



Learn Achieve Celebrate

Information and guidance
for Designated Teachers of Looked After and
Previously Looked After Children in Northumberland
1st May 2020

EXTRAORDINARY CORONAVIRUS SCHOOL CLOSURE BRIEFING

Contact Us

Here are contact details for teams and services that you might need during this school closure period. Let us know if you need any others:

- ESLAC 01670 622779
- Email: eslac.info@northumberland.gov.uk
- OneCall 01670 536 400
- CYPS 01670 502 700 (CYPS, prescriptions, crisis)
- Family Placement 01670 626 262
- IRO's 01670 624888



Annual Report of the Virtual School Headteacher 2018-19

While we were all a bit pre-occupied on 26th March, the DfE published the statistical first release [Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities in England, 31 March 2019](#). My annual report for 2019 has now been published using the validated data. Please click on the picture of the front cover to view and download from our Virtual School web page.



PEPs

We hope you have found that the new update has simplified how the e-PEP works. The integrated Quality Assurance document appears to be working smoothly and we have already found that the dialogue between the Virtual School and Designated Teachers is much easier. There has been an increase in schools making instant amendments to the e-PEP to ensure the highest quality for our looked after children. Thank you!

Risk assessments & decision making

There has been much talk about risk assessments and safeguarding during the lockdown, for obvious and understandable reasons. It might be helpful to re-focus on what safeguarding is about, that is:

- assessment of risk
- taking appropriate precautions
- having systems for reporting, reviewing and for accountability



Safeguarding is the mitigation of risk and we all have a responsibility during the lockdown and school closure period to make sure that we have the right information to do this effectively for children.

Social workers are constantly updating and reviewing their risk assessments for looked after children, some on a daily basis depending on the need. Your insight and views in relation to education are invaluable and there are some excellent examples of joined up approaches to supporting and safeguarding children. As Designated Teachers you have a very important part to play in decision making, as valued members of care teams and professionals who know the children well.

The vulnerable children weekly return

Last week Children's Services introduced a new weekly return for schools to collect key information about children with social workers and/or with EHCPs. The form is very easy to complete, with drop



down lists and the names of children provided for you. This data is critical for Children's Services and contributes to the safeguarding of children during the school closure period. Please can you complete the return each week, or if you would like some support or to discuss further just get in touch with the Virtual School.

Britannica School



The Virtual School has purchased the Britannica online learning resource to support all of our looked after children, whether they are working from home or attending school. Britannica is for all ages and abilities, it is updated every 20 minutes by a team of over 60 editors, the articles are curriculum mapped, differentiated and translated into over 120 languages. Covering the depth and breadth of the curriculum, the programme supports student-led inquiry whilst also ensuring pupils develop core skills and subject-area mastery. The idea is that as students dive into content, they build on skills and knowledge achieving clearly defined evaluation points at the end to measure their learning.

Log-ins and information have been sent to all foster carers and an online training session for carers was delivered last week. We are really encouraging you to use this resource, it's fabulous and will make a real difference to our learners. A reminder that logging in is very easy. Just follow this link – [Britannica School](#) – and insert **virtual** as the ID number. ENJOY!!

Mind of My Own, Mindfulness Project



We encourage all looked after children to use the Mind of My Own app to contact their care team to share their thoughts or concerns. Staff at NCC have used this platform as a way of reaching out to young people to support their emotional well being throughout the lockdown, teaching basic mindfulness skills and helping to keep them engaged at home. Mind of My Own is not only available for looked after children, it's for any young people open to social care including Early Help, CiN, CP, Youth Justice and Sorted. The Mindfulness workbook can be downloaded [HERE](#).

The Northumberland Home Challenge

To help keep young people to keep active, Northumberland Youth Service is encouraging young people to complete 6 challenges over the next few weeks in a project called Northumberland Home Challenge. To take part, children and young people should document all their achievements, send evidence of what they've done to the Youth Service and then they will receive a certificate and a chance to win an online voucher to spend!

The Requirements:

- you must be residing in Northumberland during the lockdown phase of Covid19
- challenges must be completed during the lockdown phase
- you must send through evidence that you have completed the challenges to receive your certificate and be in with a chance to win the vouchers.

All the information needed to take part, including the work booklet, can be found here:

[NORTHUMBERLAND HOME CHALLENGE](#)



Children in Need and Virtual Schools



Following a children in need review last year, the University of Bristol and Rees Centre have now published a research report on *Children in Need and Children in Care: Educational Attainment and Progress*. You can access a Policy Brief, executive summary and full report at this link [HERE](#).

The recommendations, if they are accepted and progress, will have implications for the role of the Virtual School Headteacher, Designated Teachers and Designated Safeguarding Leads. I will talk to you more about this when the lockdown is over and we are getting back on track.

Virtual School Headteacher: Jane Walker

