Easter School** for Year 6 and Year 11 pupils, providing intensive test /exam preparation and confidence building techniques, with local alternative provider Maximize, funded by PP+.

**ESLAC Teacher** was recruited on a part time basis to teach maths on a 1 to 1 basis or in small groups, funded by the School Led Tutoring Grant. 18 pupils received tuition across 14 different provisions, and 80% of those who received 4 or more sessions made progress.

**Outdoor education** provision from local alternative providers Nudge, Forest Schools and Clarty Commandos supported vulnerable learners who benefited from outdoor provision and individual timetables before successfully re-engaging with formal learning.

## Extra support and intervention for Year 11 pupils

- Priority support from Education Intervention Workers and VS Educational Psychologists
- ESLAC worked with schools and attended Care Team meetings to improve stability
- Provided tutors to support with revision, complementing schools' use of the School Led Tutoring Grant
- Held an Easter Revision Club
- When 5 pupils didn't attend their first GCSE exam we entered 2 of them swiftly for Functional Skills so they were able to achieve accreditations

## UASC in Year 11

### 4 pupils

1 pupil achieved  
**4 GCSEs** and  
**2 were grade 4+**

All 4 pupils are enrolled in full time ESOL courses at college

### Factors affecting learning: achieving success at KS2

Stability was good for the pupils that achieved age related expectations in reading/writing/ maths. During Year 6:

- **there were no suspensions**
- **attendance was above 90%** and 22% of pupils had 100% attendance
- **67% had no school moves** in Year 6, the rest of the cohort had only 1 school move in Year 6
- **67% had either 1 or 0 home placement moves**
- 78% had been **in care for over a year**
- **proportion of SEND was very low** with only 2 on the K register, 0 had an EHCP

# Challenges

KS1 SATs reading/writing/maths combined dipped to **12.5%**  
Not as good as last year  
Below the national average

KS1 -2 progress in reading, writing and maths  
Similar to last year  
Well below the national average

Phonics test in Year 1  
Dipped to 28.6%  
Not as good as last year  
Well below the national average

Attainment 8 and Progress 8  
**22.8 and -1.37**  
Similar to last year  
In line with national averages

**55**  
cared for pupils lived in residential children's homes at some stage in 2022-23

**87%**  
of that group have SEND,  
**80%**  
(45 pupils) have EHCPs

**2 of the 55**  
pupils are working at age related expectations

**12 pupils**  
were in Year 11 and  
**50%**  
are in EET

Their average attendance is  
**64.1**

Outcomes at Key Stage 1 are telling us that pupils still have gaps in their learning from 2 years ago and that we need to prioritise school readiness for our cared for children currently in the Early Years phase.

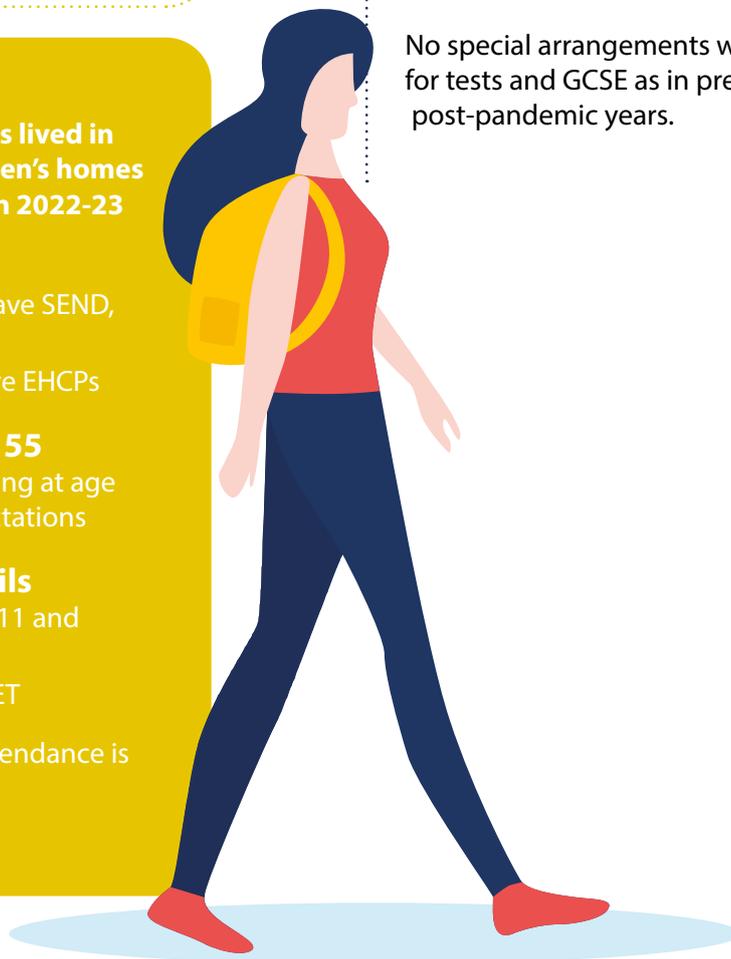
Although progress is being made, the rate is slow and needs to accelerate to avoid future under-achievement.

The impact of lower achievement at GCSE shown in the reduced number in education, employment and training for September 2023.

The achievement of pupils placed in residential homes is not as good as that of cared for pupils in foster placements.

A growing number of pupils experienced instability at school and this had a negative impact on their education achievement.

No special arrangements were allowed for tests and GCSE as in previous post-pandemic years.



## Factors affecting learning: challenges for Year 11

This cohort of pupils was in Year 8 when the pandemic started. Their achievement has dipped the further away we move from the pandemic years, indicative of the impact of disruption to learning and school closure.

*This was a large and complex group of pupils:*

- only half of the cohort were entered for at least 1 GCSE
- 5 pupils missed at least one GCSE exam
- high proportion of the cohort have an EHCP
- 1 is an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child with English as an additional language
- 2 pupils were in school placements in Scotland and did not take GCSE exams, 0 were entered for the Scottish Nationals (GCSE equivalent)

### Stability was poor overall:

- Overall attendance during year 11 was only 88%
- Levels of persistent absence were very high
- 12 pupils entered care at the beginning of KS4 (Sept 2021)
- 3 pupils had been permanently excluded from school prior to entering care and had no school roll
- Over half the cohort had at least 1 suspension
- 11 pupils attended alternative provision
- 3 pupils had a school move during year 11 due to their SEND
- 12 pupils had at least one placement move
- 11 were placed in residential children's homes

# Achievement

## Next Steps



Work with the Early Years service to improve school readiness in Year 1

With schools, use Pupil Premium Plus differently to accelerate progress during Key Stage 2



Sustain improved achievement at the end of Key stage 2

Support schools to improve achievement in GCSE maths

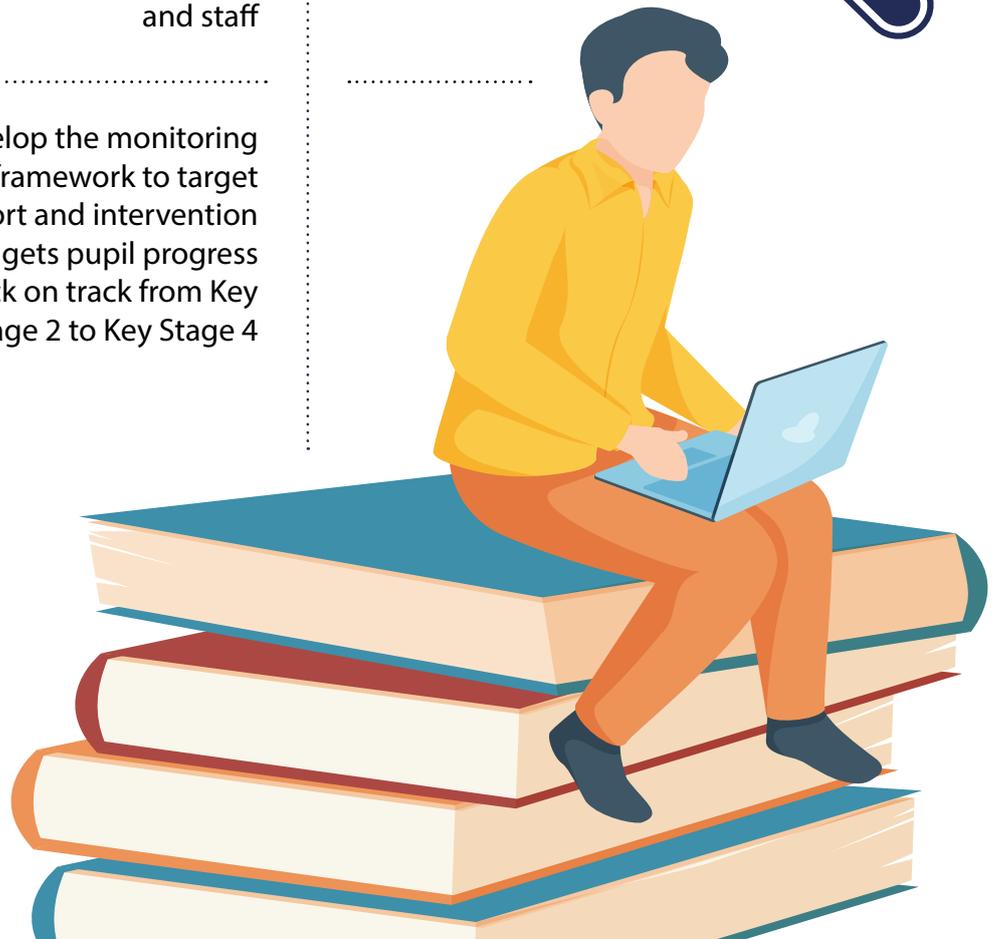


Target more EP and specialist resources into residential homes to work with pupils and staff

Recruit part time teachers in English, maths and science to work into residential homes



Develop the monitoring framework to target support and intervention that gets pupil progress back on track from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4



## Summary of education outcomes **2022-23**

<b>2023</b>	<b>Northumberland CLA* (all) %</b>	<b>Northumberland OC2** %</b>	<b>National All 20.2%</b>
<b>Early Years GLD</b>	<b>52.9%</b>	<b>66.7%</b>	<b>67.2%</b>
<b>Phonics Year 1</b>	<b>55.6%</b>	<b>28.6%</b>	<b>79%</b>
<b>KS1 R/W/M</b>	<b>33.3%</b>	<b>12.5%</b>	<b>56.0%</b>
KS1 Reading	42.9%	12.5%	68.3%
KS1 Writing	38.1%	25%	70%
KS1 Maths	47.6%	25%	70.4%
MTC average score	18.33	18.75	20.2%
<b>KS2 R/W/M</b>	<b>25.9%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>59.5%</b>
KS2 Reading	44.4%	40%	72.6%
KS2 Writing	44.4%	35%	71.5%
KS2 GPS	48.4%	40%	73%
KS2 Maths	48.1%	45%	72.9%
KS2 Progress Reading	-3.11	-3.88	+0.03
KS2 Progress Writing	-3.33	-4.00	+0.04
KS2 Progress Maths	-2.83	-3.27	+0.04
<b>KS4 Basics 4+</b>	<b>37.5%</b>	<b>33.3%</b>	<b>65.1%</b>
<b>KS4 Basics 5+</b>	<b>25.0%</b>	<b>16.7%</b>	<b>45.4%</b>
KS4 English 4+	41.7%	41.7%	74.8%
KS4 Maths 4+	41.7%	33.3%	70.2%
KS4 English 5+	41.7%	41.7%	60.8%
KS4 Maths 5+	25.0%	16.7%	50.9%
<b>KS4 Progress 8</b>	<b>-1.87</b>	<b>-1.37</b>	<b>-0.03</b>
<b>KS4 Attainment 8</b>	<b>24.5</b>	<b>22.8</b>	<b>46.4</b>

\* where CLA is child looked after

\*\* OC2 is the official cohort CLA national averages are not yet available for publication (see 'A note about the data' on the back cover)

# Stability

**Stability is about safeguarding and learning. It's where the Virtual School's ESLAC team can make a difference and help to make the conditions for learning right for every cared for child.**

**We want our children to tell us that they feel safe to learn.**

**We make a valuable contribution to stability and permanence.**

## Successes

No permanent exclusions for **15 years**

**29** permanent exclusions were prevented

More pupils attend schools judged to be Good or Outstanding by Ofsted.

Reduction in mid-year school moves from 8% to 7% of pupils experiencing at least one move.

ESLAC staff a consistent factor for pupils experiencing school moves.

Effective working between the Virtual School and Children's Social Care to maintain school placement stability.

A rise in Northumberland in the percentage of cared for children who had no social worker change over 12 and 24 months.

Strengthened and diversified the offer of support from our VS Educational Psychologists.

EBSA training from VS Educational Psychologists for Designated Teachers, Foster Carers and Care Teams including assessment of risk factors, and the push and pull factors framework.

Funded additional training for schools from the NEWST Occupational Therapist.

Improved use of attendance data to identify pupils and schools for earlier intervention.

Used Pupil Premium Plus funding differently to encourage use of alternatives to suspension.

Effective monitoring of attendance by Education Welfare management team.

Good and Outstanding schools **82%**  
89% of primary pupils, 70% of secondary pupils  
Better than last year

### Emotional and mental health and wellbeing

contributes positively to stability and improves engagement in education. Use of the SDQ behaviour screening tool this year helped discussions about the emotional health of individual pupils at all PEP reviews, and informed the emotional and mental health and wellbeing outcome in each pupil's PEP. This year the SDQ score was used as a benchmark, in 2024 we will compare scores to see if EMWHB is improving.

**79** pupils received 1:1 support to learn self-regulation

### An innovative relational and trauma informed approach

to working with cared for children is being successfully implemented following a launch at the Relationships Matter multi-agency conference (March 2023)

*details in the Children With a Social Worker section of this report*





## Virtual School Educational Psychologists

were in high demand and made a big difference:

**30+**  
school consultations

**75**

EP assessments on entry to care

**1 to 1**

support for 76 pupils at risk of permanent exclusion

**41**

pupils had EP involvement after referrals from professionals

**10**

training sessions on themes to promote better emotional and mental health: Attachment and trauma, Bereavement and loss, Resilience, PACE, Emotion based school avoidance (EBSA)

### Alternatives to suspensions

were encouraged by giving additional funding to 3 schools with the highest number of suspensions.

#### Impact was positive:

**2** stopped using suspensions;  
**1** used fewer suspensions as a last resort



### Other things we did that prevented more suspensions

#### Training and guidance to promote alternatives to suspension

restorative approaches and reparation, daily problem-solving circles, developing relationships between adults and children

#### Provided support

problem solving consultations, group supervision and training for staff

#### Delivered therapeutic interventions

Thrive, Drawing and Talking, Lego Therapy, mentoring

**Involved the local authority's Inclusion Team and HINT team for advice and support**  
**promoted the Northumberland Exclusion Handbook**

**Arranged time limited part time timetables for individual pupils**

#### Made appropriate use of alternative education provision

alternative providers, Northumberland's Pupil Referral Unit and Primary Support Bases

#### Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

scores for our children give us an indication of their emotional and mental health and wellbeing. The average score for Northumberland's children has improved from 17 to 14.9 which is encouraging news. It means that the scores are in line with the average for all cared for children in England, and puts Northumberland in the 'borderline' band when previously it was in the 'cause for concern' band.

# Challenges

Overall absence and the proportion of pupils that are persistently absent from school have reached record high levels

Almost a third of our school aged cared for pupils have school attendance below 90%. This is different to the national trend where the % of persistent absentees in the cared for population is lower than the overall pupil population

A very high proportion of children have SEND

**76** changes of Designated Teachers

First request made for direction from the Secretary of State to admit a pupil to an out of of county school

**121**

is too many changes to education provision as pupils moved into alternative provision, had tutors or moved schools

Too many missed learning sessions for term time holidays, medicals and contact

Pupils' needs are increasingly complex

Frequent and rising use of suspensions to manage challenging behaviour.

The increasing number of out of county placements presents challenges for the provision of timely support

Overall absence  
**Increased to 10.3%**  
Not as good as last year  
Higher than the national average

Persistent absence  
**Increased to 28%**  
Not as good as last year  
Higher than the national average

Phase change school moves  
**64 pupils**  
Similar to last year

Learning sessions missed  
**Total of 837 (all pupils)**  
More than last year

Mid-year school moves  
**41 pupils**  
More than last year

Suspensions  
**158 suspensions for 46 pupils from 32 schools**  
More than last year

# Top10

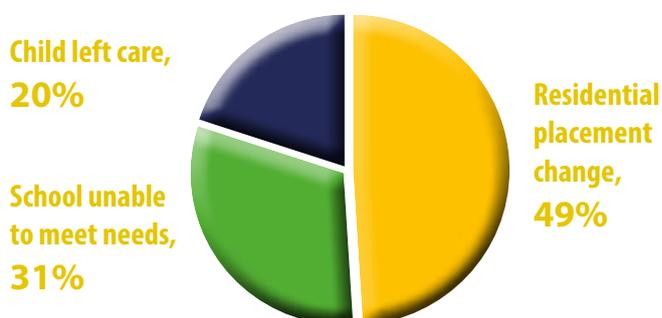
## reasons for poor attendance

1. Inflexible school behaviour policies
2. Instability and previous disruption to school attendance e.g. school moves, breakdown of foster placement
3. Family issues e.g. loss of a parent
4. Disrupted learning and gaps in learning before entering care, including poor attendance, extended periods of time off school, moving schools
5. Unmet SEND
6. Poor punctuality while at home and lack of boundaries
7. Parental influence and their educational experiences
8. Emotional impact of their experiences including not trusting adults, no sense of belonging, feeling unsafe and not worthy
9. Friendship difficulties
10. Complexity of needs due to fragmented educational experience

The presence of the Virtual School at planning and placement panels had a positive impact and the proportion of mid-year schools moves due to residential placement moves did improve this year, despite the overall number of moves increasing.

To avoid delay when pupils need to attend an alternative provision, the PRU or Primary Support Bases the Deputy Virtual School Headteacher now has delegated responsibility to allocate places and funding so that decisions for cared for children can be made outside of the Inclusion Panel. A positive impact on stability is expected during 2023-24.

## Reasons for mid-year school moves



# Good Practice *Case Study*

## **Jake's journey : what it takes to achieve stability in a school placement**

Jake is a pupil in Year 5 who has been cared for since 2016. He had two unsuccessful adoptions and experienced 8 changes in schools and 5 home placements before returning to care. His last unsuccessful adoption ended abruptly so he returned to the North East at very short notice and was placed with a temporary foster carer before returning to his current carers who had always wanted to keep him long term.

Jake was highly dysregulated and had experienced significant trauma and rejection. At the start of the pandemic Jake was struggling in mainstream. He had an EHCP that was shared with schools but no Northumberland special schools could meet his needs. After numerous meetings, panels and discussions with schools a place was eventually identified at a local independent special school (albeit in another local authority). The Virtual School's Lead Teacher for Primary supported with the transition.

Jake did not settle and the school was constantly challenged regarding their inclusivity and support for him. The school ended his placement which subsequently put pressure on his foster placement. Discussions took place to explore out of county residential placements with education. Specialised alternative provision was identified in the interim to enable him to continue in education while options were explored.

Suitable education provision was explored with multiple schools and eventually a place was agreed at a Special Academy that specialises in educating children with social, emotional and mental health needs. The Lead Primary Teacher visited the school with the carer to support and discuss how Jake would be integrated.

A package of funding and support was put in place and Jake started at the Special Academy in March 2022. After a positive start he became dysregulated, and staff struggled with his level of need. He was placed on a part time timetable which included forest school provision, but Jake could not cope and became further dysregulated. Eventually he refused to attend.

The Virtual School Educational Psychologist supported the Care Team to get a greater understanding of Jake's life. In December 2022 the EP and Lead Teacher visited the carer at her home and the EP recorded an interview which told the story of this life. This was very emotional for the carer as she recalled his past experiences.

With permissions from the carer and Care Team the recording was then shared with school staff, and it totally altered their perception of Jake. They changed their way of managing his behaviour, based on an in-depth report prepared by the EP that included his survival strategies, hypotheses around his internal working model and next steps.

The Virtual School continued to work closely with the Special Academy as Jake's timetable gradually developed until he was receiving full time education by April 2023.

The impact of this tenacious, partnership working is that Jake is receiving full time education in a stable school placement. The academy is fully aware of his needs, background and the support required and there has been a reduction in incidents where Jake becomes dysregulated. Consequently, his academic progress and attendance have both improved. Jake has stability at home and is forming friendships and relationships both with adults and peers and is part of the football team in his home community. The recording has been used for training in the Virtual School.

# STABILITY:



## NEXT STEPS

Address the **top 10 reasons for poor attendance**

As Northumberland's Attendance Strategy is implemented, **ensure the needs of cared for children are well understood and prioritised as 'everyone's business'**

**Deliver more training and develop more resources** to promote alternatives to suspension

**Work with Care Teams** to reduce the number of missed sessions

# Supporting Teaching and Learning

The ESLAC team is here to help. We do everything we can to support Designated Teachers so that school communities can nurture every child to fulfil their academic potential. Our diverse training programme, free of charge, is our response to what our children and Designated Teachers tell us they need. We make sure that resources get to the children and schools that need them the most.

## Successes

Different use of Pupil Premium Plus for greater impact.

Diversified our training programme for Designated Teachers, Foster Carers and Care Teams, all delivered free of charge.

More focussed use of the PEP linked to PP+ e.g. all pupils have one attendance outcome, one EMHWP outcome.

A record number of 27 pupils achieved our Expert Learner Award, by meeting the demanding criteria.

The PEP completion rate is the highest it has been for the last 5 years.

Quality assurance of PEPs shows that this is a process that supports teaching and learning effectively, and not just a form that has to be filled in.

## Challenges

Legacy of the pandemic – gaps in learning, disrupted progress, poor emotional and mental health and wellbeing

While we know that progress was made by most pupils, we need a deeper insight into the impact of PP+ in schools

Some Outcomes in PEPs are not SMART enough

The terms and conditions of grant funding are known about late and are fixed term, and this can have a negative impact on getting best value for money from the Virtual School's allocation

## You are an Expert Learner if you have:





# Virtual School

For the academic year 2022-23 our total PP+ budget was £851 235.

In line with our PP+ policy we top-sliced £915 from each grant of £2410 and used that centrally held funding of £308 550 to provide:

## Support for Designated Teachers

- Staffing
- Rewards
- Crisis support
- ePEP development
- Training from external providers, including Thrive

## Therapeutic assessments and interventions

### Education resources

- Lexia licences and Britannica
- IT equipment for pupils
- Globalbridge (careers resource)

### Teachers

Alternative provision re-engagement programme (ENGAGE)

Prevention of suspensions funding dispersed to 3 education settings

The Virtual School is also responsible for the early years pupil premium (EYPP) which in Northumberland is distributed through the Early Years team to providers that educate and care for children who are taking up the free early education entitlement for 3 or 4 year olds.

The local authority receives £353.40 EYPP funding per eligible child taking up 15 hours of early years provision. This was topped up by £433.20 from the Early Years deprivation supplement from the 3 and 4 year olds' budget.

The Virtual School's use of PP+ had a positive impact on education outcomes across the support and intervention spectrum, by preventing escalation and responding reactively in crisis situations.



## Pupil Premium Plus 2023

A Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) grant of £2410 was allocated by the DfE for every eligible school aged cared for and previously cared for child.

# Schools

Schools were allocated a maximum of £1495 of the DfE allocation of £2410 for each eligible pupil which was a total of £542 685. The funding allocated was dependent on providing effective support for each pupil to achieve their individual outcomes and the quality of their Personal Education Plan (PEP).

## What the PEPs are telling us about the impact of PP+ on education outcomes:

**Key Stage 1:** Academic progress was recorded in the ePEP in at least one subject for 8 pupils (22%)

**Key Stage 2:** Academic progress was recorded in the ePEP for 46 out of 68 pupils (68%)

21 out of 23 Year 6 pupils showed improvement in at least one subject (91%)

**Key Stage 3:** Academic progress was recorded in the ePEP in at least one subject for 50 out of 61 pupils (82%)

**Key Stage 4:** Academic progress was recorded in the ePEP in at least one subject for 11 out of 50 pupils (22%)



## What schools used PP+ to fund in 2022-23

	Key Stage 1	Key Stage 2	Key Stage 3	Key Stage 4
Number of pupils eligible for PP+	36	68	61	50
Alternative provision			4	8
Resources	3	4	12	6
Group	8	16	11	4
1:1	11	21	12	12
Therapeutic intervention	11	16	13	11
Behaviour management	3		3	1
Designated Teacher			3	6
Educational visits		1	3	1
Study support		10		1

Schools' use of PP+ had a positive impact on education outcomes, getting more pupils back on track to make academic progress and developing bespoke packages of support to engage pupils in learning

## Other grant funding

### **School Led Tutoring Grant:**

used to provide 1 to 1 tuition to pupils with high levels of need who were unable to engage in full time education at school. Providers included Nudge, Teaching Personnel, Engage, Prospero, Nudge and Academy 21

### **Covid Recovery Premium:**

used to fund interventions based on individual assessments of need and including play therapy, dyadic developmental psychotherapy, EP resources, licenses for Paul Dix behavioural management online courses, emotion coaching and Thrive attachment therapy

### **Post 16 Pupil Premium Plus:**

funding for a one year DfE pilot to improve recruitment and retention in further education. Used in Northumberland for the development of a new statutory 16-18 ePEP and a Post 16 Education Intervention Worker

### **Promoting the education of previously looked after children (extended duty):**

used to fund 1 x FTE Educational Psychologist post

### **Promoting the education of children with a social worker (extended duty):**

used to fund 2 Education Welfare Support Officer posts, a Children Not in School Co-ordinator post, Relationships Matter Conference March 2023 (launch of the relational and trauma informed approach), attendance campaign, Performance and Intelligence Lead post

## Designated Teacher Training

A comprehensive training programme was delivered by Virtual School staff free of charge to schools with Northumberland cared for children both in and out of county. Alongside the termly Designated Teacher conference, with a varied agenda, the programme was responsive to Designated Teacher and children's needs and included:

- Designated Teacher: New to Role
- Secondary PEP and Outcomes Refresher
- Primary PEP and Outcomes Refresher
- Attachment & Trauma
- Bereavement & Loss
- Resilience
- ESLAC Transition Briefing for Designated Teachers
- Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)
- Designated Teacher Conference
- ESLAC SATS Preparation and Wellbeing Support
- ESLAC GCSE Preparation and Wellbeing Support .



Two thirds of Designated Teachers who completed the feedback form reported enhanced understanding of the needs of cared for children following the consultation sessions.

- 83% of DTs who completed the feedback form reported that the consultation sessions helped them / their school to further meet the needs of cared for children and improve outcomes
- Designated Teachers reported being better able to support staff working with cared for children, exploring solutions and reducing suspensions as a result of the consultation sessions

## Foster Carer Training

We delivered our first face to face training session to 16 foster carers looking at a range of resources and interventions that the Virtual School funds to support learning including:

- Lexia, reading program for Reception to Post 16 pupils
- Britannica, an online secure encyclopaedia supporting study at all levels from early years to university level
- Night Zoo Keeper, a differentiated writing program supporting 4 –12 year olds.

The PEP process is being used as an effective tool in recording educational information and supporting pupils to make progress or better than expected progress.

- 621 PEPs have been completed this year, increase from last year
- 96% PEP completion rate, consistent with 2021/22
- 177 are rated as 'green', this is higher than last year
- Interim PEPs are being held to reflect significant changes
- 74 pupils were transitioned to new schools, 43 were entered their next school phase and had a joint PEP meeting between schools
- Enhanced training offer:
  - 5 sessions to Designated Teachers inc SMART outcomes
  - 2 CPD sessions for the ESLAC team on progress and attainment
  - Foster carer training on education and interventions

## SUPPORTING TEACHING AND LEARNING:

### NEXT STEPS

Pilot a PP+ impact evaluation with volunteer Designated Teachers in a representative sample of schools

Deliver more training that focuses on the emotional and mental health and wellbeing of pupils

Ensure that the PEP quality assurance process improves the quality of SMART outcomes



# 16+

## Successes

Virtual School participated in year 2 of a national Pupil Premium Plus Post 16 pilot

Led priority 6 of the council's Corporate Parenting Strategy action plan that involves work with the private sector to create EET opportunities

A high proportion of school leavers are choosing to stay in education at 16

Retention of 17-18 year olds in EET has improved significantly

The majority of 17-18 year olds are still in full time education

25% of students are on Level 3 courses which is similar to last year and correlates with 2 good years of GCSE results in 2022 and 2021

Introduction of new statutory Post 16 ePEP

Strengthened support with two new posts of Post 16 Education Intervention Worker and Virtual School Careers' Adviser

Increase in staff capacity has meant more support to NEET young people as well as those preparing to leave education and we expect this to be reflected in the number engaging in EET in September

EET Clinic Terms of Reference reviewed and are now managed through the Virtual School

17-18 year olds in EET

**77%**

Better than last year  
Better than the national average



Level 3 qualifications

**100%**

5 students

More students than last year



More young people are progressing into EET through the clinics

10 EET clinics have taken place:

**74** young people were discussed

**6** have started re-engagement activities

**5** have progressed into EET

**7** started courses in September

A higher number of care leavers engaged in education, employment and training through the multi-agency EET Clinics.

Successful liaison with Northumberland College means that our Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children have access to an English language course.

Strong integrated working with social workers (Personal Advisers).

We know our young people well – the circumstances of the pupils that are NEET are known and they are all engaging with Virtual School Careers' Advisers.

Joined the Northumberland Employability Network that increases our awareness of non-government funded EET and re-integration opportunities.

During SEND practice week we developed criteria for assessing when direct careers guidance is appropriate for young people with complex SEND.

Helpful involvement in the newly formed Regional Post 16 Virtual School Steering Group where common issues such as lack of ESOL provision and SEMH provision are addressed.

### **3 young people are in EET with local company Bernicia Homes**

Opportunities with Morgan Sindall are being promoted through schools, FE providers and the EET clinic



### **Pupil Premium Plus Post 16 Pilot**

Grant funding received through the pilot was ring-fenced for retention of students in further education. It coincided with a new statutory requirement for young people having a personal education plan (PEP) until they are 18, so that they continue to be supported in education, achieve well and are aspirational. We combined the funding with this requirement to develop a post 16 ePEP, ready for implementation in September 2023. The grant also meant we could appoint to a new post of Post 16 Education Intervention Worker to implement the new PEP and develop relationships with students and further education providers.

### **Care Leavers' Covenants**

We are involved in 3 Care Leavers' Covenants that aim to provide support and services to care leavers beyond the statutory minimum required.

#### **Northumberland Care Leavers' Covenant**

Our original covenant from 2018 was refreshed in 2023 to re-affirm our promise to our care leavers to go the extra mile as their good corporate parents. We promise to support them to live independently and involve our partners from the public, health, voluntary and private sectors

#### **North East Raising Achievement Partnership Care Leavers' Covenant**

This is a collaboration of our 5 local universities that offers a Choices Together programme to engage pupils from an early age and supports them to build academic pathways out of school.

#### **North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board Care Leavers' Covenant**

Delivering their promise through a NHS Universal Family Project with Northumberland, North Tyneside and Newcastle local authorities, to support care leavers into employment.

# Challenges



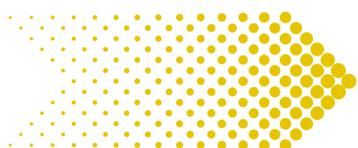
**Low numbers of pupils achieving the Basics at GCSE reduces the range of opportunities available at 16+**



**Lack of suitable post 16 provision for school leavers with SEND**



**Cohorts of pupils are increasingly challenging and experience significant levels of instability that impact on the opportunities available to them at 16**



For those care leavers staying in education, we want them to progress from GCSE level 2 courses to level 3 courses.



**Education, Employment and Training at 16 dipped**

**to 74%**

Not as good as last year  
National average not yet known

## External factors

When a post 16 provider unexpectedly closed down in August it meant that 6 SEND learners who intended to start courses in September then had no destination arranged and were NEET

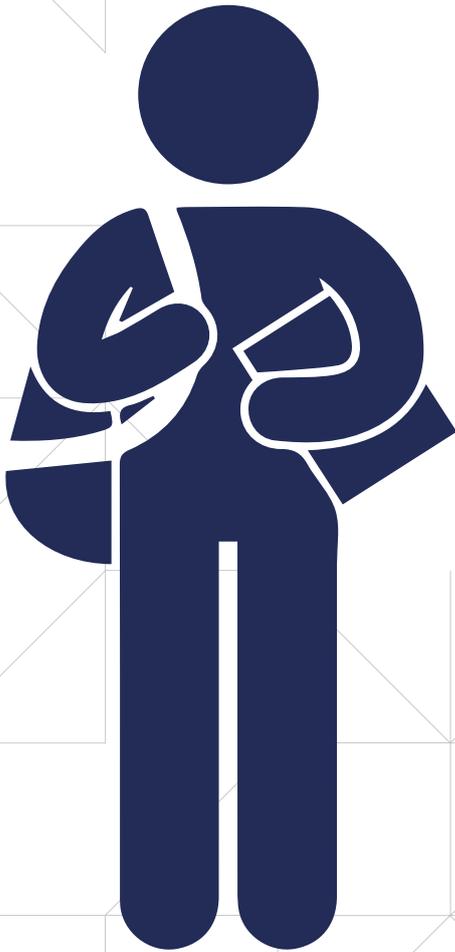
**Progressing to level 3 courses  
10% of Year 11 cohort**

Not as good as last year  
National average not yet known

## Pathways at 16: main barriers

- Lack of specialist provision
- Home placement instability (waiting for residential moves)
- Disengagement

# 16+



## NEXT STEPS

### **Embed the Post 16 ePEP**

Through the Northumberland Employability Network, **broaden the range of opportunities available at 16+**

**Deliver training for providers about the needs of our young people**

**Fulfil our commitments through the Care Leavers' Covenants**

# SEND Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

**We want to be the best corporate parents we can be for our cared for children with SEND. The proportion of cared for children with an identified SEND in Northumberland is high and rising so we champion their needs relentlessly with our partners and other local authority services to ensure that they are in the right education provision, at the right time, where their needs are being fully met.**

Impact of the role of the SEND Lead Officer for looked after children

Local authority review of SEND processes to improve the service for cared for children – an action in Priority 6 of the Corporate Parenting Strategy action plan: *Ensure that processes to identify and meet SEND need prioritise the care experienced population*

50% of EHCP reviews are aligned with looked after reviews

The **SEND Lead Officer for looked after children role**, funded by the Virtual School and inducted through the SEND Assessment Team, has had a positive impact: there is improved multi-agency working with colleagues from health and children's social care, including information sharing. Virtual School staff have been upskilled in SEND processes and cared for children are prioritised more in the SEND department because they have a dedicated advocate for their education plans. This has resulted in an increased numbers of COSAs and EHCPs that has reduced the proportion of children with unidentified needs.

## SEND processes have been reviewed

to the advantage of cared for children through a new Specialist Overview Resource Team (SORT), and additional panels have taken place to accelerate the placement process.

### School age cared for children 5-16

- 74 pupils have an EHCP and attend Northumberland schools
- 17 pupils have an EHCP and attend out of county provision (Northumberland holds their EHCP)
- 11 pupils have an EHCP and attend out of county provision (host local authority holds their EHCP)

### Post 16 cared for children and care leavers 16-19

- **14** students have an EHCP and attend Northumberland schools
- **7** students have an EHCP and attend out of county provision (Northumberland holds their EHCP)
- **13** students have an EHCP and are not in education, training and employment

### Cared for Children with SEND

**35% EHC Plan**  
**22% SEND Support**

More than last year

Lower than the national average



# Challenges

Increasing number of children entering care with previously unidentified SEND

## **Increasing complexity of SEND**

Legacy impact of the pandemic – gaps in achievement between cared for pupils with SEND and the pupil population are widening

## **Increasing number of out of county placements requiring school moves that have a negative impact on stability**

Schools saying they cannot meet needs

## **Delays in arranging placements**

Delays when another local authority holds the EHCP of our children

## **Inconsistent interpretation of the Belonging Regulations in different local authorities**

Lack of appropriate SEND provision in other local authorities. Too many learners are placed in areas where education providers cannot meet their needs

## **EHCP Reviews are not always well attended by social workers and health professionals**

Delay in opening of new independent special school in Northumberland

## **Withdrawal of providers at short notice**



# Good Practice *Case Study*

## Charlie's journey: the right support at the right time for care leavers with SEND

Charlie completed A-levels after doing well in his GCSEs but due to working from home during lockdowns and school closures, combined with his diagnosis of ASD and mental health issues exacerbated by the pandemic, he struggled with post-16 education. He didn't achieve the grades he was initially predicted and decided that Higher Education, which was his original plan, was not right for him at this time.

Charlie wanted to do an apprenticeship, but he and his Care Team felt that he wouldn't cope with the social demands of this at that time and would need to build up to a full-time job. The Virtual School Careers Adviser suggested the NHS Project Choice Programme, liaised with the post-16 SEND team regarding funding, and Charlie and his parents attended an information session. Charlie decided this was the best option for him as it would give him the support he needed to get into the workplace.

Unfortunately, due to Covid, the work placements Charlie had hoped for weren't available, so he spent the first two terms in a charity shop. While this wasn't what he would have chosen, he did gain a lot of experience, including customer service which he had thought he wouldn't be able to do. Charlie is now in the 3rd term of the programme and is on placement within the NHS; he has had training on the patient record system which improves his chances of gaining employment within the NHS after his course.

Due to having the right advice and support at the right time, and working hard on the programme, Charlie now has choices. The year has made him reflect on what he wants and he has decided that he does want to return to education. Project Choice staff, with support from his 18+ social worker and Virtual School Careers Adviser, have supported him to arrange student finance. He has a place on a Foundation Degree and is excited to get started.



# Achievement for pupils with SEND

50% of children achieved a Good Level of Development at the end of Early Years  
Better than the national average

No pupils met the standard for the Phonics test  
Below the national average

No pupils met the expected standard in reading, writing and maths at the end of **Key Stage 1**  
Below the national average

2 of the 11 pupils with SEND in Year 6 met age related expectations in reading/writing/maths at **Key Stage 2**  
Same as the national average

5 of the 12 pupils with SEND in **Year 11** were entered for at least 1 GCSE and 1 pupils achieved the Basics grade 5+  
Better than the national average

For all pupils with SEND in Year 11 the **Attainment 8** score is 16.1 which is lower than the score of 22.8 for all of our cared for pupils in Year 11  
Below the national average

**The Progress 8** score for our Year 11 pupils with SEND is -0.76 which is much better than the score of -1.37 for all of our cared for pupils in Year 11 and shows that our SEND pupils have been helped by their schools, Virtual School and Care Teams to make more progress since Key Stage 2 than their cared for peers with no SEND  
Better than the national average

57.9% of our Year 11 school leavers are in **education, employment and training**  
No national data available yet

## SEND NEXT STEPS

Further develop good corporate parenting for cared for children with SEND through the Corporate Parenting Strategy Action Plan

Work with SEND services to refine new processes to ensure that cared for children are prioritised through all systems and panels whilst complying with the relevant terms of reference

Further align decision making about home placements with decision making about education so that Northumberland retains ownership of more EHCPs

Work with regional and National Association of Virtual School Headteachers to address the issue of communication between local authorities that can cause drift and delay for cared for children with SEND

Promote an EHCP review on entry to care as good practice

Develop guidance for SEND and Care Teams on supporting school moves for pupils with an EHCP that includes promoting the graduated approach to meeting SEND needs prior to a special school request

Review Belongings Regulations in accordance with the High Needs Funding 23-24 operational guide gov.uk

# Previously cared for children

**We understand the long-term impact of trauma and loss on learning and this informs the support and guidance we give to parents, carers and professionals who live and work with previously cared for children. We aspire to providing good quality advice and guidance that helps previously cared for children to fulfil their potential in education.**

In our statutory role to provide advice and guidance to families and professionals living with and supporting previously cared for children, we have:

- Co-operated with other VSHs, adoption support teams and adoption support organisations through the regional network co-ordinated by Adopt North East
- Led on the application for a boarding school place for a previously cared for pupil
- Responded to requests for advice from families and schools on a range of subjects, but predominantly Pupil Premium Plus and school applications
- Promoted the same high standards, expectations and aspirations for previously cared for children as we do for those children currently in care



**Our relationship**  
with the Family Placement  
Team and mental health  
services is a strength

## **Our Virtual School Educational Psychologists:**



- develop and refresh guidance resources on a range of relevant themes **and share expertise on what works for previously cared for children**
- **support individual previously cared for children** whose school place is in crisis

# Believe



Keep going, no matter how bad things may seem  
Even in the dark there will always be a light beam

Keep going, even if you feel as grey as the sky  
Even in the saddest moments there will not be a reason to cry

Keep going, even in the meanest of moments  
Even in the bad times there will always be the  
greenest of fields on your doorstep

Keep going, even if you don't want to get out of bed  
Even in the most boring of times, you have to look ahead

There is only one thing to fear in life  
When you don't bring yourself to believe.

Poet:

*Northumberland cared for child*



# Children with a social worker

Since Virtual School Headteachers were given an extended duty to promote the education of children with a social worker (Promoting the education of children with a social worker, June 2022) our response in Northumberland has developed at a rapid rate.

We now know that the two areas that will have the greatest positive impact for this group of learners are attendance improvement and embedding relational and trauma informed practise.

## Successes

Strong leadership to promote the education of children with a social worker.

Promoting the education of children with a social worker is a theme now incorporated into Northumberland's safeguarding partnership (NCASP) via the Safer in Education sub-group chaired by the Virtual School Headteacher.

Co-planned and delivered with the Be You team, a Relationships Matter conference that launched a county-wide relational and trauma informed approach to working with children.

Good progress with Northumberland Schools C.A.R.E initiative.

Strengthened Education Welfare service.

Multi-disciplinary training developed and delivered to children's social care by ESLAC, Education Welfare and Inclusion teams about schools' statutory guidance for attendance, behaviour and suspensions/exclusions. **Over 100** social care team managers and social workers joined the training.

Our aim is that the education of children with a social worker will be routinely considered in day-to-day practice, or Business As Usual. This will ensure that education is embedded as a protective factor

### Research shows that relational practice:

- develops social and emotional competencies
- supports responsible decision making
- improves self-discipline
- increases empathy
- develops self-confidence and resilience
- improves outcomes

Education Welfare Support Officers worked with **51 children who have social work involvement and 13 cared for children**

The aim is to empower leaders to embed a relational approach in school through restorative methods by **"teaching behaviour but never excusing it."**

Was the journey easy?

**No.**

Was the journey and approach worth it?

**You bet it was!**

Paul Dix

**A Task and Finish group, chaired by the Head of Safeguarding, has strengthened the relationship between education and social care.**

Two case file audits were carried out in line with the quality of practice framework in children's social care, showing that there has been progress in recognising education as a protective factor and ensuring that improved school attendance is part of safety plans.

**A Virtual School SharePoint webpage has been launched with a dedicated section for promoting the education of children with a social worker.**

The Early Help Education team has developed an in-school early help map to capture what is accessible to children before schools need to engage other services to meet additional needs.

**Northumberland contributed to the DfE evaluation of the first year of the Virtual School Headteacher's extended duty to promote the education of children with a social worker and learning from the first year has been factored into future improvement planning. The recommendation to DfE to make this duty statutory has also been noted.**

**We know that grant funding from the Virtual School to provide this support and resources is having positive impact because:**

over 300 professionals from Northumberland schools have signed up to the Online Change Behaviour course which is 7 hours of pre-recorded content to support relational behavioural practice development with practical tasks to carry out in school

the Northumberland Relationships Matter website is attracting an average of 88 unique visitors every month

With the **Be You team**, the Virtual School jointly launched a multi-agency initiative to embed a relational and trauma informed practice approach. The aim is for all schools to be attachment aware and trauma informed so that the underlying reasons for children with a social worker not doing as well at school as their peers are understood and overcome.

The starting point was a **Relationships Matter** conference in March 2023 attended by over 200 professionals in person, with the recording then shared so that it could be used by all professionals for further staff training. The training provider was *Paul Dix* and his team, author of *When the Adults Change*.

This was used as a springboard for the launch of a pilot scheme called **Northumberland Schools C.A.R.E.** which stands for **C**aring about **A**dversity **R**esilience and **E**mpowerment and is a collaboration between the Virtual School, Be You and NEWST teams. A pilot is underway with 9 pilot schools completing a relational audit and a training session on attachment and trauma, with half termly supervision via network meetings. All of the pilot schools have self-evaluated their current practice and knowledge against given criteria to support their planning to develop relational practices and become trauma informed.



# Successes



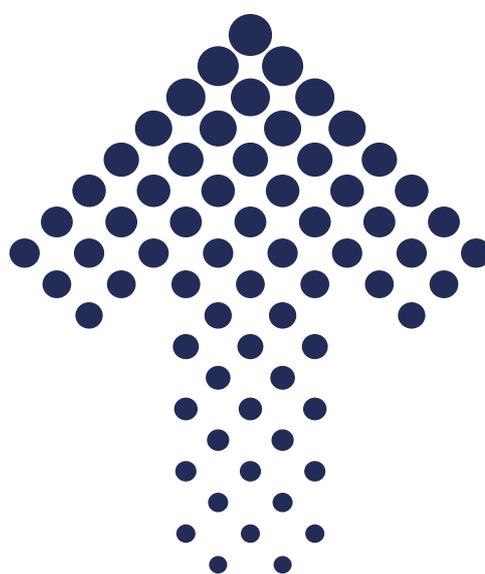
## **Overwhelmingly positive feedback from Relationships Matter conference**

An excellent day that exceeded expectations. One of the most useful and exciting conferences I have attended for a while.

**Brilliant content and aims for Northumberland it's been a long time coming schools changing practice.**

Thank you so much for such a fantastic conference. I feel so lucky to have had the opportunity to attend. Every single speaker and presentation offered valuable insight and the entire day was so cohesive and joined up. Everything aligned with our approach at both of the schools I work at and it was really affirming. I have loved being part of such an interesting, informative and important event.

**This has truly been the best Conference I have attended in some time. Already passionate about the content, I feel further inspired after today. Thank you SO much. I only wish our entire school had been there with me.**



## **Outcomes that are much better than 2022**

Pupils meeting age related expectations in reading/writing/math's at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2

## **Outcomes that still need to improve in 2024**

Overall attendance, suspensions, permanent exclusions and GCSE achievement are areas for improvement

# Challenges

**Developing a meaningful data set has been challenging as the group is large and data information systems from schools, education and social care do not 'talk to each other' easily**

There are over 4000 children in the group of those who have or have had a social worker in the last 6 years, involving all schools in Northumberland (166), alternative providers and many out of county

**Getting an insight into what pupils are telling us are their barriers to education**

# Children with a social worker

## NEXT STEPS

Recruit to 2 new fixed term posts of Virtual School Co-ordinator: children with a social worker, and Virtual School Learning Mentor: children with a social worker

Develop a more sophisticated data set and outcomes framework

Provide guidance and support to develop the role of the Designated Teacher with all children who have social care involvement

Continue to implement the Northumberland Schools CARE initiative

Facilitate the next Relationships Matter conference to target social workers



# Pupil Voice

**We want to have meaningful conversations with our cared for pupils about their education. Listening to what our children are saying gives us an insight into their experiences of school so that we can take action when needed to make things better.**

Our cared for children's council, Voices Making Choices, worked closely with the Participation team (Northumberland Adolescent Services) to produce a short film for adults and professionals working with them that shares their views about stigma in the care system. We want our children to know that we listened to what they said and will try to do better for them.

**These are some of the messages they wanted us all to hear in Children's Services**

## **RULES**

Not being allowed to do activities that our friends do eg sleepovers

Not getting parts in plays due to not being allowed in photos

Having to get permission authorised for many random things eg hair dye, piercings

## **LANGUAGE**

Using jargon such as placement, contact, PEP contributes to us feeling different

We don't need a Designated Teacher, just a teacher we can trust and who cares

## **MEETINGS AND PAPERWORK**

Being taken out of class to attend lots of meetings

Paperwork for lots of things eg risk assessments, reviews

Having health assessments that peers don't have

Having to retell our story to new workers.



## **You Said**

*You don't like being labelled as looked after children or worse called LAC*

## **We Did**

*Children's Services and all professionals that work with you will now call you cared for children*

“ There's so many things that need to change around the foster care system. It is so important that the government, the people who have the power to make a difference, take some time to listen to children and young people who have experienced being in the care system. To them, this is just a job, but this is our lives. They have so much power to change the way things are. ”

*Chloe (Care experienced A National Voice Ambassador (ANV) and Chair of ANV)*

# Priorities for Continuous Improvement

The NEXT STEPS for 2023-24 identified in each section of this self-evaluation and have been organised into 4 priorities for improvement. Specific actions under-pinning each priority are set out in the separate document that is the Virtual School Improvement Plan 2023-24.

## Improvement Priority 01

Raise achievement

### Summary of NEXT STEPS

- Work with the Early Years service to improve school readiness in Year 1
- Support schools to improve achievement in GCSE maths
- Develop the monitoring framework to target support and intervention that gets pupil progress
- Recruit part time teachers in English, maths and science to work into residential homes
- Target more EP and specialist resource into residential homes to work with pupils and staff
- With schools, use PP+ differently to accelerate progress during Key Stage 2

## Improvement Priority 02

Improve stability to create the right conditions for learning

### Summary of NEXT STEPS

- Address the top 10 reasons for poor attendance
- As Northumberland's Attendance Strategy is implemented, ensure the needs of cared for children are well understood and prioritised as 'everyone's business'
- Work with Care Teams to reduce the number of missed sessions
- Deliver more training and develop more resources to promote alternatives to suspension

# Priorities for Continuous Improvement

## Improvement Priority

03

Support teaching and learning in schools

### Summary of NEXT STEPS

- Deliver training that focuses on the emotional and mental health and wellbeing of pupils
- Pilot a PP+ impact evaluation with volunteer Designated Teachers in a representative sample of schools
- Ensure that the PEP quality assurance process improves the quality of SMART

## Improvement Priority

04

Improve recruitment and retention in education, employment and training Post 16+

### Summary of NEXT STEPS

- Fulfil our commitments through the Care Leavers' Covenants
- Embed the Post 16 ePEP
- Through the Northumberland Employability Network, broaden the range of opportunities available at 16+
- Deliver training for providers about the needs of our young people

## Improvement Priority

05

Improve the experience of education of cared for children with SEND

### Summary of NEXT STEPS

- Further develop good corporate parenting for cared for children with SEND through the Corporate Parenting Strategy Action Plan
- Work with SEND services to refine new processes to ensure that cared for children are prioritised through all systems and panels whilst complying with the relevant terms of reference
- Further align decision making about home placements with decision making about education so that Northumberland retains ownership of more EHCPs
- Work with the regional and National Association of Virtual School Headteachers to address the issue of communication between local authorities that can cause drift and delay for pupils with SEND
- Promote an EHCP review on entry to care as good practice.
- Develop guidance for SEND and Care Teams on supporting school moves for pupils with an EHCP that includes promoting the graduated approach to meeting SEND needs prior to a special school request
- Review Belongings Regulations in accordance with the High Needs Funding 23-24 operational guide gov.uk

## Improvement Priority

06

Promote the education of children with a social worker

### Summary of NEXT STEPS

- Recruit to two new fixed term posts of Virtual School Co-ordinator: children with a social worker and Virtual School Learning Mentor: children with a social worker
- Develop a more sophisticated data set and outcomes framework
- Provide guidance and support to develop the role of the Designated Teacher with all children who have social care involvement
- Continue to implement the Northumberland Schools CARE initiative
- Facilitate the next Relationships Matter conference to target social workers



# Northumberland's Virtual School

## Northumberland's Virtual School

Northumberland's Virtual School Headteacher is managed through children's social care and has Head of Service oversight of the work of 4 teams that fulfil statutory duties for the local authority to ensure that children are safer in education. Those services are:

- Promoting the education of looked after and previously looked after children
- Promoting the education of children who have and have had a social worker
- School attendance
- Children missing and at risk of missing education
- Elective home education
- Licensing for children in entertainment and employment
- Safeguarding standards in schools, including the training of Designated Safeguarding Leads
- Providing education for children with health and medical needs who cannot attend school

The Virtual School Headteacher chairs the Safer in Education Group of the Northumberland Children's and Adult's Safeguarding Partnership.

The ESLAC – education support for looked after children – team is the operational arm of the Virtual School that is dedicated to cared for and previously cared for children. It is a multi-disciplinary team with 22 staff/17.52 FTE providing a range of expertise in teaching, educational psychology, education welfare, careers' guidance and therapeutic interventions.

The team provides training and support for Designated Teachers for looked after and previously looked after children in all education settings.

The MALAP – multi agency looked after partnership – has terms of reference as the governing body of the Virtual School. Governance is provided by the Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting Group (SCPG).

ESLAC is funded by NCC and the Pupil Premium Plus grant from the DfE.

Northumberland's Virtual School is a member of the National Association of Virtual School Headteachers.

## ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Definition	Abbreviation	Definition
AP	Alternative Provision	K	SEND need
A8	Attainment 8 is an average of pupils' highest scores in a secondary school in 8 specific subjects	KS1	Key Stage 1
COSA	Consideration of Statutory Assessment	KS2	Key Stage 2
CYPS	Children and Young People's Service	KS4	Key Stage 4
		NEWST	Northumberland Emotional Wellbeing Support Team
DVSH	Deputy Virtual School Headteacher	NEET	Not in education, employment and training
EBSA	Emotionally based school avoidance	PP+	Pupil Premium Plus
EET	Education, employment and training	PACE	Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy
EHCP or E	Education, Health and Care Plan	PEP	Personal Education Plan
EIW	Education Intervention Worker	PMH	Primary Mental Health
EMHWB	Emotional and mental health and wellbeing	P8	Progress 8 is an average score measuring progress over 5 years since KS2. 0 means in line with the average rate of progress of all children nationally
EP	Educational Psychologist	SDQ	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire
ePEP	Electronic Personal Education Plan	SEMH	Social, emotional and mental health
ESLAC	Education Support for Looked After Children team	UASC	Unaccompanied asylum seeking child
ESOL	English as a second language	VS	Virtual School
EY	Early Years	VSH	Virtual School Headteacher
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education		

## A note about the data

The official cohorts reviewed in this report are small and the individual pupils comprising the cohorts change during the course of each phase. Percentages can vary considerably so that comparisons with other groups of pupils or establishing trends in performance over time are not always meaningful.

The official cohort does not comprise all pupils in a year group at the time of the assessment, but all those of statutory school age who have been in care for 12 months or more from 31st March of 2022 and of those how many match to the school census. This can change what the data might be telling us significantly. For example, in Year 11 in 2022-23 the actual cohort was 31 pupils, the official cohort was 23 pupils, and the official cohort matched to the school census is 12 pupils.

The Virtual School captures data for whole cohorts, so where local data (and not validated DfE data) is quoted then it refers to all pupils in one year group at one time regardless of the length of time they have been in care or the school census.

## Disclaimer

The information provided in this publication is, to the best of our knowledge, accurate at the time of production. Data sources are available upon request.

## OTHER FORMATS

If you need this information in large print, Braille, Audio, or in another format or language please contact us:

**0345 600 6400**

If you are deaf or can't speak on the phone, contact us using Relay UK. Download the Relay UK app or using your existing text phone prefix our dedicated text Relay number:

**018001 01670 623 515**

British Sign Language users can contact us using an online sign language interpreting service:

**[northumberlandcc-cs.signvideo.net](https://northumberlandcc-cs.signvideo.net)**

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